



LeaderQUEST

Educate. Innovate. Lead

Helping to Get and Keep Jobs Through Certification



Certification is Key to developing and validating the skills IT professionals need to maximize their value to organizations

Individuals drive certification decisions 70-80 percent of the time

The current economic climate is having a substantial impact on how organizations view their IT investments. While cost cutting is one way of addressing budgetary issues, companies that are successfully navigating the economy are more interested in leveraging the maximum efficiency from their existing assets, with IT as one of the most powerful tools to achieve those goals. LeaderQuest is assisting individuals gain these in demand skills so companies can reach these goals.

IDC reports that companies are initiating IT projects to improve operational efficiencies. According to its 2007 Performance Impact Study, team skill is the biggest determinant of project success. Projects that met most or all of their objectives had twice the amount of trained professionals as those projects that achieved only partial success. IDC's study revealed that IT teams with more than 50 percent of the team holding relevant certifications show 15-17 percent improvement in capabilities.¹

These findings place a high value on IT skills, and yet there continues to be a serious IT skills shortage. According to a Gartner study,² 40 percent of operational downtime is due to operator error—attributable to a significant lack of training on core systems. At the same time, number of

Certification demonstrates motivation

"We hire and give more promotions to the people that are certified—we give them larger raises, too. But remember, those are also the people that are demonstrating dedication, professionalism, drive and desire to succeed."

– Keith Terry, IT manager, Seattle

¹ Cushing Anderson, "Worldwide and U.S. IT Certification Training and Testing, 2008-2012 Forecast," IDC, August 2008, IDC #213828, Volume: 1

² Gartner Security Conference presentation: Operation Zero Downtime, D. Scott, May 2002

undergraduate computer science majors fell by 40 percent between 2000 and 2004, and there has been a 70 percent decline in interest in pursuing the major.³ IDC estimates the gap between the demand for and supply of IT professionals with the right technical skills in the next five to ten years will be 40 percent.⁴

This means there's a significant opportunity for individuals to get certified, especially during the economic downturn—and the decision to pursue certification is being driven by individual IT professionals, not organizations. Seventy-eighty percent of people attending IT training classes say they, not their managers, made the decision to attend, 85 percent chose their own coursework based on their career path, and 87 percent pay for their own training.⁵

Of all the IT professionals who take training at a CPLS (Certified Partner Learning Solutions) like LeaderQuest, 20 percent are there specifically for certification⁶ and Microsoft anticipates that level to climb over the next several months.

IDC anticipates that the shortage of IT skills will accelerate corporate training initiatives, providing training organizations more opportunities as long as they link training with a successful return on investment.⁷

Certification provides differentiation
"Teams that commit themselves to achieving rigorous, validated certifications significantly outperform IT teams without certification. Teams that I have studied certified by Microsoft meet similar performance benchmarks."

– Cushing Anderson,
IDC Vice President,
IT Education and Certification research

³ The Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California

⁴ "Certification at the Entry Level" by Matt Walker, Certification Magazine, July 2008

⁵ "Professionals Maintaining Currency and Relevancy," CompTIA Survey, May 2007

⁶ Metrics That Matter

⁷ Cushing Anderson, "Worldwide and U.S. IT Certification Training and Testing, 2008-2012 Forecast, Forecast Update: Picture is Clearer and Bleak." IDC, November 2008, IDC #214700, Volume: 1

For individuals that want to significantly differentiate themselves from their peers, developing and validating their skills through certification has never been more important.

For IT professionals, Microsoft training and certification ranks second as a satisfaction driver (after eLearning).⁸

Individuals who are certified earn on average two-and-a-half certifications per year.

Individuals, both with and without IT job experience need to understand the value certification can bring to their careers.

