

Certification Facelift for Career Uplift

Making every company crave for their skill set is a dream that most engineers harbour. Certifications help them live that dream, equipping them with essential knowledge and hands-on experience to increase their employability quotient

■ VANISHA JOSEPH

Ever noticed goods on a beam balance when you go shopping? Those need to outweigh the weights to enter your shopping basket. Similar is the situation of engineering students stepping into professional shoes. They have to outperform competitors in skill sets to get into a good company. Thus, they have to constantly be on a look out for opportunities that help them develop extra skills to set them apart, and get noticed by employers.

The situation is no different for experienced engineers, many of whom jostle against stagnation. They also search for ways to improve their profiles and make themselves more marketable.

Certification is one such makeweight that promises to give both experienced engineers and freshers the extra edge; increasing their employability quotient and helping them outsmart competitors.

"The IT field has witnessed fast changes and developments, making it essential for engineers to keep up

with varied languages, applications and products. For engineers, practical and academic knowledge is important, and certifications are a quick and effective way of learning innovations to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date. Certifications serve as yardsticks, determining the potential of engineers who can play a strategic role within the company. They gauge the ability of an engineer," says Aanal Bhagwati, owner, CareerValue Solutions, a Bangalore-based human resource management firm.

Industry experts couldn't agree more. "There is a huge mismatch between industry requirements and skill sets of students passing out every year, as they lack hands-on experience. Every company wants to hire people with right skills that can give them return on investment (ROI) from the day one of their joining," says Lokesh Mehra, regional manager, corporate responsibility, Cisco South Asia.

"With technological changes at a very fast pace, working/experienced professionals too need to acquire specialised skills to fill knowledge gaps that come

along with innovations," he adds.

Naveen Kumar, CEO, Emtech Foundation, a training institute that provides embedded system certifications, says: "Certification courses help increase your demand in the current scenario, where industry requirements are becoming specific. Your résumé needs to match up to these requirements. The industry wants engineers who can adapt to their work culture as soon as possible. This is where certifications play a huge role."

How do certifications help?

Be it getting freshers ready to fly into action from day one, or improving chances of growth for the experienced, or beating recession blues, certifications can help boost the career of engineers. "Vendor certification provides competitive edge, skill differentiation and credibility in the job market. It helps in aligning credentials for job roles, which makes it easier to understand skills requirement for an open position and helps in making accurate hiring decisions," says Tarun Agarwal, director—Technology & Learning



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Makes freshers industry ready. Statistics say only 20 to 30 per cent engineers are employable after procuring their engineering degree and certification courses make them 'employable' in the true sense. "Today's engineering curriculum is designed to fulfill requirements of past but technology across globe is moving at a rapid pace. Due to lack of proper R&D environment and practical facilities in colleges, students get very little understanding and exposure to practical implementation of engineering concepts. Certifications help freshers acquire relevant skill sets keeping them at par with current and future trends of the industry," says S.S. Bhowmick, director, Nex-G Exuberant Solutions, which offers training courses in mobile communication technologies. "Certifications are like value addition for students. They help freshers gain job-specific knowledge that will ultimately lead to employability," adds Varada Murthy, CEO, People First HR Consultants.

Proof of your competency. Earlier the competence of professionals was verified by word of mouth, but in today's global and technologically advanced society, new ways of recognising competence have emerged, one of which is certification. "A recognised certification programme helps employers judge with a neutral platform by means of a certification," says Dilip Mendens, director, Ascro Transatlantic. Certification serves as a proof of competency for engineers. "Certification builds a certain level of confidence amongst employers. The structured learning that happens during preparation for certifications, helps to form a base for the engineer on which the employer can build the required level of capability in a shorter time," says J.A. Bhavsar, group head (IT), ITM Business School.

Adds credibility to working professionals. In today's employment market, employers require tangible evidence of credibility of an engineer's ability. "The ground reality is that certifications remain the key differentiator when a company is deciding on promotions or finding tal-

What's Hot in Certification?

1. As the telecom business grows into a multi-trillion dollar industry, there is a need for professionals certified in telecom, wireless, mobile communication software and mobile applications.
2. Certifications in infrastructure management services, security, unified communications and storage, which include aspects of virtualisation and architecture, have a huge demand.
3. With natural and manmade disasters increasing, risk management and packaged application support are emerging as high demand skillsets.
4. With automation and intelligent electronic products growing, certifications in embedded systems are also in high demand.
5. Some other courses that prepare you for the technology needs of varied industries are supply chain management, project management, total quality management and six-sigma, quality compliance related courses, etc.

ent for latest innovations. It remains the tiebreaker for promotions. If I am looking for talent within my organisation for new projects I instantly search for people having certifications of the skillsets required for that project," says Mehra.

"A well designed training programme can help any trainee to excel in existing jobs and also helps them to explore new opportunities. For example, in mobile application development, a Symbian programmer can enhance knowledge in upcoming mobile platforms, like LiMo, iPhone, BlackBerry and Android. Similarly, a 2G/GSM engineer can learn new wireless network technologies, like 3G-UMTS, WiMAX and LTE," elaborates Bhowmick.

