

The Future of Certification at User Group Events

By Stephen Bingham 



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Two years ago, TUG brought IBM certification to TEC. This was a great success. Many of our attendees took the opportunity to test their skills in a variety of topics, from System Operations to System Administration and RPG ILE. Several attendees walked away with their certification in hand, and all left with a better understanding of their strengths and areas that they can focus their educational efforts on.

In 2005, TUG (like many other user groups) was able to offer all of our attendees the first exam for free. Subsequent exams were offered at discounted rate. In 2006, IBM changed their policy on certification testing at user group events. The first exam was no longer free, however everyone paid a discounted rate for each test taken. This discounted rate was a little over 50%. Not a bad deal if you are planning to write the test anyway!

IBM requires that all of their Business Partners meet certain standards. This includes that individuals representing IBM products maintain a current level of certification. For V5R3, the deadline for obtaining these certifications was shortly after the **TEC 2005** conference. Some of those who received their certifications at TEC were working under this deadline.

V5R4 was announced earlier this year. As of the writing of this article, IBM has not yet released the new certification exams for the current version of the operating system. The lack of new exams means that those holding V5R3 certifications are holding the most current available. As a result, user groups across Canada and the United States experienced a drop in attendance at their certification labs at their respective

events this past year. Some of the reasons given for this include:

- "I am already V5R3 certified and the new exams are not out yet. "
- "I would like to get certified, but am waiting for the V5R4 exams. "
- "Even at the discounted price, it is still cost prohibitive. "

As we head into the fall, the volunteers on the TEC committee will be gearing up for our next conference — **TEC '007** (April 17-19, 2007). We need to hear from you. Do you want Certification at TEC? Over the last two years, many of you who filled out the evaluation sheets in the certification lab indicated that the IBM certification was part of your reason for coming to TEC, and for some it was the primary reason. Is this still true?

If the Certification lab is going to continue, we need your input. What exams would you like to see offered? Are you interested in exams from IBM Business Partners or Third Party Vendors? If so, which ones? Are you an IBM Business Partner or Third Party vendor that is interested in having your products featured in our proctored lab?

This is your User Group and your Educational Conference. Help us to help you get the most out of it. Come to **TEC '007** and Get your "License to Skill."



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