CCIE sponsorship proposal example

Quentin Demmon

March 28, 2015

Departing the lovely, sterile, electronic testing center after passing the final CCNP Route/Switch exam, and I'm on the way to the local pub to celebrate. You *know* what I'm already thinking about: gotta ride that wave, right? Stoke the flames, feet off the pedals down the hill, ride the momentum up the next, and all that jazz. Before the crispy new paper certificate arrived in the mail (finding it uncharacteristic of Cisco to do this without levying an additional fee), and I'm wondering: how does one actually go about preparing for the CCIE? How much is it going to cost? Should I ask my employer to help?

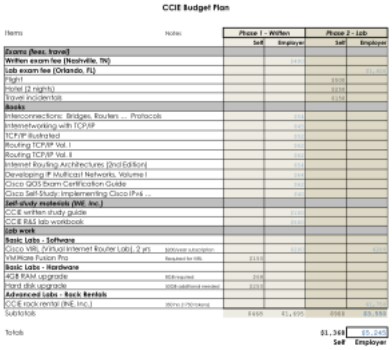
Don't bother trying to find a fill-in-the-blank template in your favorite word processor on the Interwebs. The CCIE is much more than a handful of Cisco Press books, GNS3, and a local test center – you've gotta plan this sucker out. Time to crunch some numbers; build a few spreadsheets. If you're asking for sponsorship, it may even be time to wrap a fancy tie around your neck and, heaven forbid, fire up Powerpoint and put on a sales hat.

> *[whispering voice: maybe this is part of what becoming a CCIE is about, eh?]*

In our eagerness and anticipation, it's easy to lose the perspective of our target audience: management (i.e. those ever-efficient persons who must decide whether or not they choose to become your agents in petitioning funds form the corporate coffers). Somewhere up the chain your pleading may land on the desk of a dutiful fiduciary who has no unearthly idea what you need. Honestly, I didn't know myself when I began.

Here's the proposal in PDF (slightly redacted) that I came up with, maybe it will help someone else along the way. The budget addendum is displayed below.

> ***[Follow the PacketPushers blogs for future posts about my experiences down the yellow-brick CCIE v5 road, VIRL 2.0, and information about live-streaming labs.]***



CCIE Budget Plan

Items	Notes	Phase 1 - Written		Phase 2 - Lab	
		Self	Employer	Self	Employer
Exams (fees, travel)					
Written exam fee (Nashville, TN)			$400		
Lab exam fee (Orlando, FL)					$1,400
Flight				$300	
Hotel (2 nights)				$250	
Travel incidentals				$150	
Books					
Interconnections: Bridges, Routers ... Protocols			$50		
Internetworking with TCP/IP			$50		
TCP/IP Illustrated			$50		
Routing TCP/IP Vol. I			$50		
Routing TCP/IP Vol. II			$50		
Internet Routing Architectures (2nd Edition)			$50		
Developing IP Multicast Networks, Volume I			$50		
Cisco QOS Exam Certification Guide			$50		
Cisco Self-Study: Implementing Cisco IPv6 ...			$50		
Self-study materials (INE, Inc.)					
CCIE written study guide			$149		
CCIE R&S lab workbook			$149		
Lab work					
Basic Labs - Software					
Cisco VIRL (Virtual Internet Router Lab), 2 yr)	$200/year subscription		$200		$200
VMWare Fusion Pro	Required for VIRL	$150			
Basic Labs - Hardware					
4GB RAM upgrade	8GB required	$60			
Hard disk upgrade	500GB additional needed	$110			
Advanced Labs - Rack Rentals					
CCIE rack rental (INE, Inc.)	350hrs @ 70%/hr				$1,750
Subtotals		$460	$1,695	$700	$3,350
Totals		$1,360 Self	$5,245 Employer		

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CCIE Route-Switch sample budget

About Quentin Demmon

Comments

Richie says

March 28, 2015 at 5:09 PM

Interesting thought.

I honestly never thought to ask an employer to pay the whole the gs just maybe a lab or 2 .

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 3, 2015 at 4:34 PM

Richie: some of my pleadings have been successful, some not – depends on the employer, but even if the answer is no you've put all on notice that you're serious about your goals and ambitions.

Reply

not a ccie says

March 31, 2015 at 12:23 PM

Better up that ram requirement to 16gb. VIRL really puts a strain on the resources.

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 3, 2015 at 4:32 PM

Thanks for the feedback. I have a late-2011 Mac that is maxed out at 8GB. I'm hoping that will work for the labs I do locally (I just purchased 350 rack rental hours). If that doesn't work I'll finally have an excuse to buy a new laptop, which won't require much mental arm-twisting!

Reply

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Peyton Maynard-Koran on Show 365: You Can't Do That In Enterprise Networks

Sanjeev says

March 31, 2015 at 1:36 PM

Very nicely done!

