Chapter 5

Maintaining Professional Certification

Key Lessons

- Sustaining Professional Associations and Professional Organizations Certification Programs
- Budgeting Time, Energy, and Money
- Balancing Family, Friends, and Recreational Interests
- Earning PDUs and CEUs
- Volunteerism
- Obtaining Lifetime Professional Certification Status
- Reviving an Expired Professional Certification
- Sunsetting a Professional Certification that Has Been Retired
- Handling a Professional Certification that Becomes Problematic
- Reinstating a Professional Certification After It Has Been Revoked
- Deciding Not to Maintain Professional Certification

Sustaining Professional Association and Professional Organization Professional Certification Programs

In 2006, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) published the *7 Measures of Success: What Remarkable Associations Do That Others Don't*. This is a great book. It presents best-in-class ideas of organizations, such as the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), which reported record growth from

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36,000 members in 1992 to over 250,000 today. How did SHRM do it? Perhaps more important, how does this organization retain members and continue to grow? The seven measures are:

1. A customer service culture: "We're here to serve you" approach.
2. Alignment of products and services with mission: Mission is central and products align.
3. Data-driven strategies: Gather, analyze, and use data to drive change.
4. Dialogue and engagement: Staff and volunteers engage on the professional association's direction and priorities.
5. Chief executive officer (CEO) as a broker of ideas: Facilitates visionary thinking throughout the association.
6. Organizational adaptability: Be willing to change and *not* to change.
7. Alliance building: Seek complimentary partners and projects.

Reportedly, only a portion of the revenue to support professional certification comes from grants or loans (i.e., from professional association headquarters). Percentagewise, only a small amount of contributions come through donations. Considering that the majority of professional associations currently absorb the cost associated with developing professional certification, they must depend on the membership to help sustain professional certification. Sustaining professional certification programs is done through membership dues and products and services to maintain the professional certification.

Due to changes in consumer demand, it has become a struggle for many professional certification programs.

According to research conducted by Knapp & Associates (2007), it is reported that nearly 40% of professional certification programs report little or no growth. However, more than 50% of those surveyed retain those individuals who have achieved the professional certification. It is interesting to note that approximately 90% of those who receive professional certification are required to engage in activities to maintain their credentials. So, part of the secret to survival appears to involve ensuring that those individuals who have achieved professional certification are retained and support continuous improvement in the professional certification program so that growth can be realized. This is especially important considering that the vast majority of professional certification programs require renewal or recertification every 3–5 years.

Professional certification is founded on the concept of goodwill, self-improvement, and other positivistic characteristics that makes it difficult to combat from an investment standpoint. Professional certification can be positioned to show tremendous value and offer flexibility, especially in those fields, such as project management, that are:

- Intradisciplinary: within a discipline

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- Interdisciplinary: between disciplines
- Transdisciplinary: across disciplines

It could be argued that professional certification protects the public and encourages compliance with regulatory authorities in addition to elevating the status of the professional associations or professional organizations. So, it makes sense why it is in their best interest to do everything possible to maintain professional certification programs. How does the professional association or professional organization encourage certificants to maintain the professional certification?

- Being invested in maturing the profession
- Through certification maintenance (CM) programs
- By instilling pride and accomplishment
- By competing for awards
- Promoting best practice
- By Benchmarking
- Through networking opportunities
- Through volunteering
- By becoming engaged in practice analysis
- By creating a philosophy of membership for life

How does the professional association or professional organization encourage the industry at large to support the professional certification?

- With market studies showing success cases
- By listing them in the job description as highly desirable
- By keeping the professional certification up to date
- By linking the professional certification to job performance
- By engaging the external agencies to become involved as sponsors
- By publishing content that adds value to the job market knowledge base
- By instilling motivation in its members to become volunteers

Budgeting Time, Energy, and Money

When a person achieves professional certification, the person has to keep in shape to maintain it. The best way to describe it is to think of it as exercise. Many certifications are established on the premise of studying a couple hours per month or 20 professional development units/continuing education units (PDUs/CEUs) per year. Some professional associations or professional organizations will schedule 2-hour chapter meetings once per month as a dinner from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. or 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. One hour may be set aside for networking and the other hour for the program. This only allows the certificant to earn 1 PDU/CEU. However,

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if the professional associations or professional organizations has two programs in one evening (i.e., the main presentation and a bonus program), then the certificant can earn 2 PDUs/CEUs. The certificant would then most likely require a 2.5-hour meeting from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. or 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. There may be 30 minutes set aside for networking and 2 hours for the programs, respectively, 1 hour each. Note that a 50- to 60-minute presentation is considered allowable for 1 PDU/CEU.

