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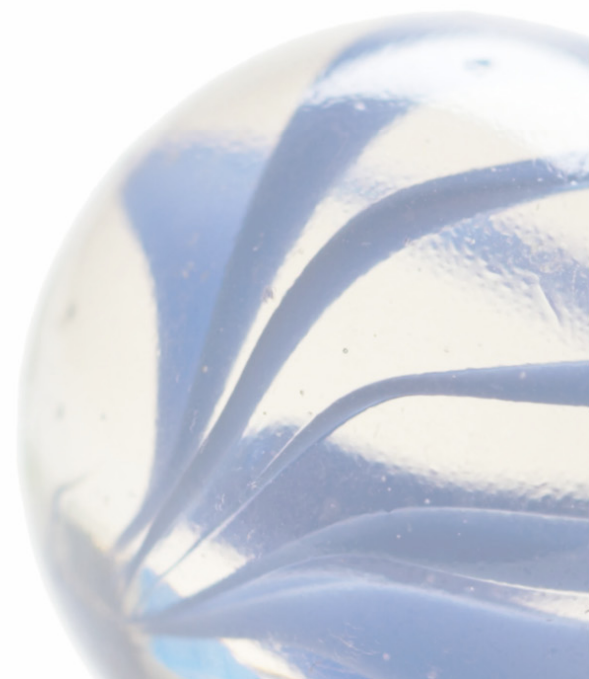
...thinking beyond learning™

PRINCE2® or APMP?

Project Management Certifications for
Project Managers

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IPMA® is a registered trade mark of International Project Management Association.
PRINCE2® is a Registered Trade Mark of the Office of Government Commerce in the United Kingdom and other countries.



1. The Context

1.1. IPMA® / APM Group partnership press release November 2009

The Association for Project Management Group (APM Group) and the International Project Management Association (IPMA) signed an agreement on 11th November 2009, which furthers co-operation between the two organisations internationally. The intention is that PRINCE2® will be recognised by IPMA as a qualification that leads to level 'C' & 'D' IPMA qualifications. IPMA will define a syllabus and exam to bridge the gap(s).

For the full press release: www.apmgroupltd.com/PressCentre/11Nov09APMGIPMAalliance.asp

1.2. My experience as a Project Management training consultant

Which is the best Paul – PRINCE2 or APMP? Which course should I do Paul – PRINCE2 or APMP? Which will look the best on my CV Paul – PRINCE2 or APMP?

For a long time now, I've been fielding these very questions at the start of both PRINCE2 and APMP courses.

I remember a few years ago sitting on the APM Introductory Course and the tutor answering the 'Which one's best?' question with the answer 'APM is far better than PRINCE2'. At the time, I thought it was a ridiculous answer, and I'm even more sure a few years later.

For far too long now, confusion has reigned supreme in the British Project Management certification market.

It seems that a lot of organisations and individuals don't have the first idea what either PRINCE2 or APM are, let alone what the differences are. Most people that I meet on training courses think that the two certifications are in direct competition with each other and this is where I'd like to start: **PRINCE2 and APM are not in competition with each other, and rather than choosing one over the other, both certifications together make the best combination.**

Now the cynics amongst you may now be thinking, 'he's bound to say that as he works for a training company', but hear me out!



2. Let's start with the APM and their course portfolio

The Association for Project Management are striving for Chartered status this year, a move that will give increased visibility and prestige to the profession of the Project Manager. According to their website, the APM's mission statement is: "To develop and promote the professional disciplines of project and programme management for the public benefit".

To support the profession of Project Management, the APM have a number of training courses available to both their members and non-members that correspond with their membership levels. Membership of the APM requires an individual to have both a commensurate level of knowledge and experience and therefore these courses support Project Managers as they move up the ranks. The knowledge requirements are underpinned by the APM Body of Knowledge (BoK), a textbook consisting of guidelines about the component aspects of Project Management.

2.1. The APM Introductory Certificate in Project Management

The entry level qualification advertised by the APM is the Introductory Certificate.

This qualification is designed to give people new to Project Management an overview of the profession and some of the fundamental skills required to work as part of a successful project team. It covers a diverse range of topics including, Planning and scheduling, Communications, Quality management, Teamwork, Resource management, Risk management and review. AT the end of the course, candidates sit a one-hour multiple choice exam which, if successful, leads to the award of the Introductory Certificate.

2.2. The APMP

The next level of course available from the APM is the APMP.

At the end of the course, candidates sit a three-hour written exam and, if successful, this leads to the award of the APMP. The course is aimed at people who have some experience of Project Management and gives them some foundation level knowledge that enables them to work more effectively on projects in their organisations. It is not a pre-requisite to do the Introductory Certificate – if a candidate has some prior knowledge and experience of working on projects, then direct entry on to the APMP isn't a problem. The APMP qualification covers a range of topics that are fundamental to successful project management. These include Planning, Critical Path Analysis, Business Case development, leading, motivating, managing and building the team, Earned Value Management to name but a few. The APMP level qualification is recognised internationally and sits at level D of the IPMA competency framework.

