

Why Get Certified?



Differentiation Strategy

- We live in a commodity world where products and services appear to be the same or very similar to the customer.
- The question is how to differentiate your products and services in that crowded market.



Employees R Us

- Differentiation can be in the things we sell or it can take the form of exemplary employees with customer centricity and focus.
- Extensive research shows that the most effective path is via motivated and confident employees and creating a positive experience for the client or customer that they will have reasons to remember.
- Employees are the face of our companies and become our differentiation.
- To maximize what they can do requires the proper tools to do the job right.
- Central to this theme is to embrace industry certifications.



To Be or Not to Be?

- To paraphrase the Bard, our question might be, "To get certified or not; that is the question"?
- Which professional development certifications might be right for the forward-thinking AV, IT and digital signage technology managers of today?
- This is an interesting question considering the vast number of certifications that appear to be popping up all around us.

"To be or not to be?" That is not the question. What is the question? The question is not one of being, but of becoming. "To become more or not to become more", this is the question faced by each intelligence in our universe.

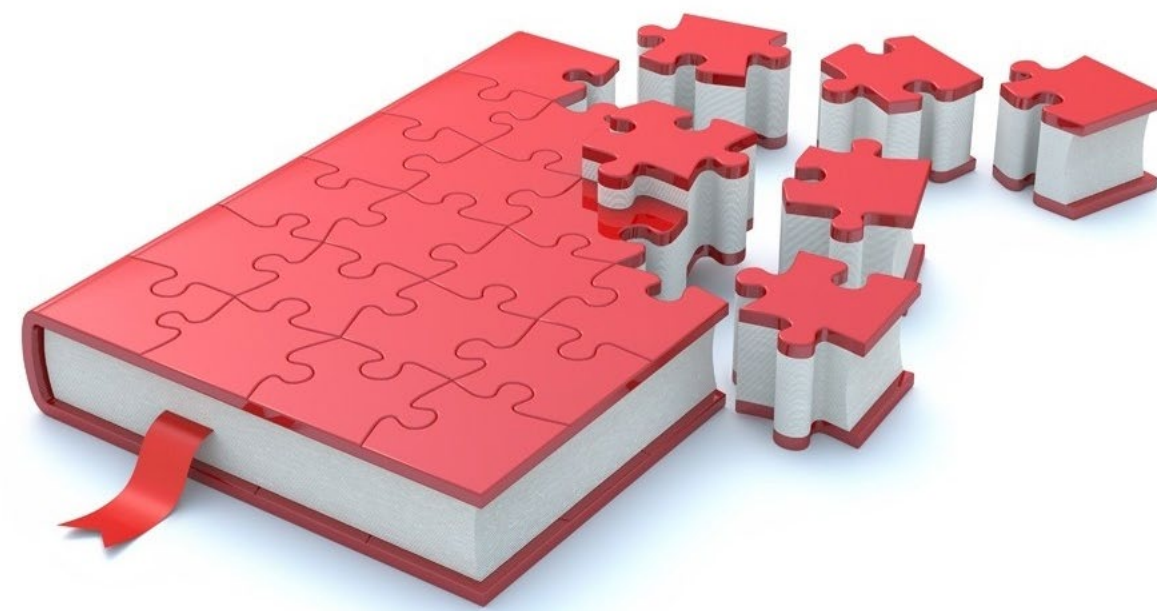
"Certifications" Abound

- Most manufacturers in the AV and IT universe have a "certification" of some sort attached to their offerings. Overall this is a good thing.
- These programs are aimed at making a person more familiar with the details and performance of a product, understanding what the tangible benefits are, and what problems are solved in the process.
- There is a hidden agenda of these certifications which is to get a person enveloped and dedicated to a brand and keep them loyal and become proactive proponents to others.
- The company offering the certification tries to consciously instill a sense of pride and accomplishment in the process.

Apply the axiom and truism that says
"An educated user is our best customer"

The Unintended Consequences

- Most education properly delivered, is good but left uncontrolled and learned in a random and almost ad hoc nature, this disparate knowledge might actually be confusing.
- At the formal education level, this is what a curriculum is all about.
- A curriculum is "a group of related courses, often in a special field of study: e.g. the engineering curriculum."
- The important words are "related courses". A curriculum focuses on how one topic or level of course relates to another.



