IT Certification – Driving Competitive Edge in a Global Marketplace

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The US currently has the largest IT certification market in the world. However, others are catching up fast. For example, growth is rapid in the BRIC economies - Brazil, Russia, India and China and in Eastern Europe – all regions where the overall expansion of the IT market has accelerated dramatically over recent years.

In fact historically, emerging countries have been the most passionate about the benefits of IT certification. They have led the way in driving programme adoption and in the results achieved by candidates. As a result, employees in these regions

have competed for jobs on a more equal footing with their peers in more established economies and are now often at a competitive advantage.

When Autodesk's own scheme got under way in China, 89,000 people were certified in the first year. Enthusiasm in Poland, where Autodesk certification was recently launched, is also high with aggressive delivery numbers achieved in the first few months.

Businesses in more mature economies such as Japan and South Korea are now responding to this strong emerging market adoption by ensuring that employees have fully validated their skills.

So the US needs to ensure it maintains its lead, engaging with training and certification schemes now will help win against global companies that endorse certification and have large numbers of employees registered on these schemes. Businesses that engage can guarantee that when they tender for large projects, potential customers will take certifications into account.

Fighting Back

Economic conditions, pressure from developing markets and from large corporates bidding for business are just part of the explanation. Today, universities and colleges are becoming more sophisticated in terms of the technical courses they run. Many offer a practical range of vocational and industry oriented programmes. As a result, students graduate with higher levels of technology skills, putting greater pressure on the existing workforce to be competitive and further fuelling interest in technical certification.

This point is particularly relevant in manufacturing design where digitisation has brought massive changes not just to the technology used, but also to workflow and methods. This transformation has accelerated over the past few years with the introduction of digital prototyping and cloud computing enabling more accessible and affordable versions of applications such as simulation and product lifecycle management (PLM). Even those students who have learnt the latest methods using the latest technologies, may not be aware of best practice and other ways to maximise the potential of the software.

There is also, particularly among more experienced users, a strong element of competitiveness that drives uptake of certification schemes – especially where groups of colleagues attend the same event. Candidates enjoy the kudos, the sense of personal satisfaction and pride that goes with exam success and like to compare themselves favourably with their peers.

A Global Perspective

While the battle between companies operating in emerging and mature markets continues, many companies today operate in a global context. They may be off-shoring work or they may be multinational corporations with many international operations. So while employees can play their role in the struggle between

businesses from mature and emerging economies, they are also part of the global economy.

This global consistency benefits employers by giving them a measurement of a member of staff's technical expertise but it also has significant advantages for employees. An individual passing a certification exam in India has the same qualification as an employee passing the scheme in Illinois and the same benefits apply wherever in the world that member of staff is based. This is where international certification programmes score points over national, locally-branded schemes.

Holding Your Own

Ultimately, many of the benefits of IT certification programmes relate to enhanced competitive edge. This extends far beyond corporations from mature markets battling for advantage over businesses based in emerging economies. It is just as much about employees competing for advantage over their peers in the job market whether as part of an international battle, or experienced staff taking on the challenge offered by university graduates with all the latest technical skills.

The growing success of certification schemes and associated training programmes across the world demonstrates clearly the importance of excellence - and that in this fast-changing industry, the need for certification will become ever more critical.

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