Energy is an important aspect of time investment because some certificants will be tired after work or may have other responsibilities that conflict with opportunities to earn PDUs/CEUs. professional associations or professional organizations can structure events so that certificants can attend virtually and pay a fee to attend the presentation. Attendance can be tracked by the webinar hosting vendor. An assessment can be administered for those virtual attendees to ensure they actively participated. Due to the trust system associated with participation, there should not be an overwhelming concern with a certificant who chose to attend virtually instead of in person. The rationale for allowing people to attend virtually and obtain PDUs/CEUs includes:

- Inability to drive to the location due to time constraints
- Inability for the person to attend due to health concerns or inclement weather
- Inability to attend due to lack of financial resources

Balancing Family, Friends, and Recreational Interests

There are some who, after achieving certification, may experience a new professional vacuum. This vacuum has a tendency to suck one into activities offered by the professional associations or professional organizations:

- Chapter meetings
- Special interest groups
- Meetings of the board of directors (BOD)
- Conferences
- Study group meetings
- Volunteer activities

Avoiding the temptation to become overinvolved initially is easier said than done because the new certificant is excited about the great achievement and is now with others who have pursued the same path. Some of the best relationships are made inside professional associations or professional organizations. This being said, if others now notice that the certificant has less time to spend with them, jealousy may occur. While it may seem small, it can create irritation over time. The best solution is to be open and honest and to seek agreement with those individuals, such as family, and come to an agreement about:

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- The number of chapter meetings that will be attended, when, and where
- The new relationships that will likely occur as a result of achieving the professional certification and any members of the opposite gender if that creates an issue
- The amount of travel that is associated with volunteering
- The amount of financial investment (i.e., in going to chapter dinners) and if this is reimbursed by the company
- The change in feelings or attitude as a result of participating in the professional associations or professional organizations activities

Earning PDUs and CEUs

Earning PDUs or CEUs should be an enjoyable process. If it becomes burdensome, then there may be something lacking in the process. It becomes the responsibility of professional certification solutions providers to come up with creative ways to satisfy the educational needs of those who are maintaining professional certification. They need to work closely with the professional associations or professional organizations to understand the requirements for earning education hours. For example, some professional associations or professional organizations will accept a program that is a minimum of 50 minutes in duration as 1 PDU. Other professional associations or professional organizations will institute other criteria to define what qualifies as a PDU. The following are examples:

- Serving on the BOD for a full term might equal 1 PDU per month.
- Serving as an active volunteer to support a chapter BOD might equal 1 PDU one time.
- Attending a chapter presentation of 50 minutes might equal 1 PDU per month.
- Writing a newsletter article might equal 2 PDUs one time.
- Creating a new course to be accessible to the professional association might equal 5 CEUs one time.
- Writing a book on subject matter related to the occupation might equal 10 CEUs one time.
- Delivering a webinar to those outside the industry might equal 2 PDUs one time.
- Maintaining a website for the professional associations or professional organizations might equal 2 PDUs per month.
- Attending the annual international conference might equal 10 PDUs one time.
- Winning a global award associated with best practice might equal 1 CEU one time.
- Completing a 1-year project associated with the PDU might equal 20 PDUs one time.
- Getting a promotion at work, attributable to the professional certification, might equal 1 PDU one time.

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Note: The key to justifying any activity as worthy of PDUs or CEUs is based on the quality of documentation. The system should allow for reasonable flexibility and promote education.

One of the identified gaps in earning PDUs pertains to understanding how alternate methods of training equate to PDUs or CEUs. In other words, it is generally accepted that a presentation of 50 minutes or longer should equal 1 PDU/CEU; however, the individual who is taking a self-paced course may have a dilemma on how to report education hours:

