

Mega Bootcamps – Reaching Higher

Introduction

In today's dynamic world, there are tremendous pressures to grow for both individuals and organizations. For individuals, the growth can be new skills, improved capabilities, and attaining new credentials through certifications or formal education. For organizations, the concerns are improving planning and execution – how to do more with less. Thus, whether you (as an individual) are looking to develop new skills for self-improvement or preparing for new credentials or you (as an organization) are looking for opportunities to train your teams with new skills and improving communication and cohesiveness, being a part of that optimum forum is paramount.

In the last two decades, I have attended many forums both as an individual and as a project executive seeking this perfect forum. This article summarizes the four forums along with their advantages and disadvantages:

- PMI Global / EMEA Congress
- PMI PMO Symposium
- PMI Mega SeminarWorld
- PMO Advisory Mega Bootcamps

In Pursuit of a Perfect Forum

What is a perfect forum for learning? Depending on the topic of training, for project management, there are two primary considerations: environment and training quality.

I. Environment

The environment establishes the overall appropriateness for learning, and there are two important considerations - Physical and Social:

- A physical environment conducive for learning is vital. For example, a noisy environment can be distractive but a comfortable, spacious, and relatively quiet environment puts people at ease. More importantly, the physical environment should also address the basic necessities such as meals, snacks, drinks, and bathrooms. Common equipment such as writing pads, pens, markers, flip charts, and other relevant technologies should be readily available. By making sure this essential “stuff” is taken care of, the participants can focus on learning.
- A social environment composed of people with similar interests – for example, a professional conference with a critical mass of like-minded people. It is much better than an airport business lounge with people of various interests. The right social context can also promote networking, an added bonus for most people.

II. Quality of Training

Quality of training can be viewed from three perspectives: Quality of Trainer, Content and Participants

- The quality of the trainer is perhaps the most important component of ensuring an optimal training forum. In project management, the quality of the trainers is reflected in their credentials and certifications, work and life experiences, and their interpersonal ability to connect, communicate and teach. Ideal trainers are authorities in their field who can tailor the content in real time and adjust to the needs of the participants.
- The quality of the content is also very important, especially in certain specialized and technical areas such as project management. The medium of the materials, whether they are paper based or electronic, needs to be appropriate for the training forum. In certification training, having large test banks for participants to practice can be indispensable.
- The quality of the participants is another critical component of the overall learning. Based on my personal experience, I often learn as much from the other participants as the trainer, especially in small group training. Having participants with similar backgrounds and experiences can affect the pace of learning, quality of discussion, and the ability to empathize with each other's challenges.

A perfect forum exists when both the environment and training quality are optimally assembled.

Advantages & Disadvantages

With nearly twenty-five years of experience in project management, in various roles from a worker bee to leading very large PMOs, I am often placed in the role of being the "PM Educator in Chief". Every year for the past two decades, I have attended numerous training classes and professional conferences but have also hired trainers with customized curriculums for organizations. Many are good, but not great and did not make the threshold for consideration here.

Below is a comparison of four forums. For transparency, I (the author) am the CEO of PMO Advisory responsible for creating the last of the four forums. In this article, my intention is to be as objective as possible and critically analyze all these forums.

#	Name	Advantages	Disadvantage
1	PMI Global Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent environment setting – usually in large cities (Rome and Chicago in 2017) with quality presenters, content, and attendees• Wonderful forum for project professionals networking and learning about the latest trends• Large variety of topics providing a broad scope of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be overwhelming – too much of everything – sessions, content, people• Session size can be huge – over 100 people• Difficult for in-depth learning• Cost can be high for individuals, especially when factoring traveling from afar

#	Name	Advantages	Disadvantage
2	PMI PMO Symposium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to PMI Global Congress • This conference is designed for more senior project professionals and executives. The networking environment is much stronger than PMI Global Congress • I found the PMO Symposium to have higher adherence to the conference theme, which can boost learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited vendors – which can be positive but in my view, vendors also showcase their products which often reflects the latest trends • Session size is also large (but somewhat smaller than PMI Global Congress), making in-depth learning difficult • Cost can be very high for individuals, especially when distant traveling is required
3	PMI Seminar-World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to PMI PMO Symposium in the overall environment but each class is smaller (My experience was about 25 people) • In-depth topics, typically 2 to 4 days • Very interesting courses, especially some advanced topics • Excellent networking opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major disadvantage perhaps when combined with the conference, it's often an entire week (sometimes more for people attending the PMI LIM meeting)
4	PMO Advisory Mega Bootcamps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to PMI SeminarWorld but focused on certification bootcamps - e.g. in 2017 the focus is Portfolio (PfMP), Program (PgMP), and Risk (PMI-RMP) • Deep immersion for learning • Excellent forum for company team training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resort fee extra, but heavily subsidized, much less expensive than resort/hotels fees as compared with major cities

For a more detailed version of this article, including a discussion on the Mega Bootcamps, please visit: www.pmoadvisory.com/blog/mega-bootcamps.