

# Using Project and Program Management Groups on LinkedIn

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We plan our articles a year or so in advance and research our topics to ensure that they will be of interest to our readership (we hope this one will be of interest to you). In conducting the research for this particular article about 12 months ago, we saw that there were over 700 Program Management and 1,200 Project Management subject groups on LinkedIn. Recently, we revisited this research and found it had grown to over 2,000 Program Management and nearly 3,600 Project Management subject groups on LinkedIn, a 3-fold increase in the number of groups in just 12 months. In the same timeframe, membership of LinkedIn has expanded, but to a lesser degree, so the interest in and/or the demographic of program/project management with members must be increasing at a faster rate than general membership in LinkedIn. Why, then, has the proportion of groups focused on Project and/or Program management, outpaced general membership?

To understand this, let's first discuss LinkedIn ([www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com)). Unlike Facebook, it is a business networking tool rather than a social networking tool. It helps professionals to keep in touch with current and past contacts and make new professional connections. Many recruiters and employers use LinkedIn nowadays to find viable job candidates, and employers often post job advertisements as well. What are the basics of running and using LinkedIn groups? A beneficial feature of LinkedIn is that any member can create a group, tailored to a particular subject interest. Each group can have categories for discussions and comments, job postings, member information, and other attributes that provide a medium for information exchange in the subject area, all free of charge. As of mid-2011, there were 957,000 groups and sub-groups registered on LinkedIn. Members can join or be invited to discussion groups and comments can be shared within the group with the intention of providing information beneficial to all the members. The largest group has over 440,000 members. Each group can have branches of up to 20 'special interest' sub-groups, and individuals can join up to 50 groups and 50 subgroups. Some groups have restricted membership with members having to meet certain criteria, while others are 'open membership', meaning anyone can join. As many of you know, Jeff is founder of the 'PgMP Credentialed Networking Group' which now has over 3,100 members and twelve related sub-groups that exist primarily to support the PMI's PgMP (Program Management Professional) applicants.

Are some PM organisations particularly active in LinkedIn? We believe that the answer is 'Yes'. For example, in performing some LinkedIn searches we found the following results. Note: We are not trying to advertise or emphasize one group or interest over another but attempting to provide an overview of what is available on LinkedIn for the program and project professional. Keep in mind that there is an overlap with some groups, but this will provide some perspective.

Search	Project Management	Program Management	Portfolio Management
Total # of groups	3,604	2,040	485
PMI subject	841	30	20
PMI Chapters	188	9	2
Agile Specific	75	11	5
PRINCE2 groups	209	14	10
IPMA groups	79	2	1
PMO	80	31	30
Six Sigma	33	5	3
ITIL	35	4	3
PM careers	40	11	7

PM Jobs	135	43	14
Membership	PMI Central has 26,000	PM Link has 84,000	PM Link has 84,000

Note: PgMP Credentialed Networking Group comes in a respectable 18<sup>th</sup> with 3200+ members in the Program Management category

A 'passive feature' of LinkedIn group membership is an email sent periodically to members, announcing new discussions and/or jobs posted. We are often asked for tips on networking by program and project managers, and we advise them to join and be an active participant in as many LinkedIn groups and subgroups as possible – but to make sure they are relevant to you. This ensures you can receive information from members of the groups and, in turn, they get visibility to you. Many vendors and trainers offer discounts for their products and services through LinkedIn groups. We are also aware of several 'success stories' of people finding jobs, obtaining a new credential, or making good business connections who owe at least part of their success to their group membership.

Now that we have hopefully informed and motivated you about LinkedIn PM groups, and you're planning to search and join various groups, let us give you some precautions, pre-work, and tips. Before you put yourself 'out there', ensure your own LinkedIn profile is current. In other words, it should read like your resume, with your professional information (positions, educational experience, etc) all accurately listed. Make sure that you have a professional profile photo and basic contact information. Remember, people will only know you through what you post on your profile, so if it's not current and proportional in relation to your life and career accomplishments, take the time to update it.

As we mentioned earlier, you will be limited to the number of groups you can join (50). Therefore, you should be sure to check out the group description and 'mission' before joining (of course, you can leave groups if you choose). On the 'join group' page, you can see all members to whom you are connected so you can (if you choose), check with them as to the quality and benefits of joining the group. The group owner and group manager (which can be the same person or two different people) are also shown for each group, and you can contact them for specifics. Remember, some groups have limited access so check before applying as you may be declined membership in certain ones. Lastly, keep in mind that you can't join a sub-group without first becoming a member of the main group. You can also increase your LinkedIn connections by contacting others within the group.

In conclusion, there are over 5,600 program and project management subject groups on LinkedIn. All career-minded PM's should first ensure that their LinkedIn profile is commensurate with their professional experience and education, then seek out, join and actively participate in appropriate PM subject groups. The benefits to you will be receiving new information and making new professional contacts. You should choose your groups with care; ensure you follow any guidelines your employer may have. LinkedIn allows anyone to join 50 groups and 50 sub-groups so there are plenty from which to choose.