- **Reading printed material:** According to Stewart (2013), the average reading speed is 200–250 words per minute for nontechnical material (2 minutes per page). However, for technical content, the reading speed reduces to 50–75 words per minute, roughly 5–6 minutes per page. Let us suppose the certificant is reading a printed manual that is composed of a mix of 15 pages of nontechnical material (30 minutes) and 5–6 pages of technical content (30 minutes), for a total of 20–21 pages. Using his rule of thumb, these 20–21 pages would take 1 hour, which would equal 1 PDU/CEU.
- **Speaking/hearing printed material:** If the style for reviewing printed material is enhanced electronically by hearing someone else speak (audio) or if the person reads the content aloud, it is believed to take 1 minute per double-spaced page (or 2 minutes per single-spaced page) (Answers.com, 2010). This follows the same general rule as reading nontechnical material.
- **Viewing e-learning in a presentation format:** The average person will take approximately 3 minutes to review a presentation slide (i.e., PowerPoint). This is because the screens are primarily fixed unless they have audio, video, or animation (slide build components). Reviewing a 20-slide PowerPoint presentation could then represent 1 PDU/CEU. If there are hyperlinks on the PowerPoint slide to other content (i.e., web pages), then each additional page should include the time allotment for a web page or supplementary document.
- **Viewing a web page in a web browser:** The average person will take approximately 4 minutes to review a web page. It can take slightly longer to review content in a web page than a PowerPoint slide due to the horizontal and vertical scrolling and information being formatted differently on screen. However, if the information is streamlined, it can actually be quicker to view content on a web page. So, it could be debated that content on 20–25 web pages could take 1 hour to review, which might equate to 1 PDU/CEU.
- **Job aids:** The content on job aids should be considered technical content. Each page of a job aid should allow for 5–6 minutes per page (normal size 8.5 × 11 inches). Time allotments for blueprints or larger-size documents that expand up to 24 × 36 inches should be adjusted accordingly.

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- **Visuals:** Documents that include any types of charts, diagrams, illustrations, pictures, graphs, or other forms of visualization should be considered technical content, and 5–6 minutes per page (normal size 8.5 × 11 inches) should be allowed. Time allotments for blueprints or larger-size documents that expand up to 24 × 36 inches should be adjusted accordingly.
- **Listening to sound/narration:** Audio clips have time counters, and it should be easy to convert; an audio or video is equal to 1 PDU/CEU if it is a minimum of 50 minutes.

Professional certification maintenance is critical to the ongoing success of a professional certification program. If a professional associations or professional organizations is going to be successful, it has to be clear with certificants regarding what is acceptable and how to report it. Because PDUs/CEUs are based on the honor system, it becomes central to the integrity of the individual to accurately report hours earned. On one hand, we want the system to promote sound educational practices. On the other hand, we do not want certificants to question the validity of what is acceptable to maintain professional certification.

Volunteerism

Volunteering has the tendency to bring out the good in some people. If people are not overcommitted, a professional association can grow significantly through dedicated volunteers. Being connected to a professional certification by becoming a volunteer is perhaps one of the most significant factors that will encourage the retention of a professional certification. The only factor that appears to be stronger is the commitment associated with CM. There are certain personalities and approaches that work extremely well in getting people to volunteer. These are some of the techniques that engage people to volunteer:

- Maintaining visibility on a professional association website
- Creating a sign-up calendar
- Giving small gift certificates at the end of the volunteer period
- Sending e-mails to the person's supervisor at work
- Mentioning a person's name at a professional association meeting
- Asking volunteers to recruit volunteers
- Putting volunteers on a path to join the BOD
- Publishing a newsletter and mentioning volunteers
- Giving volunteers PDUs/CEUs
- Creating levels (i.e., commended volunteer and outstanding volunteer)
- Setting time limits for volunteering (i.e., 1 month, 3 months, etc.)
- Waiving (eliminating) meeting charges for volunteers
- Having a volunteer appreciation luncheon or dinner at the end of the season

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- Giving volunteers a certificate of appreciation
- Writing letters of reference for volunteers

Obtaining Lifetime Professional Certification Status

Barnhart (1997) said, "The only group capable of defining the knowledge required for a specific field may be a certifying body." Being able to obtain professional certification status for a lifetime can be valuable. It is nice to have a home paid for and a car paid for. Why not professional certification? Those applying for lifetime professional certification usually are required to meet these criteria:

- Must be in good standing up until the time of recertification
- Must have completed requirements for recertification
- Must document experience of more than 15 years of full-time professional experience (depending on the type of professional certification)
- Must complete lifetime certification application

Note: Being a member of the professional associations or professional organizations may be a plus but should not disqualify someone from lifetime membership (see definition of an illegal tying arrangement in the glossary).

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM), one of the earliest to offer professional certifications, beginning in 1915, for example offers lifetime certification. ISM states that applicants for lifetime certification should apply as soon as eligible. So, it is to the applicant's advantage not to wait because it may require additional steps and expense to realize lifetime certification status.

Conversely, according to Sears (2010), one well-known professional organization, after agreeing to lifetime membership arrangements, changed this agreement, which would have resulted in significant costs to members. Due to pressure, it became necessary to revert to the original agreement on lifetime memberships. The lesson here is to keep documentation so lifetime membership is defensible.

