Thank You Mr. Fichtner and the PMP Prep Cast! I have to say this was a long road with multiple obstacles, failures, and difficulties that seemed unsurmountable but thank to the Prep Cast I was able to pass the PMP Exam! To give you a little background before I detail what I did to pass; I am an US Army Infantry Officer with prior service currently at 20yrs active service in the military. I am serving as a company commander at the Army's premiere light infantry Task Force and have been in command for 17 months to the date (who's counting?) I have attempted the PMP once while in command and failed but passed this time around with above target in all PGAs!

My initial failure was due to the following reasons:

- Lack of planning
- Lack of risk mitigation (especially when it came to my own triple constraints being in the armed forces!)
- Not understanding the full scope of what I endeavored to achieve and what it would take to achieve it
- Mindset
    - Allowing too many distractions
    - Not controlling my emotions and insecurities
    - Allowing others to affect me
    - Allowing me to affect me
    - The arrogance of thinking that I can control my life while on this endeavor instead of planning for the worst-case scenario and mitigating or accepting it and moving on!
- Feasibility
    - I was 6 months into command prior to the 1st attempt and prior to that I returned from a 6-month deployment from Afghanistan with no break in between and wondered why my mind was so cloudy 😉
    - Study Materials! Sure, I had the PMBOK 6th edition and took some other online classes (I will not name due to possible lawsuits), but it did not help me understand how to apply and translate the project management skills that I have gained in the military! I mean I have been in a leader position for 19 out of the 20 years I been in; been on multiple mission sets, worked in many teams, and commanded up to 3 company's worth of Soldiers at one given time. Initiating, planning, executing, M&C (our bread and butter), and Closing (NO Comment 😊) was part of my everyday life from sun up to sun up. Surely, I can pass the PMP with no issue, right? (Obviously not!)
    - Rushed the process instead of truly taking it in (more on that below)
    - I DID NOT HAVE AN EXAM SIMULATOR! I failed with 1 AT, 1T, 2BT, and 1NI, in that order. ☹

I learned a lot from the 1st Attempt and knew that in order for me to pass the PMP Exam I would have to engulf myself in it, take the exam when I was "ready" and feasible. The following is what I did immediately after my initial failure and eventual triumph:

- Accepted it. I accepted my failure and resigned myself to do it again. I reexamined my thoughts, habits and source materials and conducted my phase closure procedures to further refine the scope.

- I researched every lesson learned I could find and eventually landed across the PM Prep Cast.
- Prepared the project charter using some of the previous OPA templates and tailoring it for this endeavor and had my BA (i.e. my wife) proof it before approval. I had a target date in mind but also built multiple buffers for the military life that I can't control with an ultimate completion date prior to my reexamination deadline of 4 Nov 19. I even built in an additional testing day if this didn't pan out (Luckily it did 😊)
- When I was sure that the PM Prep Cast was going to be my primary source for exam prep, I devised a plan to how I was going to study, at what intervals, analyzed my own way of learning (which is visual, and auditory), to include if I was a conceptual learner, rote, or a mixture of both and when my mind worked the best.
- It took an additional 10 months with a stupid amount of training missions, Soldier issues (if you've ever been a commander you know what I mean!) and additional task that continued to pop up as a requirement (scope creep anyone?) but I finally had the opportunity to pass the PMP exam with above target in all categories!
- These are the things I learned throughout this that truly made the difference:
  - Vocabulary is everything! I didn't know what I didn't know until I hit the exam the first time and through that retrospective, I tightened up my shot group.
  - The PM Prep cast truly shined a beacon on my understanding of the processes and conceptualizing the why behind the process that made sense
  - I was able to apply that knowledge to my own job becoming completely immersed in it (you really don't know how bad the processes are in your own work structure until you start applying it!) Not only did it improve my processes, but I found new efficiencies that I didn't know was there to exploit!
  - I built flexibility into my schedule that allowed me to take into account lead and lag times due to mission sets, and time frames for when I could feasibly compress my studying (for instance taking this military 4-day to complete the last of my simulations and studying prior to the exam.)
  - Last, but not least utilizing the PM exam simulator to finally ingrain the knowledge I have gained. I realized through my studies that my mind favors long term memory versus short term gain which might have attributed to failing the first attempt. The other is frame of mind. The PM ES does not have any question that is on the actual exam, but it puts you in to the right frame of mind to be able to answer the questions on the exam. I repeat, **the PM ES does not have any question that is on the actual exam, but it puts you in to the right frame of mind to be able to answer the questions on the exam.**

This has been one hell of a ride and its only just the beginning! I will be transitioning from the military in a year and a half and will be cultivating all the knowledge I've gained preparing to be a project manager on the civilian side. The PM Prep Cast is an invaluable source! I am better now for it and will continue to strive for improvement in this profession. Once again thank you Mr. Fichtner and the crew at PM Prep Cast guiding me along the journey and know that because of you the best is yet to come!

Very Respectfully,

Angel M. Gutierrez, PMP!