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We were thrilled to present four sessions as part of the 2022 Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) Symposium. We covered a wide range of topics designed to help Service members, test centers, and military educators in their pursuit of industry certification. Here are some highlights:

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- Christopher Bloor moderated a panel of certification experts who detailed strategies for optimizing the certification process, including how they determine exam requirements and map certifications to industry job roles and the attributes of successful candidates.
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How an Air Force Master Sergeant leverages his own experience to help Service members get certified

Scott Johnson, Master Sergeant, United States Air Force.

For many Service members, the most daunting part of the certification process is understanding how to meet the exam registration requirements. Once Master Sergeant Scott Johnson realized that his Air Force taskers provided the necessary expertise to earn a Project Management Professional certification, he was able to start the process and get certified. Now he volunteers as a mentor to help others on their project management journeys.

How long have you been in the Air Force, and what is your current rank and AFSC?
I've been in the Air Force about 13 years. I'm a Master Sergeant and my career field is 2A5, which is aviation maintenance. I'm an aircraft section chief and I oversee about 97 maintainers. We handle scheduling changes along with our production superintendents to make sure we have the right people in the right place at the right time to generate air mobility missions. I also build different maintenance teams based off diverse tasks and projects that come down.

What made you want to get a project management certification?
The field of project management first interested me when I was learning what my father-in-law and brother-in-law — both project managers in Buffalo, New York — do on a day-to-day basis. After that, I started doing some research, and I realized that project management is something that I would like to pursue when I retire from the Air Force.

The Project Management Professional (PMP) certification is a very valuable, and I don't want to be someone who retires from the military after 20 years scraping to find something. I want to make sure I set myself up for success.

“Having a mentor is imperative to make sure that you have someone to help you understand the process.” —Scott Johnson
Certification Spotlight

Can you explain your process for researching the PMP?

Even though I used Air Force COOL to pay for this certification, the certification is not cheap, so I wanted to make sure that it was something that I wanted to do when I eventually transition to civilian life. I had my Airframe and Power Plant certification to fall back on as a safety net, but I wanted to try to reach for something, and that was the PMP. I had some good mentors in my father-in-law and brother-in-law, who showed me the benefits of project management in the civilian sector.

Finally, there was a network of mentors on LinkedIn, and they were really helpful in providing information about the benefits of the certification. I'm now part of a growing list of PMP-certified military personnel that mentor others through the process.

Describe some of the unique challenges that you faced attempting to get certified while on active duty.

The big thing was scheduling. I had three major holidays — Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day — between when I participated in the boot camp in November 2018 and when I took my PMP certification exam in March 2019. Aircraft maintenance is always a high tempo career field with missions and pilots maintaining their qualifications. Once you add in a family life with two kids and a wife at home, time becomes extremely valuable and every minute matters. The most important piece was setting a plan and ensuring that I had time to reach the milestones and stay on schedule. My shift hours were 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., so I would get into work around 5:00 a.m. and go through the material until about 6:30 a.m. Everyone’s schedule might be different, but you need to find a plan and stick with it. When people don’t have a plan in place, they fall off track and miss their milestones.

Do you believe that military experience helps prepare people for the project management certification?

I absolutely believe a military member’s unique experience helps them prepare for getting their PMP certification. I’ve had the opportunity to mentor three or four military members that are working toward their PMP certification who are unsure if their experience will translate. Once we start going through the application process and breaking down all the projects that they work on, they realize they’ve been doing project management for a long time. There’s a lot of similarities between project management and what we do in the military.

Describe some of the unique challenges that you faced attempting to get certified while on active duty.

There’s a lot of similarities between project management and what we do in the military. Once you learn the proper terminology, then it’s just connecting the dots.

—Scott Johnson

On the road again...Our event calendar in 2022!

After nearly two years of digital conferences and video meetings, we are appreciating the renewed opportunities to meet with our partners and customers in the federal government at industry events. Whether it was the CCME Symposium in February, the SAME SBC conference in May, or one of many AFCEA events, these 2022 events have reinforced enthusiasm for industry certifications within the military.

But we're not done yet! Below is a list of the remaining events we're attending in 2022. Perhaps we'll see you there!

Alamo ACE
When: Monday, November 14 – Thursday, November 17
Where: La Cantera Resort & Spa
16641 La Cantera Parkway
San Antonio, Texas
https://www.alamoafcea.org/mpage/2022aace

Department of Defense Intelligence Information System (DoDIIS) Worldwide
When: Monday, December 12 – Thursday, December 15
Where: Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center
900 E. Market Street
San Antonio, Texas
https://www.ncsi.com/event/dodiis/

70% of survey respondents said certification made them better coworkers and mentors.


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What recommendations do you have for Service members who are just starting their certification process? Are there particular study and preparation tools and techniques that you recommend?

Do your own research and find out what learning process works best for you. There is a multitude of free exam questions available on the internet; it just depends what you’re looking for and what tools are best for your learning style. PMI will give you everything that you need to take your exam, but they won’t give you all the “between the lines” content that is crucial, and that’s where a mentor can help. Having a mentor is imperative to make sure that you have someone to help you understand the process.

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The Certification Outlook

Connecting you to credentialing resources

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80% of survey respondents are likely to pursue another certification in the next 12 months.

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Are you PCSing? Let us know who the new test center manager is so we can keep them updated on key events.

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