

How to Build Credibility and Confidence With Professional Certifications and Credentials

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Do you ever receive an email from someone with a slew of letters behind their name and wonder what the alphabet soup really means? Are you curious about professional achievements and digital badges promoted by connections on LinkedIn?



Professional credentials can help you set yourself apart from others and gain a competitive edge in the industry. They can be a valuable asset for career advancement by demonstrating your commitment to training and specialized skill development, and they can help you make a stronger case for a promotion or raise. And with a wide range of credentials available in the security industry, it is important to understand the

distinctions between programs to determine which one best suits your needs.

There are several different forms of credentials ranging from academic degrees and certificate programs to stackable microcredentials and certifications. Among these, professional certification programs stand out for their rigorous requirements and are a viable way to build one's expertise.

Selecting the right credentialing program depends on your learning goals and career aspirations. It's important to understand the differences between types of credentials when choosing a professional education path. The Institute for Credentialing Excellence provides the following definition of terms:

- **A microcredential** is a formal recognition awarded to an individual who has demonstrated attainment of a narrow scope of knowledge, skills, or abilities. The scope of the microcredential can be as granular as a single skill or competency.
- **A certificate program** is a non-degree-granting program that provides instruction or training to aid participants in acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and/or competencies associated with intended learning outcomes. Assessment-based certificate programs evaluate participants on the accomplishment of those intended learning outcomes and award certificates for successful completion.

- **A certification** is a voluntary, nongovernmental process by which an individual is determined by a certification body to have successfully completed the requirements of a certification program. A certification program publicly identifies individuals as having mastered knowledge and skills critical to successful performance in a profession, occupation, or role.

What distinguishes certification programs from other credentials is that they are not designed to teach concepts or skills. Instead, they establish a minimum level of accepted competence, measuring proficiency through personnel assessment tools like exams. This "line in the sand" serves to distinguish and publicly recognize individuals who have mastered work-related knowledge.

Earning an industry-recognized certification can help you to demonstrate your breadth of professional knowledge and skill. It can also act as a stepping stone in your career, helping you advance and take on new responsibilities. As noted in a blog by RISE community supporter and security industry veteran Jon Harris, "Knowledge acquired over time provides compounding interest [and] has a sum drastically greater than its parts."

Investing in your knowledge and skill development today will yield significant benefits as you gain practical on-the-job experience. Still, you want to consider the return on investment for obtaining a credential considering the financial resources, time, and effort involved. Here are a few tips for evaluating credentials your boost your career:



- **Clearly define your goal:** Think about your long-term career aspirations and identify credentials that align with your professional goals.
- **Perform a cost-benefit analysis:** Weigh the financial investment, time commitment, and effort required against the potential career benefits and opportunities the credential might provide.
- **Consider industry recognition and credibility:** Select a credential that is offered by a reputable organization and widely recognized by employers within the security industry.
- **Ask for referrals:** Talk to colleagues, mentors, or industry professionals who have earned similar credentials to gain their insights and recommendations.
- **Examine exam and assessment methods:** Review the exam blueprint or competency framework to understand the scope of the exam and determine if it suits your learning style and professional development goals.

- **Estimate compound interest:** Consider how developing expertise through the credentialing process now will create career advantages, maximize your potential, lead to new opportunities, or fuel your next career endeavor in the future.

Overall, obtaining a professional certification or credential is a strategic investment in your career that offers both personal satisfaction and career benefits that can help propel your success. Employers value certified professionals and credential holders who contribute effectively to the organization and are committed to upholding high-performance standards. Achieving your professional development goals through certifications and credentials can enhance your confidence, give you a sense of accomplishment, and further motivate you to continue pursuing professional growth.

