

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Certification and Career Enhancement

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the definitions of professional certifications
2. Understand the value of certification in your career
3. Gain knowledge on social media's discussions on certifications

Using the five Ws and H method, the features and benefits of professional certification are used to assist decision making in pursuing professional development.

What is professional certification?

“Professional certification, trade certification, or professional designation, often called simply certification or qualification, is a designation earned by a person to assure qualification to perform a job or task. Many certifications are used as post-nominal letters indicating an earned privilege from an oversight professional body acting to safeguard the public interest.”

This definition allows us to differentiate certification from a university degree. Certification demonstrates the skills that you have developed through the workplace and study. Education, such as earning a university degree, demonstrates the knowledge that you have gained that enables the individual to utilize critical thinking, which can be used to advance a profession.

Why is there professional certification?

Certification, based on an industry's standards, enables an organization to determine the capabilities of its workforce, as an extra tool in addition to others to evaluate its workers. Certification also allows different organizations in an industry to assess workers who may desire to move between organizations.

“The growth of certification programs is also a reaction to the changing employment market. Certifications are portable, since they do not depend on one company's definition of a certain job. Certifica-

tion stands about the resume and the professional reference by being an impartial, third-party endorsement of an individual's professional knowledge and experience.”

Who creates professional certifications?

Professional associations, trade organizations, and international standard bodies, among others, create professional certifications. APICS, the Association for Operations Management, has developed Certified in Production and Inventory Management (CPIM) and Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP). The Project Management Institute has developed the Project Management Professional (PMP), among others. ISM, the Institute for Supply Management, has developed the Certified Professional in Supply Management (CPSM).

Government agencies also develop certification. The DOD created the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) for professionals in the acquisition workforce. Technology professionals have a wide array of certifications from industry and government.

When is certification of value?

Certification is of value for professionals when work experience has been accumulated. Certification normally involves a review of work experience as well as testing of knowledge gained from experience. Thus certification will generally come after experience has been gained. Certification authorities normally require recertification. Few industries stay static in this technology-driven world, thus certified professionals must demonstrate that they have maintained industry involvement and knowledge. Timing of certification renewals varies by industry. At APICs, the Certified Supply Chain Professional must be renewed every five years. So does DAWIA.

How is certification earned?

Certification is a combination of evaluation of work experience and an examination. The American National Standards

Institute (ANSI), Standard 1100, defines the requirements of meeting the ANSI standard for being a certifying organization. According to ANSI Standard 1100, a professional certifying organization must meet two requirements:

1. Deliver an assessment based on industry knowledge, independent from training courses or course providers.
2. Grant a time-limited credential to anyone who meets the assessment standards.

Are there differences between international standards and certification? ANSI is critical in development standards for organizations and industries. Its standards will apply to organizations, and certifications will apply to individuals. Knowledge and experience with standards may be components within certification. For example, ASIS, the American Society for International Security, has created ASIS SPC.1.2009, Organization Resilience Standards. This standard focuses on security, preparedness, and continuity management systems. ASIS professionals are certified through CPP, Certified Protection Professional, and other certifications. Its standard for organizational resilience is a component of the certification exam.

Technology plays an increasingly important role in certification. Professionals who aspire to be certified can study for exams on specific websites dedicated to their certification. They can take their exams in proctored computer settings. Thus, those aspiring to be certified need not be fixed to a specific location and have the freedom to live and work where their jobs may take them.

Social media sites have also become a source of information. Here are a few to get you started:

- http://www.linkedin.com/answers/browse/career-education/certification-licenses/CAR_CRT
- www.facebook.com/pages/Professional-certification/139515772734841 (for IT professionals)

Are you a trainer or educator who may seek certification in your profession? Check out the American Society for Training and Development's certifications:

- <http://search.astd.org/Search.aspx?csquery=certification>.

Good luck! DTJ