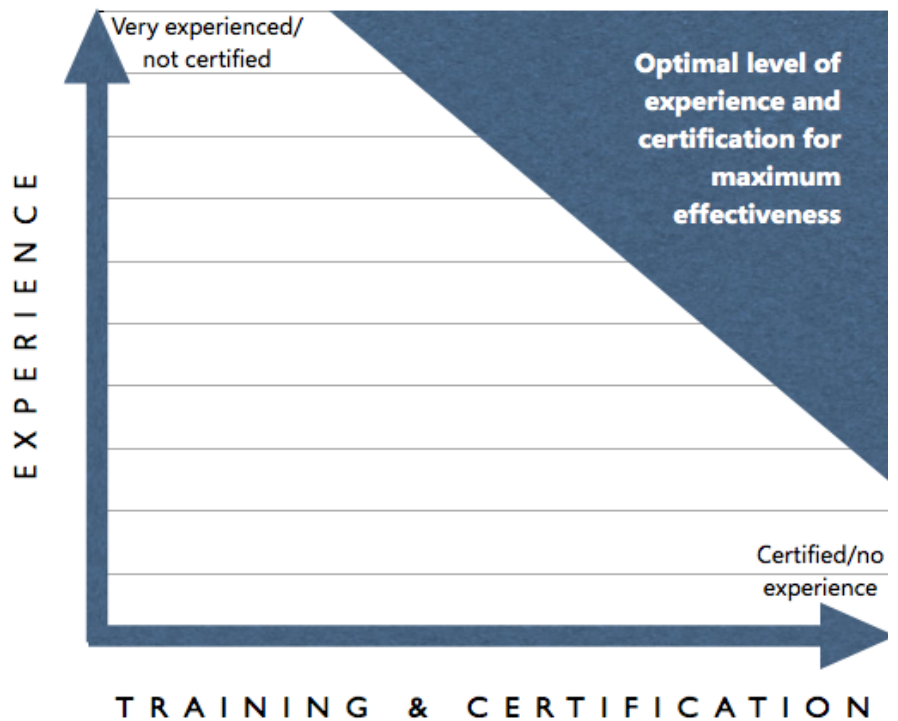
Experience versus certification

Which is better: knowledge or experience? Today, IT professionals need an optimal balance of both.

Experienced professionals tend to be highly proficient at the skills they use every day, but don't necessarily have the broader perspective certification provides to deal with new or unusual situations.

People who are certified, but have little or no experience, have the knowledge to understand a wide range of situations, but lack the proficiency to execute efficiently. And while new performance-based testing gets them part of the way, it's no substitute for experience.

IT organizations need professionals who have the right balance of agility that certification provides and experience to accomplish the job quickly and efficiently.



⁸ Metrics That Matter

The value of certification

1. **Relevance** – Microsoft certification reflects and validates real-world skills and job-related experiences used every day, aiding in practical technology problem-solving and improving the professional performance.

2. **Journey** – Microsoft certification adds value across all stages of an individual's career path, so it is valuable for job seekers, new and advanced skill building, and upward career growth.

3. **Community** – Earning Microsoft certification provides access to valuable, exclusive Microsoft resources and benefits, and opportunities to connect with a wide network of certified professionals.

Certification helps get and keep jobs
"I graduated in summer of 2003 with a degree in Business Administration and majors in Management Information Systems and Electronic Commerce. Because this was during the .com bust, I was not able to get an interview for any IT position. After two years of no interviews, I decided to attend a technical school, which was teaching MCSE classes. After I received my MCSE I was able to land the first job I interviewed for and have been working in IT consistently ever since."

– Pat Birkeland, Infrastructure Specialist, Avanade Inc.

Fifty-five percent of hiring managers consider employee certification as a criterion for hiring, while 46 percent consider certification a criterion for promotion. Forty percent of individuals reported that Microsoft certification was a factor in improving their ability to find or keep a job, or led to a promotion, and 43 percent reported salary increases as a result of Microsoft certification.

Four key messages about training and certification for individuals



Certification improves employability

IT hiring managers know certified professionals help their organizations.

A study⁹ conducted by IDC looked at the organizational performance of 5,540 IT teams and found that 65 percent of managers believe that certification improves the level of service and support offered to IT end users, and that the top performing IT teams have on average between 40 and 55 percent certified Microsoft members trained on relevant technologies and processes. They also found that team performance rises every time a team member earns certification, so there's a direct and positive impact on organizational performance as a result of certification.

IT managers are also concerned with the "knowledge leak" that occurs due to staff turnover, promotions, and changing technologies.¹⁰ Certification ensures that organizations retain the skills they need.

Key Entry-Level Certifications

MCTS

Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist certifications develop in-depth knowledge and expertise in specific technologies.

- Server 2003
- Active Directory 2008
- Client

MCITP

Microsoft Certified Information Technology Professional certification develops skills to successfully troubleshoot desktop environments that run on the Windows operating system.