Reviving an Expired Professional Certification

Certifications that are offered by professional organizations usually expire more frequently than certifications offered by professional associations. Certifications from professional organizations are frequently related to information technology (IT), which changes frequently. If the professional organization did not allow the professional certification to expire, then certificants would be maintaining out-of-date professional certifications. So, allowing the professional certification to expire based on new software operating systems, for example, is usually the right decision.

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Professional associations have a slightly different issue with certification expiration. Professional associations will allow a professional certification to expire, for example, 5 years from the date of issuance. This is because of a number of factors. For instance, the body of knowledge (BOK) might change significantly due to new industry knowledge. Those previously certified had knowledge that pertained to a previous BOK that has become obsolete. They are now required to understand a new BOK. Provisions may be made to have a professional certification expire and rename it to reflect a new BOK if the changes are significant. It should be noted that, in most cases, changes in a BOK can be handled through PDUs/CEUs and putting into place a supporting infrastructure that enables people to be trained on the new BOK.

Whether it is a professional organization or professional association, if there are changes to be made to the professional certification, expiration periods may be the best time to do so. For those certificants who are faced with an expiring professional certification, it can result in essentially starting all over again with the professional certification, including obtaining or verifying PDUs/CEUs. It may also mean invoicing, completing a professional certification application, retaking the professional certification exam, and paying the same cost for the certification exam as other first-time takers. professional associations or professional organizations may allow some flexibility in this process if the certificant was in good standing before the certification expired. Therefore, it is important to work closely with the professional associations or professional organizations and express the need for support.

Sunsetting a Professional Certification That Has Been Retired

Sunsetting refers to canceling a certification or allowing it to become extinct. It becomes a dead certification. A professional associations or professional organizations may decide to sunset a professional certification when:

- The perceived value of the certification has decreased due to changes in the marketplace (i.e., a job type has become obsolete due to changes in technology or process).
- The number of individuals certified is not growing despite professional association marketing efforts.
- The number of individuals certified is decreasing, which occurs when individuals fail to meet the requirements of CM (i.e., due to test/retest, recent work experience related to certification, or fees).
- The number of new applications is insufficient to justify the resources necessary to maintain the certification.
- Competition from another professional associations or professional organizations (i.e., software company) has introduced a more comprehensive or desirable professional certification program.

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- Changing the requirements of the certification would be so drastic that people newly certified would be very different from those who achieved certification previously (i.e., no college degree required previously; now a college degree is required).
- The professional certification certification can no longer be supported from an infrastructure standpoint (i.e., trade journals are discontinued, chapter locations closed, merger or split of professional association governance).
- After reevaluating the professional certification, it appears that it is more appropriate to be downgraded to a certificate program.
- The certification goes through a name change, and it creates a marketing dilemma, so it is reinvented and given a new name.
- The professional associations or professional organizations is dissolved through merger, acquisition, bankruptcy, or the like.

For example, a professional certification from the HP ExpertOne website represents a good practice for professional organizations. It lists (1) certifications becoming inactive, (2) scheduled inactive date, and (3) replacement certification. It allows the viewer to show only (1) certifications becoming inactive soon, (2) inactive certifications, and (3) expired certifications. This certification website for professional organizations can be simple and efficient.

For example, those certificants who have obtained an IT professional certification must make a decision how to handle changing requirements as they arise. The different approaches are:

- Retain the inactive/expired professional certification on their résumés and hope that there will be use for it by others who have not migrated to work associated with the replacement professional certification.
- Remove the inactive/expired professional certification from their résumés once the replacement professional certification has been achieved.
- List both the inactive/expired professional certification and replacement professional certification on their résumés in hopes that it will attract prospects that have requirements for both the old and replacement professional certification.

Many certificants who sunset their professional certifications usually have no intention to use them again. However, there may be circumstances when they want to reference them:

- They want to participate on a professional associations or professional organizations BOD and provide mentoring support, and they feel their professional certification will add credibility.
- They move into a new field of consulting and feel some need to retain their designations from time to time.

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- They are completely done with working and have no intention to engage in consulting or serve on BODs.

Handling a Professional Certification That Becomes Problematic

When a professional certification becomes problematic, it is incumbent on the certificant to take action. It is not only professional association certifications that can be have problems, but also professional certification from professional organizations have challenges as well. Wyrostek (2008) discusses that IT certification also has its share of problems; he lists the top 10:

1. Certifications are vendor centric.
2. Certification's life cycle is short.
3. Certifications are not real-world oriented.
4. Certifications have been devalued.
5. There is no oversight body.
6. Degree versus certification versus experience.
7. HR people are not in touch with the real world.
8. There are budget cuts.
9. There is a glut of certified people.
10. No one knows which certifications matter.

