

PMP preparation & exam: some of Razvan's tips

The 3 passes through the PMBOK

- 1) Follow the original order, by KAs: learn the PM language and basic knowledge (core concepts)
- 2) Re-assemble it ordered by PGs: this will re-package the PMBOK to reflect the PM usage perspective (in the order that a project progresses); you start to apply the basic knowledge (from 1st pass) – excellent for Situational questions, and for applying PM best practices in your own work
- 3) Go back a 3rd time and, this time, keep both perspectives (KAs, PGs) in mind, easily switching back and forth

Some additional points:

- Don't try to memorize the whole PMBOK; you'd waste a lot of brain cells (even if only for a short term) and, even if you manage it, it's not enough for the exam:
my rule: (at most!) ¼ memorization + fill-in the blanks, based on ¾ UNDERSTANDING!
- Another way I like to look at the 3 passes:
 1. learn to speak and read
 2. learn to write
 3. write poetry
- Don't read every word in your 2nd and 3rd passes: be selective (you already know the basic knowledge), focus on what's relevant to the new perspective (PG, 2nd time), or to the whole process (PG&KA, 3rd time)

Rearrange the "Input – Tools & Techniques – Output" sequence

- To me, it makes more sense to think first of the what you are trying to accomplish through the process (goals, objectives, purpose...the Outputs)
- Then, think of what information/objects do you need to achieve those Outputs (the Inputs)
- Finally, think of what you'll have to do (the Techniques) and what tools you have available (the Tools) to "go" from those Inputs to the desired Outputs
- Hence, in this view, the order "Outputs – Inputs – Tools & Technique" is a lot easier to grasp and understand
- Once you have a good grasp of the concepts, feel free to switch to whatever order you prefer

Differentiate between Tools and Techniques

- Tools: PMIS, Configuration Management System, Change Control System, etc.
- Techniques: Decomposition, Variance Analysis, Brainstorming, Delphi, etc.

It will help you better understand and remember PMBOK.

Rename the Process names

- PMBOK is rather inconsistent in the way it assigns names to PM terms – especially Process names
- In my view, a more logical way to name a process is to reflect the actions performed in that process; hence, I've renamed all processes to reflect a <verb> <object> construct.
For example: "Scope Planning" becomes "Plan Scope Management"

- This way, all Processes start with a <verb> term (logical), while all Inputs, Outputs, and Tools start with a <noun> term (Techniques, unfortunately, are a bit trickier); a lot easier for the brain to keep things straight; hence, a lot easier during exam to remember them straight as well
- In some instances, I even changed <verb>+<object> process names to better reflect their purpose; e.g. “Create WBS” into “Breakdown Scope into Work Packages (WBS)” – whatever made better sense to me!

Note: Some people have concerns that non-PMI conformant terms may trip them in the exam. In my opinion, the time when PMI was trying to “trick” candidates on exact term compliance are long gone (unfortunately, that is still frequent in practice exams and simulations). Of course, in the end, you should adopt/adapt only those tips that work well for your style and that you feel comfortable with.

Yet another note (added in 2009): Finally PMI caught up with my “bickering” and changed the process names (in PMBOK4) to reflect the rule I have been promoting so much. Thanks, PMI ☺

Product Scope NOT EQUAL to Project Scope & Scope = (implied) Project Scope (in PMBOK view)

- Product Scope: features and functions; primary responsibility of the Business Analyst
- Project Scope: work required to deliver the above Product Scope
- When PMBOK speaks about Scope, it refers to (implies) Project Scope (unless explicit “Product Scope”)

Know & practice recognizing the different Question types & applying correspondent tactics to answer them (see separate document)

- The exam is too fast-paced to figure your tactics right there; you’d waste precious time
- Instead of using your brain power to focus on the mechanics, use it to focus on the content of the questions

Know and practice the exam environment

- Be prepared! Don’t let surprise push you off-balance when you hear “M’ am (Sir), here’re your 2 pencils and 3 sheets of paper. Please leave everything else in the locker. ... No, you can’t have your watch. No water, either!”
- So, practice with 2 pencils & 3 sheets of paper (you’ll get a new sheet of paper only if you exchange it with an old one... hence, practice good paper-space management, too!)
- Treat it as if training for a marathon: can’t run the whole length too often, yet you have to be ready to do it all in the final run; try at least couple of “the whole shebang” practices

There’s more...

... I’ll let others to add to the list

GOOD LUCK!

Razvan ☺