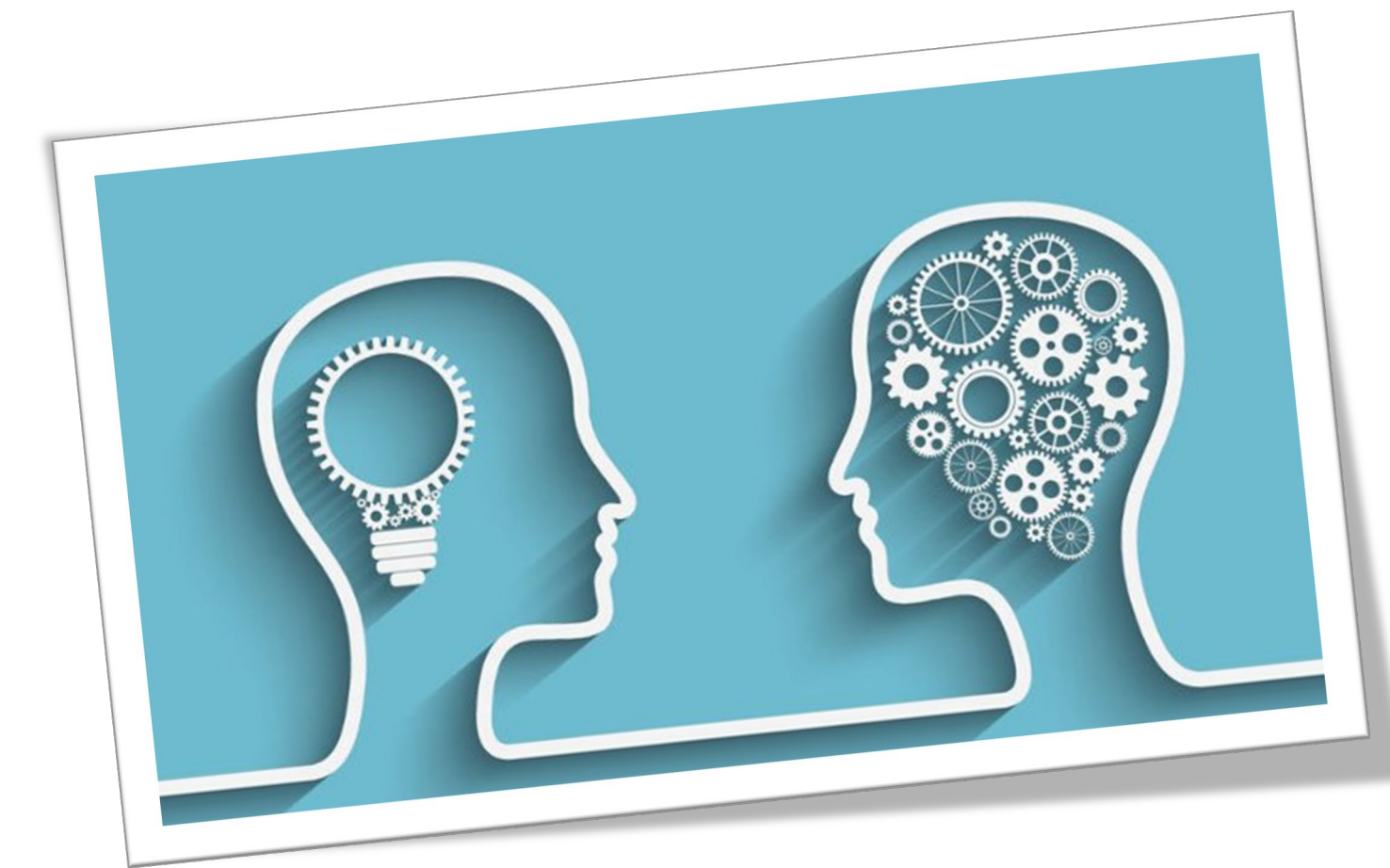
The Unintended Consequences

- We are all familiar with different levels of courses in each category and there are pre-requisites required before moving from level to another.
- If left unchecked and in disorder, this can cause the confusion we are speaking about.
- Herein lies the shortcoming of disparate and random certifications from multiple companies.
- Typically they address part of a subject but rarely all of it and this is where "generalist" certifications takes center stage.



Generalists are Good

- The "generalist" certification is a curriculum covering the broad scope of an industry and teaches an overview with a varying degree of detail about the major segments.
- It is like an umbrella over the industry with the more granular details underneath the protective cover of general knowledge.
- Several good examples are the:
 - **Certified Technology Specialist** (CTS) certification from AVIXA
 - **Digital Signage Certified Expert** (DSCE) from the Digital Signage Experts Group
 - **MCSE and MCSD** from Microsoft,
 - **Cisco Certified Network Associate** (CCNA)
 - **Project Management Professional** (PMP) from the Project Management Institute.



Industry Acceptance

- Before going any further, it is important to note that any so- called certifications without industry acceptance and recognition, are meaningless.
- An apt comparison might be a minister who is "ordained" by a church with 2 members versus a recognized denomination. A person can even be self-ordained but, who really knows or cares.
- The key to any certification is recognition by a significant cross section of those involved in a profession or industry.



AVIXA - Certified Technology Specialist

- The CTS certification covers the basics of audio, video, design, integration, and management of an AV system.
- An AV system is comprised of numerous types of technologies and equipment and each product might have a certification offered by their respective manufacturers.
- AVIXA offers a generalist approach from an impartial vendor neutral perspective and only from an accepted and best practices point of view.
- The certification is completed upon passing an in-depth exam before a person can show the CTS designation.
- This entire process ensures a fundamental understanding of each segment of the industry and how they all fit together.