Note: Wyrostek's article is worth reviewing because Cisco is highly regarded. As stated in the article description on Cisco's website (http://www.ciscopress.com): "Less than 10 years ago, certification was a surefire way to enter the growing IT sector. But certification no longer guarantees that you will be able to find a high quality job in IT. It still has its place, but the IT certification industry has faced some systemic problems that no one has addressed since its emergence. Warren Wyrostek calls on personal and real-world experience to share the top 10 problems with IT certification."

In addition to what Wyrostek pointed out, signs that the professional certification is becoming problematic can be noticed when these occur:

- The professional certification becomes tainted and has a bad reputation.
- Certification renewal fees dramatically increase and become unaffordable.
- Membership in the professional association dramatically increases and becomes unaffordable.
- Professional certification is dissolved by the sponsoring organization.
- The professional certification is slated for discontinuation.
- The amount of recertification becomes extensive to the point you cannot keep up (i.e., requiring recertification every year).

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- Confusion exists or there is a real lack of clarity on the purpose of the credential.
- There is a significantly high failure rate on re-certification exam; the majority fail, and you are unable to pass the exam after multiple attempts.
- The number of people coming to meetings decreases.
- The number of people attending national conferences decreases.
- The number of people complaining increases.
- The number of people recertifying decreases.
- The number of people engaging in educational activities decreases.
- The amount of dues received by the professional association decreases.
- People stop using the designation after their name.
- People stop referencing the credential on their résumé.
- Social media (i.e., LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter) give the professional associations or professional organizations a bad name.
- The number of hits to the website decreases.
- The size of content in trade journals decreases.

Reinstating a Professional Certification after It Has Been Revoked

Under some circumstances, a professional certification can be revoked by a professional associations or professional organizations. Revoking a professional certification can happen any time after the application is accepted. Revoking a professional certification happens under a number of circumstances:

- The professional certification was issued by mistake (i.e., the person failed the test [scoring error]).
- The certified individual violates the code of conduct and professional ethics.
- The person is believed to have cheated on the assessment.
- The assessment questions were divulged to other parties.
- The designation was misused.
- The person has a felony conviction.
- The person is guilty of gross negligence or professional misconduct.
- There was fraud on the professional certification application (PCA).
- The certificant demonstrates unethical behavior that is reported.

All of these situations seem frightening, but they do happen, and some people have found themselves in precarious positions trying to reestablish their credentials. If a certificant is in this position, some of the questions he or she should ask include:

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- Is the professional certification worth the effort of seeking reinstatement, or should I find another professional certification instead?
- Should I obtain legal support in an attempt to clear my name?
- What reinstatement policies will I be required to meet?
- What documentation do I currently have to support my claim?
- What is the normal processing time for my reinstatement application?
- How can I obtain a reinstatement application?
- How many PDUs/CEUs do I need to have to be eligible for reinstatement?

If a certificant has determined that it is worth attempting to reinstate a revoked professional certification, the certificant may find it worth considering these approaches:

- See if the professional associations or professional organizations will consider moving the revoked status to an on-hold status due to revocation being harder to address than an on-hold status.
- Find out who to speak with if there are more questions about the reinstatement of the professional certification.
- Clarify the issue of why the professional certification was revoked. If the information surrounding the revocation was incomplete or incorrect, all facts should be presented.
- Draft a letter to the legal department of the professional associations or professional organizations expressing why he or she feels it is worth considering reinstatement of the certification.
- Admit to any violation on his or her part and how he or she has changed since then.
- Request a conditional reinstatement if a full reinstatement is not possible.
- Present a letter of reference that shows improved professional behaviors.
- Create a list of projects completed so the work products are easy to review.

If the person fails in the attempt to reinstate the professional certification, the person should:

- Respect the decision of the professional associations or professional organizations not to reinstate the professional certification;
- Keep the information confidential and not communicate this revoked status;
- Remove the designation from his or her name;
- Remove any current reference to the professional certification from his or her résumé;
- Add a supplemental page to his or her résumé indicating when the credential was received and the date the use of the credential ended. It is not necessary to specify the condition by which the professional certification ended unless the professional associations or professional organizations requires this of the certificant.

