

Title:

IT Certifications: What Types of Support Do Your Clients Need?

Word Count:

429

Summary:

IT Certifications aren't a necessity for sweet spot small business clients. Larger small businesses need them, but sweet spot small business clients don't need or want to pay for people with IT certifications.

Keywords:

IT certifications, IT support, computer support, computer consultant, computer consulting

Article Body:

Sweet spot small businesses have distinct support needs-strong desktop support skills and light LAN skills. In this article, you'll learn what skills and certifications are most important to your sweet spot business clients.

What Specific Tasks Will Your Clients Need Help With?

These sweet spot clients are looking for help with popular desktop applications like Microsoft Office, Intuit QuickBooks, and Interact ACT! and help doing hardware upgrades. They need help setting up shared folder backup software and keeping their antivirus and firewall software up-to-date. These small businesses need help synching up their PDAs with ACT! and Microsoft Outlook. And they definitely need help with their networks.

Micro Small Businesses Have Different Needs

Micro small business space with fewer than 10 PCs, the peer-to-peer end, don't bother spending a lot of money on certification. In fact, IT certifications are often perceived as a negative-small business owners feel like they're paying for someone who's overqualified for the job.

IT Certifications Are More Important to "Real" IT Managers

When you start selling to a real IT manager, in a much larger small business (50+ systems) you'll find a more sophisticated IT buyer. At this point, IT certifications start to become extremely important. At this level, a "real"

seasoned IT manager knows exactly what the different levels of IT certifications are.

At this level, there's a very good chance the buyers you're selling to are certified and they'll typically look for deeply niched experts-as opposed to virtual IT generalists. An in-house IT manager often handles the generalist work in-house. So this kind of larger small business doesn't need a virtual IT department-they are looking for someone to fill in their own skill gaps.

For example, if this client has a Microsoft Exchange Server installation, the IT manager may bring in a consulting firm skilled in doing forms development or hooking up a Java-based application to something that's based in a Microsoft Exchange Server Message Store. Or the IT manager may be looking for a Microsoft SQL Server developer or someone with strong Microsoft Visual Basic development skills.

The Bottom Line about IT Certifications

The sweet spot clients are a very different type of opportunity than where most small business computer consulting firms focus. At least at the outset, put most of your energy into the 10 to 50 PC space which is just big enough to need fairly sophisticated solutions, but not nearly large enough to justify putting a "real" highly-skilled IT person on payroll.

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