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How to Pass (or Avoid) a PMP Application Audit – Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can I avoid an audit?

A: According to PMI, applications are selected for audit at random. However, this could mean that they randomly audit 10% of good applications and 95% of weak or suspicious applications. To avoid problems, make sure you have a well-written application that avoids anything that raises a “red flag” with PMI. The tools at [FPMcertify.com/products](https://fpmcertify.com/products) can help with this.

Q: In your experience, what are the chances of getting audited?

A: From the hundreds of PMP applications I have helped with, I find that about 10% of well-qualified applications get selected for audit, but applications that contain wording that raises “red flags” in the preliminary review get looked at much more closely and audited at a much higher rate.

Q: What are some things that can cause a PMP application to have problems?

There are lots of very subtle things in a PMP application that can cause the PMI reviewer to arbitrarily decide the application doesn’t meet their requirements. PMI obviously won’t tell you what these things are, but the most common concern I see is wording that makes the PMI reviewer arbitrarily decide the project should be classified as non-qualifying “operations” rather than a qualifying professional project.

But there are lots of other things that can raise red flags such as wording or job titles that make the PMI reviewer doubt that you were the one actually directing and leading the project activities in the application.

Q: What happens if I am audited by PMI?

A: The process changed in May 2022 to be fully online using e-signatures instead of by mail. A normal audit involves uploading your education documents to my.pmi.org and having that system send a copy your project details for each project on your PMP application to someone who can verify the accuracy of your project description and details. That verifier can be a colleague, peer, client or sponsor who has intimate knowledge of the project. However, you should not use a junior person or someone without a managerial job title as the audit is entirely subjective and the reviewers will give any number of vague reasons why you failed an audit, when the real reason was that they didn’t believe your verifiers were credible. PMI may also do more in-depth audits if there are concerns raised during the normal audit.

In a normal audit, you will use my.pmi.org to send a Docusign form to each of your project verifiers to collect their e-signature. The form contains the information you put into that project on your application including the project title, description, contact information, your role, etc. In other words, a verifier only verifies the part of your application that relates to their project (not your other experience or qualifications). Your verifier needs to click on an email link sent by the my.pmi.org system, reads your project description and other details and answers whether they agree that the information is correct, and adds their phone number, job title, organization, and digitally signs the form. If they do not agree that the information is accurate, they also have a space in the form to explain why. You then have to keep logging back into my.pmi.org to check whether the forms have been signed (tip: ask your verifiers to notify when they have completed it). Once your forms have all been signed and you upload your high

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school/university diploma or transcript and proof of your completion of a 35-hour project management course, you then click a button on my.pmi.org to submit the audit package to PMI for review. See Page 3 of this FAQ for wording advice about contacting your project verifiers **before** you enter their information into my.pmi.org.

Q: How do I know if my verifiers would agree to what I put in my application about their project?

A: Send them an email beforehand with a “heads up” containing what you put in your application. Explain to them that it is for your PMP application and will only be seen by PMI and ask them if they would agree with what you are claiming in the case that PMI follows up (audits) your application. See page 3 for an example.

Q: How should I choose who to put for the project verifier? Does it affect whether I'll be approved?

A: Choose someone you were accountable to on the project. Avoid using a co-worker or junior person because that increases the risk that the auditor will arbitrarily decide that they don't find your application or verifier credible (they won't tell you that but instead use some other vague reasons why your application was rejected). Normally use the most senior person involved in your project who would be able to agree that your application is accurate. During the 5 days or so that a PMI reviewer may spend vetting your application, they may do a few LinkedIn or Internet searches on your project contacts to try to understand who it is that is vouching for you for your project. Sometimes red flags are raised if your project contact is not someone who had a significant management role in the project (i.e., don't provide a line supervisor, friend, or project coordinator as a contact). Although it can be tempting to use the people who we are on the friendliest terms with, sometimes using a contact with a more impressive and senior role can help avoid the suspicion that a candidate does not have sufficient experience leading and directing project activities. So yes, having credible contacts with impressive job titles likely helps avoid further scrutiny of your application.

