



**MCSE Cisco Linux A+ CIW CNE**

**Try Our IT Courses...FREE!**

Try our IT Certification Courses FREE! **SmartCertify Direct** gives you classroom-quality IT training at a fraction of the cost of traditional courses. You'll get 24-hour online mentoring from certified IT pros, hands-on interactive exercises, the popular Test Prep Exams, industry approved content and more! Our personalized courses are so powerful that you'll get certified GUARANTEED. Choose from MCSE, Cisco, A+, CIW, Linux and many more.

[Click here to try our courses FREE and register to WIN a Dell PC worth \\$2,400!](#)

For information on how to advertise in this newsletter please [contact our Ad Sales team](#) or visit our [advertising page](#).



## Value of IT Certification in Eye of Beholder

Sometimes asking an IT professional about certification feels like poking a stick in a beehive. A point-counterpoint article from a back issue of CIO Magazine yielded sentiments such as (paraphrased):

- \* A certification says, "at least I'm no stupider than this".
- \* It's an industry unto itself, trying to manufacture value to businesses where there is none.
- \* It says zero about what the person can do.

And in a more positive light:

- \* It shows motivation and initiative, especially for a consultant.
- \* It shows an employer you have basic knowledge and can learn.
- \* It's a guide to a more thorough grasp of the technology.

It's safe to say IT professionals do not speak with one voice on the subject. But while asking IT professionals can reveal limitations of assessments and certifications from the point of view of the technical expert, other players have other valid needs and perspectives on these tools as well.

For example, what is your point of view if your job is to find people to do the jobs brought about by rapid expansion of your company? How about if you're running a company in a very competitive environment, where costs are a concern? What if you are hiring an IT company to create an application for your business and want some assurance about the quality of their work? And what if you are new to IT, out of school or changing

careers? Each of these points of view provides a perspective on certification different from a purely technical point of view. Let's take them one at a time.

If your job is staffing, you don't need an IT pro to tell you the difference between paper qualifications and performance. You both have experienced that reality enough to know the value of experience. But you also know that sometimes experienced people can't do the job either. And a targeted certification from a reputable source combined with experience is worth something.

While most certifications don't predict how new hires will perform on the job, at least you'll be less likely to find them squirreled away in a corner with a guidebook cramming for the day's programming. Not that there's anything wrong with that. Then again, you wouldn't want to see your doctor doing that with a guidebook to the new colonoscopy procedure he's going to try on you. The point is there is value to certification when combined with experience.

If you are running a company or department and need someone to take care of IT functions, what is your point of view? What if you can't afford the IT talent you really need? What if you know the person you get will have to be on a learning curve as steep as the growth curve you hope for the business? You might look for someone who is sharp and flexible and learns fast enough to keep up. What if you managed to find two people like that, but one had a certification in C++? Would that mean anything to you?

Or what if you have a number of IT professionals and a limited number of technical slots for promotions? Would you promote into the slot based on past performance and allow the person to acquire the skills needed for the job? Would you use an assessment and certification or some readiness indicator as a condition for promotion to the new slot? If you didn't use an assessment, the promotion would have to be based on some objective performance measure in case of a legal challenge.

If you were hiring a company to create an application for your business, would you be concerned about the quality of their work and the qualifications of their employees? You may have been burned before by unmet promises. So would you look at the vendor's ISO certification, CMM or project management certifications or employee certifications for at least some assurance of quality? Increasingly, while it is no guarantee of competency, documented expertise is being written into contracting agreements as an indication of baseline proficiency.

And if you are not already working in IT? What if you are on the outside looking in? What if you are just coming out of military service and want a career path with lots of growth potential? You might look at a certification as a fundamental way of learning about the field you want to enter. It also documents the seriousness of your pursuit.

In a rapidly evolving IT world, certification may be a way for employees to build value for their companies and for themselves. And while experience is a great teacher, expertise on proprietary company systems and applications may not be portable in the labor market. Certifications

by an independent agent are.

When looking for assessments and certifications, be aware that objective standards have yet to be developed. Traditionally, companies such as Microsoft created assessments for their products for a number of reasons, not the least of which was to save on customer service dollars. Neither their certifications nor non-vendor-sponsored certifications offer a guarantee of performance capability.

**John Petrimoulx**

**Free Cramsession IT Newsletters - Choose Your Topics!**

H = HTML Format    T = Text Format

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> A+ Weekly         | <input type="checkbox"/> Exam Tips 'N Tricks                       | <input type="checkbox"/> • .NET Insider                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> • ByteBack!                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Linux News                                | <input type="checkbox"/> • Script Shots                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Cisco Insider     | <input type="checkbox"/> • Must Know News                          | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Security Insider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Developers Digest | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Net Admin Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> • <input type="checkbox"/> Trainers News  |

Enter your Email

**Subscribe Now!**



Your subscribed e-mail address is: [steven.thode@toadworld.net](mailto:steven.thode@toadworld.net)  
To unsubscribe, simply [click here](#) and hit "send" in your e-mail reader.

© 2002 BrainBuzz.com, Inc. All rights reserved. [Click here for Terms and Conditions of use.](#)