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THE BASICS OF

ACHIEVING PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Enhancing Your Credentials

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Contents

List of Figures ..... **ix**
List of Tables ..... **xi**
Foreword ..... **xiii**
Acknowledgments ..... **xv**
Introduction ..... **xvii**

1 Foundations **1**
Key Lessons 1
Professional Certification Defined 1
How Does the Professional Certification Process Work? 6
Assessment 8
The Application Process 9
Lack of Knowledge about Resources 9
Certification Maintenance 10
Ongoing Requirements to Stay Connected 10
Why Is Professional Certification Needed? 10
Who Needs Professional Certification? 13
Where Should a Person Obtain Professional Certification? 16
Which Path Should Be Taken to Achieve Professional Certification? 17
When Should Certificate Programs Be Pursued? 19
What about Qualifications? 21
Suggested Reading 24

2 The Certification Marketplace **27**
Key Lessons 27
The Certification Jungle 27
Milestones in Professional Certification 29
Credentialing Authorities 29
Centers and Institutes for Association Leadership 33
Association Management Companies 34
Business Partners and Consultants 35

Willis H. Thomas
International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4665-5456-6 (Paperback)
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Professional Association versus Professional Organization 38
Professional Association Governance and Membership....39
Professional Organization Structure and Community Members....43
Registered Education Providers.... 44
Educational Institutions....45
Employers....45
Critics.... 46
Suggested Reading....48

3 Preparing for Professional Certification 49
Key Lessons....49
Getting Answers to Frequently Asked Questions....49
Mastering the Body of Knowledge....50
Financing Professional Certification....51
Accessing the *Professional Certification Handbook*....52
Filling Out the Professional Association Membership Application....53
Interpreting the Professional Certification Application....54
Previewing the Different Types of Certification Fees and Dues....56
Clarifying the Type of Professional Certification Assessments....57
Optimizing Certification Preparation Resources....57
Determining Test-Taking Strategies....59
Overcoming Anxiety and Mental Blocks....63
Completing the Readiness Assessment....65
Suggested Reading.... 66

4 Achieving Professional Certification....67
Key Lessons....67
Ready, Set, Go....67
Career Planning....68
Out of High School or with a General Equivalency Diploma....70
Picking Up One- and Two-Year Programs....71
Continuing on to the Four-Year Degree....71
Stretching to Advanced Degrees....72
Terminal Degrees and Beyond....73
Practice Analysis....74
Competency Development....74
Learning Methodologies....76
Capacity Building....78
Day of the Certification Exam....79
Publicizing the Credential....80
Updating the Résumé, Curriculum Vitae, Portfolio, and Biography....82
Applying for New Positions.... 84
Suggested Reading....85

The Basics of Achieving Professional Certification: Enhancing Your Credentials
Willis H. Thomas
International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4665-5456-6 (Paperback)
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5 Maintaining Professional Certification 87
Key Lessons 87
Sustaining Professional Association and Professional Organization Professional Certification Programs 87
Budgeting Time, Energy, and Money 89
Balancing Family, Friends, and Recreational Interests 90
Earning PDUs and CEUs 91
Volunteerism 93
Obtaining Lifetime Professional Certification Status 94
Reviving an Expired Professional Certification 94
Sunsetting a Professional Certification That Has Been Retired 95
Handling a Professional Certification That Becomes Problematic 97
Reinstating a Professional Certification after It Has Been Revoked 98
Deciding Not to Maintain Professional Certification 100
Suggested Reading 100

6 Good Business Practices for Professional Certification 103
Key Lessons 103
Defining Best Practices 104
Developing the Professional Association Board of Directors 106
Increasing Member Satisfaction 108
Improving Communication with Professional Organizations 109
Motivating Others to Become Professionally Certified 111
Building a Culture That Supports Professional Certification 112
Promoting a Learning Organization 113
Networking for Continuous Improvement 114
Weighing Certification Options 115
Determining the Impact of Professional Certification Programs 116
Monitoring Cash Flow 117
Measuring Volunteer Engagement Specific to Certification Maintenance 118
Calculating Return on Investment for Training (an Example Model) 122
Creating Training Materials for Certification Preparation 125
Suggested Reading 127

7 Maintaining Compliance with Professional Certification 129
Key Lessons 129
A Reality Check 129
Reinforcing a Compliance Mindset 130
Enabling Feedback Mechanisms to Eliminate Blind Spots 132
Auditing Professional Certification 133
Evaluating Professional Certification 134
Implementing a Tracking System for PDUs/CEUs 135

The Basics of Achieving Professional Certification: Enhancing Your Credentials
Willis H. Thomas
International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4665-5456-6 (Paperback)
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Assigning the Job Role to Oversee Professional Certification....136
Reviewing Implementability Concerns....137
Sustaining Accreditation with a Recognized Authority....139
Adhering to Sound Instructional Design and Curriculum Development....142
Suggested Reading....145