It's fair to say that The APMP gives candidates a thorough foundation understanding of a broad range of topics. It is also fair to say that candidates who have no previous knowledge or experience of Project Management often struggle on this course as the sheer volume of information can look overwhelming at the beginning of the week (this course, like PRINCE2 Practitioner, runs over five days). **Our experience tells us that the people who benefit the most from this course are those who have worked on projects in their organisations for a period of more than 6 months.**

After the Introductory Certificate and APMP, the remainder of the APM membership levels rely more on experience – you are required to demonstrate your Project Management prowess using your professional experience.



3. So what's PRINCE2®?

PRINCE2 (Projects in Controlled Environments) is a methodology owned by the OGC (Office for Government Commerce).

It is free to use – any organisation can utilise the methodology and many do, from government departments through to large multi-national businesses in areas as diverse as banking through to engineering.

The OGC work with a partner organisation called the Association for Project Management Group (APMG – not to be confused with the APM!) who maintain standards in training and certification by accrediting organisations and individuals.

The initial method, PRINCE, was developed in 1989, and was geared towards IT projects. It became clear that the method could be used for non IT projects, and PRINCE2 was developed in 1996 to move into a generic methodology that could be used by all types of organisation and on all types of project.

It has become the most widely used methodology in the UK and its use has spread to over 50 countries worldwide.

In fact, its use has become so widespread that **PRINCE2 has become a by-word for Project Management in the UK**, and you will be hard pressed to find a job advertisement for a project manager without the term 'PRINCE2' mentioned in there somewhere!

4. Let's go to the point quickly – what makes the APM courses different to PRINCE2?

The key thing here to understand is the term 'methodology'. The APM and its qualifications do not constitute a methodology. A methodology is a way of doing something – PRINCE2 is a way of managing a project. It is process driven and gives users a route map to follow (its process model) when delivering a project. It tells you what should be done first on a project having received a trigger to start a project (Starting up a Project), right the way through to telling you what to do last on a project after you have handed over the output of the project to the customer (Closing a Project).

It also has themes. These are the elements of Project Management that have to be considered throughout the life of the project and cover things such as risk, quality, plans and controlling the project.

PRINCE2 is based on principles. They provide a framework of good practice for people involved in the project including how to define roles and responsibilities and manage by stages.

There are two levels of qualification: Foundation and Practitioner.

The Foundation level certification proves an understanding of the methodology. The post course exam is based on the excellent 'Managing Successful Projects Using PRINCE2' textbook. This textbook is the official guide to PRINCE2.

The Practitioner Level qualification proves an ability to apply the principles of PRINCE2 to a real life project. The post course examination is based on a case study and requires candidates to answer situation based questions using their knowledge of PRINCE2.



5. What's the problem?

The biggest problem that we find from a training point of view is that many organisations think that PRINCE2 is Project Management.

There is a misconception in the marketplace that if you understand PRINCE2, then you can manage a project. Unfortunately, it's not as simple as that! Remember, PRINCE2 is a methodology – it will show you how to get from A to B and the things to look out for along the way. It doesn't tell you how to manage your team, how to work out and manage your critical path, it doesn't tell you how to identify and manage stakeholders, or report your CPI and SPI.

I have lost count the number of times that candidates have attended the foundation PRINCE2 course expecting an introduction to Project Management. **PRINCE2 is not intended to be an introduction to project management** – it is a methodology for people who have experience of working on and/or managing projects. It's for people who understand CPI and SPI, who know how to do a forward and backwards pass and calculate the critical path and who know some of the skills required to manage a team and deal with the conflict that arises along the way.

6. What should organisations be doing?

Well the answer to this question depends on who's attending the training....

If someone approached me saying 'Paul, I want to know a little more about Project Management', or 'I'd like to develop my existing skills a little more to help work better on projects', I'd recommend the APM Introductory Certificate. This course would give that person a range of skills covering a wide breadth of the technical and 'soft' skills required to work on a project.

If someone approached me saying, 'Paul, I'd like to become a Project Manager', or 'I'd like to develop my career as a Project Manager further', then I'd recommend the APMP. This would give that person a really good foundation level of detail covering both the technical and 'soft' skills required.

7. So where does PRINCE2 fit into this I hear you say...

Well, once a person understands the foundation level skills required being a project manager, or working effectively as part of a project team, then we can start to look at PRINCE2. PRINCE2 will give people who already understand the fundamental principles of project management a robust, scalable way of managing projects in a controlled manner.

As I often say to candidates, doing PRINCE2 as your one and only dip into the world of Project Management training is a bit like a 17 year old buying a Sat Nav device before he/she takes their first driving lesson!

So that's why both accreditations work perfectly together – the APM courses give you the wide breadth of knowledge required to work effectively as part of a project team and PRINCE2 gives you the way to manage your project.

No longer should the question be whether you do APMP or PRINCE2, it should be when will I do APMP and PRINCE2.

