Chapter IX

An Exploration of the Value of Information Systems Certification: The Perspective of the Human Resource Professional*

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Abstract

Realizing that human resource (HR) professionals are often the gatekeepers to employment in organizations, this exploratory study examines the perceptions of HR professionals in relation to education, experience, and information system (IS) certification. Survey results were obtained from
approximately 100 HR professionals who are members of local chapters of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in North Carolina. We conclude that education, certification, and experience are imperfect substitutes for each other. In addition, there seems to be a joint or halo effect conferred upon a balanced candidate. HR professionals are also willing to associate substantial positive organizational benefits with certification, specifically: enhanced IT staff credibility, competitive advantage, level of service, consistency of service provided. HR professionals also associate substantial employee benefits with certifications, specifically: enhanced credibility, preparation for new position within the current organization, compensation, mobility, preparing for other certification tests, and meeting a job requirement.

Introduction

Because the current information technology (IT) environment is characterized by rapid dynamic change, evolution of current technologies, and creation of new technologies, the skills portfolios of IT professionals are under constant pressure to develop in parallel. An important way to develop the IT skills portfolio is certification. While the perspectives of IT professionals and IT managers have been studied in the past (CompTIA, 2001), there has been no research on the perspective of human resource (HR) professionals toward IT certification.

The perspective of the HR professional is important. As the initial gatekeepers through which potential employees must pass to attain interviews with IT managers, the certification perceptions of HR professionals are worthy of study in and of themselves. In addition, the perceptions of HR professionals may have important implications for information systems (IS) curricula.

Background

A profession exists when its members are required to obtain requisite training, complete a certification process underpinned with rigorous standards, engage in continuing education, abide by a code of ethics, and submit to sanctions,
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