8 Case Studies in Professional Certification....147
Key Lessons....147
Association for Operations Management....148
Basics of Supply Chain Management....148
Master Planning of Resources....149
Detailed Scheduling and Planning....149
Execution and Control of Operations....149
Strategic Management of Resources....150
American Society for Quality....151
American Society for Training and Development....152
American Society of Association Executives....154
Association of Clinical Research Professionals....155
Cisco Learning Network....156
International Institute for Learning....157
International Society for Performance Improvement....159
Microsoft....162
Project Management Institute....165
Society of Human Resource Management....169
Suggested Reading....170

Resource CD....171

Acronyms....173

Glossary....175

References....187

Index....191

About the Author....207

The Basics of Achieving Professional Certification: Enhancing Your Credentials
Willis H. Thomas
International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4665-5456-6 (Paperback)
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List of Figures

Figure 1.1 The range of voluntary professional certification. 3
Figure 1.2 Typical professional certification process. 7
Figure 2.1 Interrelationships of professional associations and organizations. 28
Figure 2.2 Initial process flow for new professional certification programs. 47
Figure 7.1 Typical process for policies and procedures. 131

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International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4665-5456-6 (Paperback)
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List of Tables

Table 1.1 Reasons to Pursue Professional Certification 3

Table 1.2 Examples of Behavioral and Technical Competencies 5

Table 1.3 Some Basic Differences between Professional Certification and Certificate Programs 19

Table 1.4 Professional Certification versus General Qualification 22

Table 1.5 Professional Certification versus Professional Qualification 23

Table 2.1 Comparison of a Professional Association to a Professional Organization 38

Table 3.1 Professional Certification Required Paperwork Checklist 55

Table 3.2 Nonverbal Communication Chart for Use in Verbal Examination 62

Table 6.1 Weighing Certification Options 116

Table 6.2 Calculating the Value of Volunteer Contributions 120

Table 7.1 Considerations for Position in Training or Human Resources 136

Willis H. Thomas
International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4665-5456-6 (Paperback)
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Foreword

In the United States, the term *professional certification* is frequently used as a catch-all term for several activities that apply to the credentialing of individuals. The lack of clarity has resulted in confusion when it comes to discussing credentials or designations that accompany a person's name. The number of new professional certification programs offered by professional associations (i.e., Project Management Institute) and professional organizations (i.e., for information technology) has increased astronomically, especially since the year 2000. It is believed that in the United States alone there are more than 3,000 designations (i.e., acronyms that become a suffix to a person's name) and the number of individuals pursuing professional certification from professional associations and professional organizations continues to rise. While it is hard to determine the exact number of professional certification worldwide, it is evident that growing popularity is not only in the United States.

- Professional certification has become the key to success for many professional associations and professional organizations.
- Professional association members (PAMs) have embraced professional certification.
- Professional certification has enabled many professional associations and professional organizations to define the required competencies to apply for and hold a job in specific industries.
- Professional certification is significant because it generates billions of dollars for the economy and thereby for those who provide products or services to the professional certification marketplace (i.e., certification exams, preparation materials, and add-on products and services associated with professional certification maintenance).
- Professional certification is a controlling force in employment and is becoming stronger.

This text is dedicated to those professional associations and professional organizations, professional certification recipients, and supporting resources that have made

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a commitment to creating and maintaining high-quality professional certification programs.

To certify or not to certify—that is the question. The job market has become increasingly competitive due to a number of factors, including

- Streamlined workforces due to mergers and acquisitions
- Consumer demand with an impact on the supply chain and thereby staffing requirements
- Nature of the virtual workforce and global market presence
- Revised job descriptions based on technical and behavioral competencies
- Competing demands for compensation aligned to value of the position

Many people are challenged not only with finding a job, but also keeping it. When a person comes to understand the importance of professional certification, it is deemed mission critical to job survival. Moreover, professional certification can instill a sense of self-worth and accomplishment, which creates job satisfaction and employee retention. Professional certification can be the difference between promotion and stagnation, employment and retirement, success and failure.

Although a college degree has become increasingly important, the need for professional certification cannot be underestimated. Often, the employer will value the person with a professional certification with a degree more than an individual with a degree alone. In some cases, professional certification may receive more recognition than a college degree. However, with the large number of professional certifications available, people and employers are many times confused about which path to take. It becomes a lifeline to those in professional networks who share similar interests and pursuits. This text explores the value of professional certification, which options will yield the best results, and how you can use professional certification to support the realization of your career aspirations. It focuses on professional associations and professional organizations headquartered in the United States and has extended application to those certifications on a global basis.