- Windows 7
- Enterprise Support
- Help Desk

⁹ "Impact of Training: Functional Excellence Leads to Operational Productivity," IDC, Doc# 215762, Dec. 2008.

¹⁰ Cushing Anderson, "Worldwide and U.S. IT Certification Training and Testing, 2008-2012 Forecast," IDC, August 2008, IDC #213828, Volume: 1

For individuals who are looking for their first IT jobs, there are a number of key entry-level Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) certifications that will improve their employability (see sidebar on page 6).

Seasoned professionals are looking for ways to make themselves more valuable to their organization so they can keep their job or earn a promotion. The focus for IT professionals could be MCTS certifications to develop skills on new technologies or Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) and Microsoft Certified Professional Developer (MCPD) to take their skills to new levels.

No matter where a person is on his or her career path, certification makes them as relevant to their organization as possible by developing and validating new skills.



Certification differentiates you from the crowd

Certified individuals are more valuable team members. Certified professionals can troubleshoot better, are more effective and more productive. In the IDC study, overall individuals with certification were more valuable to the organization. "Tests of general ability and certifications are strongly correlated to divergent thinking abilities, suggesting that individuals who achieve success with these measures cope better with changing work roles and are more adaptive and innovative."¹¹

In a 2006 customer satisfaction survey conducted for Microsoft, 63 percent of hiring managers felt certified professionals were more productive than their non-certified peers. And a 2007 survey¹² reported that 38 percent of MCPs surveyed (up from 32 percent a year earlier) felt their ability to be more productive on the job was directly attributable to certification.

Certified professionals stand to gain higher pay as well as being viewed as more productive and valuable. According to *Redmond Magazine's* 2006 survey of compensation for Microsoft IT

¹¹ Cushing Anderson, "Preventing Bad Hires: The Value of Objective Prehire Assessment," IDC, January 2007

¹² Microsoft Learning (2007). Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) customer satisfaction study (2007 ed.). Redmond, WA: Various.

professionals, 43 percent of respondents reported a salary increase as a result of Microsoft certification.

Differentiation means more today than simply being better than the person working in the same department. As companies have been outsourcing more development overseas, there has been an increasing emphasis in those countries, especially India, on employee certifications as a means for building confidence with clients and proving their expertise.¹³ So as competition for work has become global, certification as a differentiator takes on a broader aspect.



Certification makes you part of a larger community

Microsoft Certified Professionals form a unique community with Microsoft as its hub.

The most significant benefit of membership in the community is the access to a group of like-minded professionals who can act as resources to each other and provide support on a professional level. Through direct communication with individuals in the community, people can raise issues with the program, communicate new ideas to Microsoft, and work together to increase the satisfaction of the structure and content of Microsoft certification.

Certified professionals have access to variety of unique resources, like professional tools and opportunities (e.g. resume posting, job search), professional networking through MCP-specific groups and tools (FaceBook, LinkedIn, etc.), special recognition at Microsoft events and eligibility for “ambassador” status (representing Microsoft at local events and user groups), and early access to upcoming Microsoft Press titles through book review club.

¹³ Cushing Anderson, “Worldwide and U.S. IT Certification Training and Testing, 2008-2012 Forecast,” IDC, August 2008, IDC #213828, Volume: 1

Another benefit of the community is in the development of the certification itself. The role of the community in certification is not well known in some areas—many don't realize that if you are Microsoft Certified you can also participate in the process of building new certifications. Microsoft continually reaches out to its MCP community for help in creating new certifications. MCPs can also partner with Microsoft professionals and other technical experts in beta exams.

A close affiliation with Microsoft and access to the professional community that surrounds it is the sense of community that is important to certified professionals.



Certification = training

Certification is the validation of a rigorous training program, which IT professionals prefer to receive from a CPLS like LeaderQuest.

In a customer branding survey of 550 IT professionals in ten countries,¹⁴ when asked if it were important that a training company be a CPLS, 76 percent of the respondents said it was important.



An offer you can't refuse

If you don't pass the certification exam, you can go audit any training class again at no extra charge.

Certified individuals have access to exclusive resources

"I like the exclusive resources for certified professionals. You've proven that you understand the concept, so Microsoft can give you more resources that you're qualified to use. If you weren't certified, you might not be able to properly use them."

– Brent Black, IT manager, Seattle

¹⁴ Market Decisions Corporation, May 2007