



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

By Bill Gaffney

Q: In your opinion what is the value of a professional certification when doing a job search or negotiating the compensation? Also what do you feel it does for a person's career overall?

A: We need to begin by defining the term "professional certification". It seems to me that just about every field has some kind of "professional certification" available to them except salespeople. Maybe they do as well but I'm certainly not aware of it. And quite frankly I think most salespeople would rather have the money.

My own situation might provide some perspective. Within the coaching field there are a number of different "certifications". There are coaching schools that require many hours of work (not a day or a weekend) to be certified. The two most recognized coaching organizations, ICF and IAC, have professional certifications. Your work at a coaching school counts towards these. The certifications require, in addition to the education, a certain amount of verified hours (typically through invoices) of coaching, usually several hundred, and a demonstrated knowledge and actual use of a number of proficiencies. These are done through both recording of coaching sessions and panel "interview". This is a very generic description but you get the picture of the amount of time and proficiency involved.

You will also see people in the coaching and affiliated professions that have letters after their names. Some of these certifications typically involve a 1 or 2-day seminar or a few hours of on line work and do not necessarily indicate proficiency. This is not to condemn those, but you tell me which would hold more credibility for you.

In the [recruiting](#) profession there is one certification that is found much more than all the others combined. It is the CPC, or Certified Personnel [Consultant](#). I hold this one, but again it does not show proficiency. It shows some commitment and hopefully some good knowledge in the area of good personnel practices from a legal and ethical perspective. I don't say this to start a war with other recruiters who hold the certification and use it. But it is not the same as holding the coaching

certification, PMP (project managers), PE (professional engineer), etc.

As I mentioned above an industry "sponsored" certification typically involves many hours of actual experience and demonstrated proficiencies as well as a broad knowledge of the field. Many times these certifications are not earned on the first go around (test). The PEs out there will tell you it is not uncommon to sit 2, 3 or more times for the certification. This shows commitment, diligence, etc.

There is typically additional compensation involved with these types of certifications. I have placed [project managers](#) and I know for a fact the PMP can raise compensation anywhere from 10 – 20K per year or more. In fact I have had companies tell me not to submit PMP because they don't pay that type of compensation.

A professional certification also enhances your job opportunities. Depending on the field many companies actually require or prefer the certification. This is not to say you won't get hired without it, but you have a much greater chance with it. With the certification the hiring authority knows you already have the skill set in general. In fact the [project management](#) profession depends on a high number of skills that are transferable across industries.

I think the professional certification can only help your career. Even if it does not equate to more money or a better chance at a job it does provide you with extra knowledge, proven competencies and commitment to your profession. All of these things can be equated into skill sets and accomplishments when selling your self to a potential employer.

Finally I am surprised at the number of people who have the majority of the components necessary to pursue the certification and don't. There are always all kinds of excuses.



Career Tips

The bottom line, however, is you owe it to yourself to pursue the certification. You will feel a sense of accomplishment, be rewarded for all of your work and commitment to your field and have demonstrated you are a true professional. By the way just about every profession has their trade publications.

People with certifications typically get the "first opportunity" to write an article or two. This is a great way to become known and enhance your professional opportunities.

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