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 23, 2015 at 6:55 PM

Thank you Sanjeev

Reply

nathan says

April 2, 2015 at 4:25 PM

VIRL over GNS3? Why?

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 3, 2015 at 4:28 PM

Good question, Nathan – I'm actually planning a future blog about that. I plan to spend as little time as possible configuring base lab environments, and maximize the time I have doing actual lab work. And, while I would love to rent a rack that someone else builds/troubleshoots/maintains, that's not economically feasible for all labs. VIRL's AutoNetKit shows promise for saving time building base lab configs.

Reply

E says

April 8, 2015 at 6:01 PM

Virl doesnt do L2 which sucks. At least with GNS3 you can get L2 from IOU

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 23, 2015 at 6:55 PM

Actually, they have just released L2 capabilities. Here is an excerpt from the April newsletter:

"We know you all have waited for a long time…. and now the two of the most requested features – IOSvL2 and ASAv, are finally here!"

Reply

RemzRR says

April 13, 2015 at 9:05 PM

May I suggest a hybrid topology
ESXi/KVM/Hyper-V Server running 10-20 CSR-1000V Cisco Routers
Same ones used in the CCIE Lab itself. Along with 4 Cisco 3560/3750 Switches which will emulate the INE CCIE Workbook. This can be supplemented with a 3rd party CCIE lab but building the rack yourself gives you alot of hands on time.
My ESXi Server runs on
-32GB of Ram
-Intel Core i5 4670
-Asus Z97C Motherboard
-500GB Crucial SSD Drive

VM's I am running
-20 Cisco CSRV's
-Juniper Virtual MX
-Juniper Virtual SRX
-Akips (Monitoring Software)
-Windows 7 (Strips Vlan Tags in Wireshark Beware on certain interfaces)
-Kahli Linux (For the pentesting Tools)

Hardware
-Digicm Console Server
-APC Power Controller (My electricity Bill)
-3 Cisco 3750's running Version 12 Code (Dont have 32mb of flash)
-1 Cisco 3650 running Version 15 Code
– Cisco 2851 (Home/Network Router, Still tweaking SSL VPN)
– Juniper EX3200 (Bought because my job uses Juniper)

My process now is using Teamviewer as a jumpbox to my rack which is segmented on another vlan/ip subnet within my house. Futurewise I just want to have an SSL VPN setup to go directly to my lab instead of using the jumpbox but running into issues.

GNS3 – Cant emulate Layer 2/ ASICS and sometimes you will run into weird issues like multicast and so forth.
Cisco Virtual Routers—-It just works and no issues and its free from Cisco….FREEEEEEE
Virl—I am not interested in paying for a subscription
IOU- Haven't tried this but hear all kinds of I cant get this to work stories so I passed on my research. But the lab itself will use this i believe.

No matter how you go for the Layer 2 stuff just remember the bulk of the lab exam for Layer 3 I think is 40% and Layer 2 is 20% I believe.

Reply

Quentin Demmon says

April 23, 2015 at 7:05 PM

Thank you for taking the time to provide the detailed lab setup list, I'm sure many people reading this will be able to use it. I initially tried to find such a list on the Internet, and yours is very succinct and practical.

This is definitely a much more affordable option, especially without a sponsor. In my particular case, time management is extremely important for several reasons. Primarily, I'm kicking off this project well into my career with fewer years to use these certs than many reading this, no doubt. Therefore, I decided early on that I would rather pay someone else to build and maintain the lab environment, giving me more time for studying and actually running through the labs themselves.

Reply

RemzRR says

April 23, 2015 at 9:03 PM

Yea makes sense. It has taken me some time to get the lab running as it is now. The SSL VPN is up now. I ran into an issue with an older Anyconnect package where it would throw an error message if it ran into a firewall with a Captive Portal page but installed a newer version and can now access my lab via Work/Remote PC, Android Phone and my future mac i hope. The Funny part is I havent gone full blown into the workbooks or labs just mainly fundamental reading.As for conveniance renting a 3rd party lab being that tokens are real cheap nowadays is the way to go. As far as expense if you have an old pc not being used it can be purpose built for an Server along as it has Vt-d technology from Intel and mixed in with some physical switches which may be cheaper than renting a lab when you consider on average lab hours can hit 1600+ I have read. Either way good luck and if time management is a important issue look into some apps. I currently use a time management app on my pc which has a tree based hierachy that I use to keep me honest. For example in the morning I do 15 minutes of spaced repetition excercizes via the Anki app and log my time. If I am tweaking the lab Ill log that as a configuration item but I try and read 2 hours a day. What gets me excited is stealing bits and pieces of strategy and implement it into my own setup. Hope this helps.

Reply

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