

Title:

MCSE? CCNA? Choosing The Right Computer Certification For Your Career

Word Count:

555

Summary:

Choosing the right computer certification can be confusing! Chris Bryant, CCIE #12933, lists some questions you need to ask yourself before hitting the books.

Keywords:

ccna, ccnp, free, pass, exam, cisco, certification, computer, mcse, ccie, chris, bryant

Article Body:

When you're choosing which computer certification to pursue next, you should also be formulating a plan for your career. Your time is precious, and you should never choose to pursue a certification because it's "hot". There are some hard questions you should ask yourself before deciding to pursue the CCNA, CCNP, CCVP, CCSP, CCIE, MSCE, or any of the many other vendor certifications that are out there.

Why do I want this certification?

This is the biggest and most important question you should answer before you spend a dime on books or classes.

If your primary goal in earning a certification is the money you feel companies will throw at you after you get it, make sure to do your research first. Basing your certification pursuits on a salary survey can lead to some serious frustration on your part. Don't get me wrong, I like money. J But those surveys can be very misleading. There's really no such thing as an "average" salary in

IT. Job responsibilities and requirements vary greatly from company to company, to the point where a "network admin" may make \$25K at one job and \$75K at another. You can see where such variations in pay can lead to some misleading statistics. (And if you're thinking of attending a tech school whose main pitch is "look at all the money this cert can get you", ask a lot of questions about how they arrived at this amount.)

A positive answer to this question works wonders. If you have a plan for your career, you'll know how this certification can fit into your plans. If you don't know what you're going to do with it when you get it, or worse, don't have a plan for your future, you may be wasting your time. Ask yourself the hard questions now - you won't regret it.

How does the vendor protect my investment of time and money?

Let's face it: earning your certification costs time and money. You've got to set time aside to study, you'll need books, perhaps a class, etc. If you're spending that money and time, it should be to make yourself more valuable in the workplace.

The vendor should also have a vested interest in keeping your certification valuable. Take Cisco, for instance. I was at a bit of a career crossroads a few years ago. Should I pursue my masters degree, or pursue the CCIE? I took a strong look at both choices, and I knew that Cisco works endlessly and tirelessly to protect the value of their certifications. While other major vendors have made strides to do so, I felt Cisco did the best job of protecting the value of their certifications. That's why I felt secure in the investment of my finances and time into a major Cisco certification, and I've never made a better decision.

Before making a major investment into a computer certification, consider the

steps that a vendor does or does not make to protect your investment.

Computer certifications have helped me tremendously in building my IT career. By asking the right questions, and taking a hard look at your motives and plans before pursuing a given certification, they can do the same for you.

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