

Are You Certifiable? (or Just TEChnically Good at What You Do?)

By Stephen Bingham

Have you gone for a walk in a bookstore lately? Have you wandered past the book section labeled: COMPUTERS? If you have, you probably noticed a few books on the subject of certification. I couldn't help notice all the books and prep exams to help pass the MCSE and A++ exams, among others. There is an entire industry striving to get computer programmers, security administrators, and pc desktop support staff to prove the extent of their knowledge by writing these exams. Why do we write them? To begin with, for those in search of a job, they are almost a pre-requisite to even get your resumé reviewed.

Managers are looking to hire the best staff that they can find, and the applicant who has a certification in their area of expertise will get the attention.

So as a manager, why should you encourage or support your existing staff to get certified? Will they not just ask for more money? Use the exams as a tool to identify training needs, so you can put your training budget to the best possible use. When employees request training during the annual performance review, make certification a goal. This can be an added incentive to ensure that the skills learned in the classroom are put to work back at the office.

As an employee, why should you seek out certification? In today's competitive market place, you can never have too much going for you. Be prepared for the worst-case scenario. Get certified; show your employer how much you know. You never know ... it may pay off.

While I was at the bookstore, I did not find any books on IBM or iSeries certification. There are many books available on iSeries security, performance management, WebSphere, and DB2, but none of those books are directly linked to any certification exam.

For those of you who have attended COMMON in the past, you may have had the opportunity to write an IBM Certification exam of your choice for free. We are working to bring this same offering to you at April's TEC conference in Toronto. Each TEC attendee will be able to write one exam of their choice from a variety of topics including system administration, DB2, and WebSphere.

We will provide a complete listing of the exams that will be available at TEC in the coming months. 

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THE MAYONNAISE JAR

When things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar...

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, he wordlessly picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and filled it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed that now it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous, "Yes, finally. It's full..."

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the grains of sand. The students laughed. "Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life."

"The golf balls are the important things – your God, your family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favorite passions – the things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house, and your car. The sand is everything else – the small stuff. If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life..."

"If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always still be time to clean the house and fix the disposal."

"Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand." One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked," he said. "It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend..." 

Forwarded by Wende Boddy

(Author Unknown)