

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CREDENTIAL VALUE – FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INDUSTRY EMPLOYERS

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NON-REFEREED RESEARCH ABSTRACT

IT employees are critical for organizations in regards to their job responsibilities of developing, managing, or maintaining organizational information systems. IT professionals' capabilities are often indicated and evaluated by the possessed IT credentials. There are always mixed messages in terms of which kind of IT credentials is more desired and directly supported by organizations. In the existing literature, despite a large amount of interests extended to IT certification, the extent and nature of overall IT credentials haven't yet been thoroughly discussed. This article intends to investigate the value of three major types of IT credentials directly from the perspective of employers, namely, IT related academic degree, IT certification, and IT related working experience.

The research focus of this article is the analysis of data gathered directly from employers on their preferences, job requirements, and organizational support with respect to IT credentials. As such, the article provides a comprehensive insight into this important topic. A survey of IT directors (or senior managers) from randomly selected 1000 companies will be analyzed. Sample question items include employers' preferences of degree, certification, and working experience; job requirements on these three credentials; possible organizational support to help employees obtaining three credentials; and corresponding comparison among these three credentials.

One of the closely related studies, Bartlett (2002) performed a two-group quasi-experimental design to evaluate employer's preference for IT certifications over 2-year academic degrees. He concluded that employers preferred a 2-year degree over certifications but they also identified that previous work experience in alignment with the needs of their firm is more important than either the academic degree or certifications. In this article, not only the pair-wise preferences will be investigated for IT certifications, IT related academic degrees, and IT working experiences, but also the specific job requirements on these credentials as well as the format of organizational support will be used to analyze the actual practices.

In order to gain the employer's perspective on IT certifications, an anonymous survey will be distributed to the IT directors (or senior managers) of 1000 randomly selected companies. The sample will be obtained from a database containing about 20 million company addresses, and among them, 33,000 have general email addresses. The survey instrument contained 24 questions delivered through a professional online survey platform. Existing and related research surveys were reviewed for insight into the development of the survey instrument. Research concepts from previous articles, such as that of Todd et al. (1995) and Al-Rawi et al. (2005), were used to develop a master list of questions. The survey instrument were also referencing to the survey used in Wierschem et al. (2011).

A pilot test of the survey instrument will be conducted in October 2011 to evaluate the usability of the survey instrument. Based on feedback from the pilot test, modifications to the instrument will be made. The updated survey will then be distributed in early 2012 to the email addresses of 1000 companies. The surveys will be addressed to the Director of IT (or similar job titles) at each company. Four weeks later a second reminder of the survey will be made. With a thorough analysis on the effective response, it is believed that this article can provide an overview on the comprehensive valuation of IT credentials from employer's perspective based on their preference levels and actual practices.