



May 2009

PMO SIG Local Interest Group Meeting - Minutes

Main Topic: PMO Interview Questions – A discussion led by Maude Fribourg

Secretary:

1. Welcome & Introductions
 - Attendees included: Bob Hyland, Carol DeGrella, Danielle Fitch, Dorothy Cunha, Gus Sanchez, Maude Fribourg, Michael Milch, Sheryl Wilensky, Susan Leong
2. Member Announcements
 - Job opportunities (within our companies, industries, etc.)
 - Be sure to check out the Career Center page on the [PMI Westchester site](#) for updated job postings.
 - Feeling from the group was that the number of available jobs appears to be going up. However, the rates have gone down.
 - Many of the postings/opportunities say PMP certification is desirable, but not necessary. Also, the companies are looking for a 100% match on their requirements. Anything less does not seem to cut it.
 - Tip from the Job Hunters Club meeting: Make sure your cover letters and resumes match the listing's criteria *exactly*. Many companies use software to screen the resumes and technique would increase your chances of having your information selected.
 - Tools – Project, time management, specialty, ...
 - Mike mentioned he had participated in a webinar for SLIM software. This is a tool used for estimating your project costs: staffing and other resources. You would view it as a “second opinion”. Over time, the idea is, if you keep feeding it information, it will adjust to your organization and will provide you with accurate estimations from the start. Mike didn't have the specific links. According to my Google search, I found SLIM tools from QSM at the following location: <http://www.qsm.com/products.html>
 - David forwarded these useful links:
 - WBS Modeler: Free add-in for Visio
<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=34c28a49-e14c-4a7d-8d49-90061fe08ab4&displaylang=en>
 - WBS Chart Pro: Free to try Add-on for MS Project
http://download.cnet.com/WBS-Chart-Pro/3000-2076_4-10072965.html
 - AACE Standards for Estimation Ranges: Very helpful when people ask for a definitive estimate when you are still in feasibility.
http://download.cnet.com/WBS-Chart-Pro/3000-2076_4-10072965.html
 - Articles of Interest
 - “Scrappy Project Management” – by Kimberly Wiefeling – Gus mentioned he was reading this book and would try to produce a review for the next meeting.
 - Dave was looking into AACE (cost estimation standards), based in manufacturing. Please refer to the Tools section above, for a link to AACE.
 - Other meetings/seminars of interest
 - May 14, 2009: PMXPO 2009 – Sponsored by Gantthead.com (www.gantthead.com)

June 7, 2009
7:45 - 8:45 PM

Chair: Gus Sanchez
Phone: (203) 877-9596



- The group also pointed out that there are very good templates out on gantthead. Similarly, Dave reminded the group that Microsoft also has good templates out on their site.
3. Success (or Blunder) of the Month
 - Not reviewed
 4. Problem/Challenge of the Month
 - Not reviewed
 5. Main Topic

Maude led the group in a lively discussion about PMO Interview questions (<http://www.gantthead.com/content/articles/245819.cfm>). We were looking to learn from the various/collective responses and get some reactions to these types of questions. Also, we were to take the perspectives of both the candidate and interviewer.

Q1 – Describe how you've implemented portfolio management across an organization. What tools have you used to manage the portfolio?

It took us a while to address the very first question. There were many, differing, opinions. Feedback included comments focused on the tools aspect of the question, as well as considering “who” you'd be speaking with – thus adjusting your response/content accordingly. Gus was “put on the spot” and answered using his own, personal experience. Mike added that the answering this question should take a “soup to nuts” approach. In the end, it was agreed that, as a candidate, you would, definitely, get a question like this.

Q2 – Describe a recent experience integrating different schedules across related projects or programs. What is your approach to manage and track key milestones and deliverables across a program?

The consensus was that scheduling could not be left to automated systems. It should be approached carefully. *****An important, observation** was made/discussed during this section/question***. The group provided answers that were broad or tangential to the question. Maude noted how important it is to *answer the question – directly*. We should strive not to “dance around it” or provide “politically correct” answers. – The group agreed.

Q3 – How do you manage new project requests and determine the organization's resource capacity?

Mike suggested using a vetting process to work towards prioritization. Then, based on priority, you can allocate resources appropriately. Because schedules and priorities are subject to change, you can rely on (refer to) the vetting process, when articulating the changes to your team members, which helps morale. Carol added the importance of including your resources, up front, for better buy-in.

It was here that we ran out of time and agreed to address the remaining question in the June meeting. Hope you can join us then!