When PMI is concerned that an applicant's experience might not qualify because it is too focused on "operations" rather than "leading and directing project management activities", their decision to approve an application is *very subjective*. If a project contact has an impressive profile on the web/LinkedIn, a reviewer is more likely to assume that the project experience meets the PMP requirements because an impressive project contact is vouching for the experience. In contrast, if your project contact has a less-impressive-looking profile/job title, a reviewer may assume that you are just using a peer/friend/co-worker who will agree to whatever you wrote because they like you, regardless of whether the claims are accurate or not. You need to consider how your application will be judged by the PMI reviewer who has concerns over whether what you have done meets the requirements of leading and directing project activities in each of the required PMBOK process areas.

Q: Can you send me a sample audit form or other documents from past audits?

A: As part of my agreement with PMI, plus privacy considerations, I am not allowed to share that.

Q: What if a project verifier does not respond?

A: You can change the verifier on my.pmi.org and only the new verifier will be able to respond. The previous verifier will be notified that your request to have them verify your application was withdrawn.

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Q: What if a project verifier responds in the Docusign system that they don't agree with what I wrote on my PMP application?

Your PMP application will usually be rejected when that happens. Depending on the reasons given by your project verifier, PMI might allow you to substitute a different verifier, revise what you wrote and get the revised one verified, substitute a different project and organization, invite you to reapply, or ban you from reapplying (though likely only in proven cases of fraud). To avoid this, it is ideal where possible to email something like I what I will paste below and ensure your contact is willing to agree with what you wrote in your application. Most of us in project management want to support each other's careers and are happy to verify the claimed experience, especially if you remind them it is for a one-time application and not something that will be posted online. You may need to explain to your contact the meaning of some of the terminology in your application like why you put your *role* as "project manager", when you might not have been THE office project manager for a project (see the example email later in this FAQ).

Q: What should I send to my contacts before I submit my application?

A: Here is a sample "heads-up" email that I have written to send to potential project verifiers in case you are selected for audit. Since it and the rest of this document is copyrighted, you need to rephrase it in your own words:

"Hey XXXXX,

I wanted to get back in touch with you to let you know I am applying for the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification from PMI.org. If my application is audited, would you be willing to verify the accuracy of the project information from my PMP application that I have attached?

The projects that I worked with you on that I would like to use you as a verifier are called XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX and YYYYYYYYYYYYYY in the attached document.

I'll only share your name and email address with PMI if I am selected for audit and if so, it just takes a minute to click on a link in a docusign.net email that would be sent and enter your contact information and whether or not you agree with what I put below. You don't need to create an account or anything and PMI would likely not contact you to follow up if you agree with my PMP application.

Note that the information I have on my PMP application in the attached is only for purposes of the application for the PMP certification (which is very fussy about wording). I do not use that wording in job applications or interviews. For example, on the PMP application, I might have my job title showing "Project Manager" but this is because PMI defines a project manager as someone who leads and directs some of the project activities. I am not claiming that that was my official job title or that I was THE official project manager for the project. If you have any questions or concerns about the attached project description(s), just let me know.

Thanks, Tim McLaren

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Q: My application was randomly selected for audit. Any advice for me?

A: The biggest risk is that your project contact doesn't respond, or worse, tells PMI they disagree with your described project experience. This can be avoided by asking your project contact beforehand to review what you have written about their project and **making sure your application is written accurately but using the PMBOK wording that PMI will be looking for**. If you are audited, you can help speed up your things by reminding your project contacts to send their completed forms to you in a sealed and signed envelope. And you should send everything together to PMI in one envelope.

Q: What should I do to make sure I pass the PMP application audit?

A: Re-read each of the answers above. And try to avoid getting "randomly" selected for an audit in the first place. Make sure you have a well-written application that avoids anything that raises concerns with PMI.

Keep in mind that PMI reviewers review hundreds of applications and are usually just following a script looking for various things that raise "red flags" with the application. Use the tools at FPMcertify.com/products to help you generate a successful application. If you use my FastPM Wizard or FastPM Concierge, you won't need to spend further time learning about the PMP application process. And you won't need to worry about all the little things that can cause problems getting your PMP application approved.

For more information or to learn about our FastPM Application Wizard and our money-back guarantee, go to FPMcertify.com .

Hope this is helpful!

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