Helps beat recession pangs. Certification also might just be the reason that saves your job during gloomy times. "Recession or no recession, the last ones a company wants to lose is people with good hands-on experience and knowledge. Certifications give that," says Kumar. Adding on, Mehra says: "Even during the current recession, companies were looking or holding onto people-skills with multifaceted features. For instance, they wanted employees who were team players, had good communication skills, hands on experience and project management skills. Certifications could help employees fill some of these gaps they probably had."

The selection criteria

Before deciding on the type of a certification programme, individuals are required to first evaluate what they wish

to learn, where they want their career to progress, and simultaneously analyse how well the programme will prepare them for the future. Thereafter, they can decide on the degree or level of training required. Providing some tips, Bhowmick says: "While deciding on a certification programme, an individual should analyse the depth of training content, its relevance in the industry, training delivery methodologies, lab facility, ratio of theory to practical sessions, evaluation practices, placement opportunities and post-training technical support."

Verification of the credentials of the institute is crucial, assert Kumar and Murthy. "Evaluate the credentials of the institute by taking a few demo classes, surprise visits to the centre and contacting alumnus of the institute. Also pay the fee in instalments; don't get attracted by discounts," advises Kumar.

Adding on, Murthy says: "Ask for references, verify affiliations and claims like the following where the institute claims its certificate programme qualifying candidates for a particular type of job in a particular country, or for all international jobs." Checking on the value-add it provides is also essential. "Consult experienced professionals of the same domain about the market value of the course before going in for it," says Kumar.

As the industry brushes aside the recession gloom, ready to once again cruise the boom tide, make sure you have the certifications and skill sets to glide along. Happy sailing! ■

Mobile Boost For Your Career!

Noida-based Nex-G Exuberant Solutions' Mobile Technology Academy is helping many young engineers prepare for a promising career in mobile technology

Do you want to be a part of the next-generation mobile technology revolution? Nex-G Exuberant Solutions, a mobile communication software company, is the perfect place to host you on the ever-innovating mobile technology.

Nex-G's Mobile Technology Academy (MTA) imparts high-quality training to engineers, grooming them into skilled technical professionals.

"Exposure to live projects to keep students updated on the latest technological advancements and a wide range of training programmes to choose from is the 'Exuberant Advantage' we offer to our students," explains S.S. Bhowmick, director, Nex-G Exuberant Solutions.

Meets training needs of one and all

Nex-G Exuberant Solutions offers technical trainings to suit the needs of all, ranging from individuals to corporates. "Be

it graduates looking for career break, or students looking for trainings, semester projects, thesis development in wireless technologies; or engineers interested in shifting to the wireless industry; or engineers working in the telecom industry, interested in enhancing their skill sets, we can cater to every segment as our training programmes are designed and managed by industry experts having 10 to 20 years experience," says Bhowmick.

The courses that the institution offers include:

Next generation telecom and wireless technology programme. This training is designed for strategic or technical managers, consultants, communications professionals, software engineers, system engineers, network professionals, marketing and sales professionals, IT professionals, and others who plan to use, evaluate or work with various existing and upcoming wireless communication technologies. The training covers wireless and telecom communication technologies, like GSM, CDMA, 3G, UMTS, Wi-Fi, WiMAX, software development/testing, etc.

Mobile and network application programme. This training covers a variety of Mobile platforms, like Symbian, J2ME, iPhone, Android, etc, and network applications.

Protocol stack development and testing course. Nex-G Exuberant Solutions has designed training programmes to train individuals in getting expertise in protocol stack software development for



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next-generation mobile terminals and network technologies.

Exposure to 'live' client projects

"Our students work on live projects related to designing, developing, testing, integrating and maintaining next-generation wireless and mobile technologies," says Bhowmick.

Besides, the institution also provides an opportunity to students/professionals to gain the required industry expo-

sure, by working with companies involved in research and development of next-generation mobile communication systems.

Scope in mobile/wireless technology

But is there scope for career growth in mobile technology? When one looks at TV commercials, where every other advertisement is run by mobile operators, like Airtel, Aircel, Tata Indicom, etc, or by mobile original equipment manufacturers (such as Nokia, Motorola and Samsung), it gives a clear insight into the business opportunity that this domain offers. "Our prime minister recently stated that there will be 25 million jobs created in the telecom sector in the future. With mobile companies providing voice and data services to over 4 billion consumers on networks that cover 6 billion people, there will be immense opportunities for trained professionals," says Bhowmick. So, it surely is time to give your career the mobile punch! ■

8 reasons to choose Nex-G Exuberant's Mobile Technology Academy:

1. World-class infrastructure
2. Syllabus that is kept updated with the latest innovative mobile technologies
3. Trainers come with vast experience from organisations like Alcatel-Lucent, IIT Chennai. The institution also has the experience of delivering corporate trainings to who's who of mobile technology industry
4. Strong industry relationship with companies for helping students get placements and post training
5. Exposure to 'live' client projects
6. Flexible timings to enable working professionals enrol into the courses
7. Hostel and transport facilities available for outstation students
8. Its trainees are today present in 21 countries, spread across seven continents