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Acknowledgments

My goal in writing this book is to emphasize the importance of quality professional certification programs and to encourage those who are pursuing professional certification to thoroughly consider their options before making this very important investment and to encourage professional associations and professional organizations to work closer with organizations such as the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to continuously improve and mature their professional certification programs.

I would especially like to thank Jim Snyder of the Project Management Institute (PMI). Jim has been a long-time dedicated member of PMI. He was instrumental in its founding success. I became a member of PMI in 2002, became a PMP in January 2005, and completed my doctorate at Western Michigan University in 2008. For more than 10 years, I have been pleased with the professional certification process at PMI. Moreover, PMI was instrumental in supporting my educational initiative; my doctoral studies focused on project management and evaluation. I wrote my dissertation on project evaluation and lessons learned through the lens of meta-evaluation, a term coined by my advisor, Dr. Michael Scriven, in the 1960s. In October 2012, I received the Cleland Award from PMI for best publication in 2012 for the book, *The Basics of Project Evaluation and Lessons Learned*, which was an extension of my dissertation. I was able to meet in person with Jim Snyder twice in 2012 as I wrote this book. The picture (see page xvi) was taken at the global PMI Conference in Vancouver, Canada.

I also thank E. LaVerne Johnson, president and CEO of IIL. She has been an inspiration to thousands of people around the world who have achieved professional certification. Her commitment to excellence is outstanding.

I give special thanks to "some" of the many professional associations and organizations that strive to continuously offer and support high-quality certifications. The list is extensive, and includes such groups as:

- Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP)
- American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)
- American National Standards Institute (ANSI)

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- American Society Association Executives (ASAE)
- American Society for Quality (ASQ)
- American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)
- Cisco
- National Organization for Competency Excellence (NOCA)
- Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals (ICCP)
- International Institute for Learning (IIL)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI)
- Institute for Supply Management (ISM)
- Microsoft
- Project Management Institute (PMI)
- Oracle
- SAP
- Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- Society of Research Administrators (SRA)

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Introduction

This book is a practical guide to professional certification. It will help you as the person seeking professional certification to understand the process and what goes on behind the scenes. It proposes to help those individuals pursuing professional certification programs (certificants) to make informed decisions about the options available and recommended processes to consider. It addresses professional certification offered by professional associations and professional organizations, such as a software company. It focuses on professional certifications that are based on job function and occupation. It targets professional certifications that are assessment based and developed by industry practitioners and leading subject matter experts (SMEs) who offer unbiased, third-party recognition of an individual's education, experience, skills, and abilities in areas such as

- Accounting and finance
- Communications and public relations
- Documentation/records management
- Education, teaching, training, and development
- Evaluation, measurement, and research
- Healthcare, hospital management, and pharmaceuticals
- Human capital management/human resources management
- Information systems/information technology
- Procurement management/vendor management
- Project, program, and portfolio management
- Quality and performance improvement
- Environmental health and safety
- Sales and marketing
- Supply chain management

The purpose for writing this book is support of professional associations and professional organizations and their professional certification recipients (past, current, and prospective) and of employers who are investing in professional certification. It is especially for people who are at a point of trying to justify professional

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certification, trying to determine whether it is worth the time and cost. It is for those individuals who need to move beyond having a "good gut feeling" about professional certification and need to make serious decisions on how to maximize their investment in professional certification.

The rationale for writing this book is that, based on my research, a similar book has not been written in quite some time. Some of the content in this book I was unable to find in other related books. Certification-related books that have been recently published address primarily the following content:

- A directory listing of professional associations and professional organizations that becomes outdated
- Specific subject matter in a functional area or discipline (i.e., purchasing)
- Exam preparation materials, including sample test questions
- Sales- and marketing-related material on how to apply for a certification
- Specialized information for voluntary professional certification (VPC)

Note: This book focuses on VPC and addresses the concept of mandatory professional certification (MPC). Those who are pursuing licensure or accreditation will also find practical application of this book. Moreover, those who are looking to use this text to achieve rewards and recognition, such as obtaining the much coveted Microsoft Valuable Professional (MVP) award will benefit from reviewing the content. As you read this text, you may become even more passionate about the topic of professional certification. It is intriguing and important to understand how the professional certification process works (or in some cases does not).

This text is not intended to be a sales tool for professional certification; however, after reading, the following may occur:

- You may ask yourself which certifications are worth pursuing.
- You may feel the need to stop procrastinating on that much-desired professional certification program.
- You may start inquiring how to put together an action plan to make professional certification happen.
- You may look at people around you who are in different places in their life and recognize that certification can begin early for some who have just graduated from high school and decide to pursue a career in information technology. You may also see it is the solution for others who have completed a terminal degree and want to reinvent themselves.

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