AVIXA - Beyond General CTS



CTS - General



CTS-D - Design



CTS-I - Installation

Digital Signage Certifications

- The Digital Signage Federation (DSF) and numerous manufacturers, distributors, resellers, and end users have partnered with the Digital Signage Experts Group (DSEG) to bring a comprehensive set of industry certification programs to the digital signage industry.
- These online and live event certification courses are designed to bring an individual the education they need to address differentiation in a meaningful way, from an understanding of the fundamentals to in-depth training in critical subset areas of digital signage.



Digital Signage Certifications

- The Digital Signage Experts Group provides certifications in 5 distinct areas of concentration including the industry overall, displays, networks, content/media, and sales
 - DSCE - Digital Signage Certified Expert
 - DSDE - Digital Signage Display Expert
 - DSNE - Digital Signage Network Expert
 - DCME - Digital Content and Media Expert
 - DSSP - Digital Signage Sales Professional
- These certification programs are impartial, agnostic, and vendor-neutral, administered by DSEG as an independent industry organization

IT Certifications

- These are the oldest certifications and unlike truly impartial certifications like CTS, DSCE, and PMP, most IT certification programs are designed to address specific brands and product families, from mega companies like Microsoft and Cisco.
- For our purposes they are lumped into the generalist category because they are so pervasive and create the network environment in which many other products work.



IT Certifications

- As with other true certifications, each of the following takes time to study and review and they have comprehensive exams that are necessary to earn the coveted designation and certificate of completion.
- A few of the most recognized programs relevant to the AV/IT universe are:
 - **MCSE** - Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer - Requires 7 exams to complete!
 - **MCSD** - Microsoft Certified Systems Developer - This certification is recommended by Microsoft both for experienced IT professionals and for people new to IT.
 - **CCNA**- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) validates the ability to install, configure, operate, and troubleshoot medium-size route and switched networks, including implementation and verification of connections to remote sites in a WAN.



Project Management Professional

- Our last example of an industry recognized certification is the Project Management Professional or PMP from the Project management Institute or PMI.
- Industry experience is a prerequisite to earn the PMP.
- PMPs earn up to 10% more than non-certified project managers.
- Over 70% of employers require or encourage a PMI certification and 93% of PMPs recommend the certification to others.
- The best example of adoption of a certification is that there are over 400,000 PMPs globally – and growing!



Professional Development and Advancement

- The best path for professional advancement is to earn formally recognized certifications.
- Professional certifications put all the elements of an industry plus your experience in context rather than residing internally as a desperate group of facts and knowledge.
- Certifications are proof positive to your employers, clients, and those outside of your inner circle that you are committed to your profession, and that you actively seek the latest information available to make your efforts the best they can be.
- Research has shown that certifications make you more valuable to employers and all else being equal the nod usually goes to the certified person in a company.



The Benefits of Industry Certifications

- In today's competitive environments, there are numerous benefits to be realized from industry certification programs.
- Industries have not only adopted certifications but found ways to use them as differentiators. These industries include:
 - Healthcare
 - Legal
 - Architectural
 - Project management
 - AV and digital signage
- Certifications have become an essential part of hiring, skills training, promotions, and both personal and professional development.



The Benefits of Industry Certifications

- Hiring and Promotion Eligibility – New and timely certifications is the key to standing out in a crowd of resumes and having a competitive advantage over candidates without certifications.
- Career improvement
- Higher wages
- Differentiation
- Job Retention
- Increased relevance
- Instills confidence



Networking and Partnerships

- Certification organizations provide a venue for members to network with other industry professionals, fostering a sharing of ideas, techniques, and information.
- These organizations are facilitators of strategic partnerships between companies and industry participants, enabling the formation of key alliances, bringing new capabilities and sales opportunities.
- Ultimately, a certification program can result in increased company differentiation from competitors.

These benefits combine to show the market that a person is well trained, skilled, and is recognized with professional credentials.

On a Personal Note

- There is of course a deeply personal benefit to all of this and that is personal pride and confidence.
- Each of us must look inward at who we are as individuals and what we provide for our families, our communities, our companies, and our clients. There is an unspoken sense of pride and accomplishment that certifications bring at all levels.
- Whether it is an CTS, DSCE, PMA, or MCSE, CCNA, each of these show your dedication to being the best you can be for all the people and companies in your life.
- If you are certified in one area look to the next progression up the ladder because we should never stop learning or developing our skills no matter what profession you are in.
- The fact is that it all starts and stops with you.



ANY QUESTIONS?

“ Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers. ”

Tony Robbins

Digital Signage Experts Group

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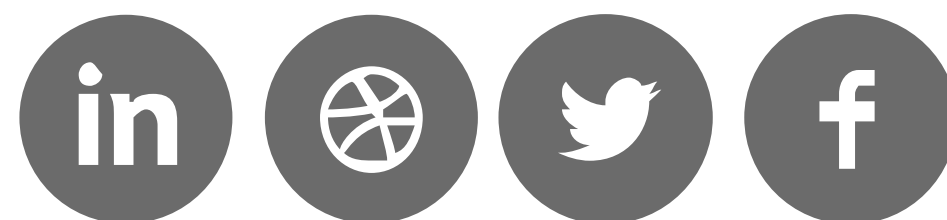
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Thank You!