Making The Most of Certifications
Importance of training & certifications in the IT department
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 Indeed, the IT industry knows certifications. Over 40 widely-held IT certifications exist, conferred by associations, vendors and other organizations. Many certifications are a measure of one's technical proficiency in a skill area. These are often conveyed by vendors or industry organizations. Such 'certs' include Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE), Computer Technology Industry Association's A+ (CompTIA A+) and Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert (CCIE).

Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), Control Objectives for Information and related Technology (COBIT®) and Six Sigma are an indication of one's proficiency in understanding and applying processes that may improve preparation and operations. ITIL and COBIT focus on IT and Six Sigma is heralded for quality management. While there are clear differences in the items addressed by each of these certifications, they measure much more than specific skill proficiency yet are not as comprehensive a measurement of one's general management ability.

Project management certifications provide a measure of one to deliver sound management performance. Project Management Professional (PMP,) Program Management Professional (PgMP) and PRINCE2 are highly sought after project management certifications. The first two are conveyed by the Project Management Institute (PMI), Newtown Square, PA., USA and PRINCE2 is granted by The APM Group Limited, Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom. PMI has 385,096 PMP holders of their certifications worldwide; 425,000 people hold PRINCE2 certifications, 53% in the UK.

Do you need a certification?

In today's market, individuals and companies increasingly seek certifications for a competitive advantage. Experience, advanced degrees and contacts are sometimes not enough. Federal contracts may require that key personnel hold PMP certifications. When two candidates with the same qualifications become finalists for a job, the one holding a globally recognized credential may often make the cut. Holders of project management certifications also earn more. According to the recent PMI® Project Management Salary Survey, project management salaries are growing, despite the recession.

So where do you start? What's the best way to prepare to earn these coveted certifications? The applications for these certifications can be somewhat difficult, so can passing the exam. "If you have a mentor, or someone that has achieved the certification, to guide you it's always advisable to save you time, effort and costs. The additional insight that a current credential holder has, can provide you with the tools, training, avenues, to help prepare for the real exam", notes Jeff Hodgkinson, PMP, PgMP, PMI-RMP, the 99th most connected and 3rd most recommended person on LinkedIn.

Many have found value in earning professional credentials. Professionals in IT and other disciplines have realized advances in their organizations and found it well worth their while to obtain the right certification. **Go for it!**

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