List of Security-Related Certification Programs

[ASIS International](#)

- Certified Protection Professional (CPP)
- Professional Certified Investigator (PCI)
- Physical Security Professional (PSP)
- Associate Protection Professional (APP)

Associated Locksmiths of America (ALOA)

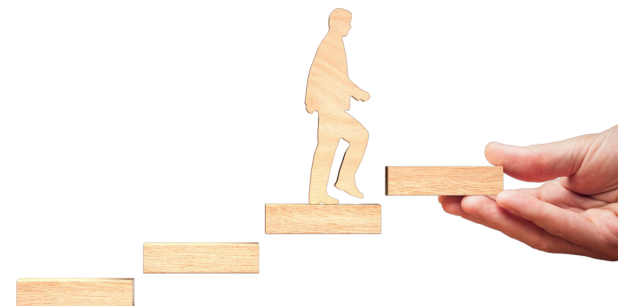
- ALOA Fundamental Locksmith (AFL)
- Certified Registered Locksmith (CRL)
- Certified Professional Locksmith (CPL)
- Certified Master Locksmith (CML)

[Building Industry Consulting Service International \(BICSI\)](#)

- Electronic Safety and Security Designer (ESS)
- Outside Plant Designer (OPD)
- Registered Communications Distribution Designer (RCDD)
- Registered Telecommunication Project Manager (RTPM)
- Various certifications for installers and technicians

[Cisco Systems](#)

- Cisco Certified Support Technician (CCST)
- Cisco Certified Network Professionals (CCNP)



[CompTIA](#)

- CompTIA Security+
- CompTIA PenTest+
- CompTIA Cybersecurity Analyst (CySA+)
- CompTIA Advanced Security Practitioner (CASP+)
- CompTIA A+
- CompTIA CTP+
- CompTIA Network+
- CompTIA Project+
- CompTIA Security+
- CompTIA Server+

[The Door and Hardware Institute \(DHI\)](#)

- Architectural Hardware Consultant (AHC)
- Electrified Hardware Consultant (EHC)

[Electronic Security Association \(ESA\)](#)

- Certified Alarm Technician (CAT) [Levels I & II]
- Certified Service Technician
- Certified Systems Integrator
- Certified Video Technician

ETA International

- Certified Alarm Security Technician

[Global Information Assurance Certification \(GIAC\)](#)

- GIAC Security Essentials Certification (GSED)
- *Various certifications on Enterprise Security Controls and Information, Cyber, and Cloud Security

[International Association of Professional Security Consultants \(IAPSC\)](#)

- Certified Security Consultant (CSC)

[Information Systems Audit & Control Association \(ISACA\)](#)

- Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
- Certified in the Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)

[International Information System Security Certification Consortium \(ISC\)2](#)

- Certified Information Systems Security Professional (Specializations offered in Architecture, Engineering, and Management)
- Systems Security Certified Practitioner
- Certified Cloud Security Professional
- Certified Secure Software Lifecycle Professional
- Certified Authorization Professional

[Identity Management Institute \(IMI\)](#)

- Certified Identity and Access Manager (CIAM)
- Certified Access Management Specialist (CAMS)
- Certified Identity Governance Expert (CIGE)
- Certified Identity Management Professional (CIMP)
- Certified Identity and Security Technologist (CIST)
- Certified Identity Protection Advisor (CIPA)
- Certified in Data Protection (CDP)

[Microsoft](#)

- Certified Service Technician
- Certified Solutions Associate
- Certified Solutions Expert – Windows Server
- Certified Solutions Expert
- Certified Solutions Expert SQL Server 2012 or later
- Technology Associate

[National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#)

- Certified Life Safety Specialist (CLSS)
- Certified Fire Protection Specialist (CFPS)
- Certified Fire Alarm ITM Specialist (CFAITMS) for Facility Managers
- Certified Fire Plan Examiner (CFPE)
- Certified Electrical Safety Worker (CESW)
- Certified Fire Inspector (CFI) [Levels I & II]

[National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies \(NICET\)](#)

- Certification in Fire Alarm Systems [Levels I - IV]
- Video Security Systems Technician
- Video Security Systems Designer
- *Various certifications in Civil Engineering Technology and in Electrical and Mechanical Systems Engineering Technology



[Information Systems Audit and Control Association \(ISACA\)](#)

- Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)
- Certified Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
- Certified in the Governance of Enterprise IT (CGEIT)
- CSX Cybersecurity Practitioner Certification (CSX-P)
- Certified Data Privacy Solutions Engineer (CDPSE)
- Information Technology Certified Associate (ITCA)

[Security Industry Association \(SIA\)](#)

- Certified Security Project Manager (CSPM)
- Security Industry Cybersecurity Certification (SICC)

[Six Sigma Council](#)

- Six Sigma Certification (Yellow Belt, Green Belt, Black Belt, Master Black Belt)
- Lean Six Sigma (Green Belt, Black Belt)