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**A Nice Approach To  
IT Certifications**

**By**

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## Disclaimer

This article was written only after a lot of research on the web and personally interviewing with some word-widely-known IT/Sec experts like Robert Hansen (rsnake@hackers.org) and Jeremiah Grossman (Whitehat Inc). It was written not to defame certification holders and certification authorities but to point out some undesirable issues.

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IT Certifications have a number of advantages in job markets. They measure job applicants' knowledge and expertise to a certain degree to know how much beneficial it is to company or not. Those who have a lot of certifications and educational backgrounds can win as short-listed candidates. The main objective of IT Certifications is to make IT professionals' knowledge and expertise updated with current trends.

Some IT Companies evaluate IT professionals' capabilities greatly looking at certifications. Salary survey news shows that IT Professionals can increase their salary by taking certification exams.

News like that misleads to undesirable effects on certifications. It indirectly makes people have bad illusion that the only reason to take certifications is to shine CV and get better job. I have hardly seen someone who takes certifications to increase their knowledge and expertise. Everyone take certifications in the hope of gaining better salary and tangible benefits.

Thus, being able to take exams is the top priority for that kind of people. They use exam crams, short-cut key points ...etc to pass exams successfully. Here I would like to show the smartest method to sit every certification. Just choose your desired certification. Find out its exam objectives. Repeatedly practice to meet such objectives. You can rest assured and feel calm that you surely pass it because you study to cover its objectives completely. Some people even prepare for exams by learning theories and concepts while taking sample questions repeatedly – repeated actions lead to some kind of memorization and thus if they see the same kind of questions in exams, they can do well.

As you can see, most methods are one-stroke learning to pass the exam. Here, I would like to give one real-world example when my teachers and parents taught me in my childhood age:

***“There are many swimming methods – frog-like, fish-like, butterfly-like ...etc. No matter how much you learn swimming methods, you cannot swim quite actually as long as you do not try swimming in pool.”***

It is true that certifications simulate real-world cases like ‘You are an administrator of XYZ Company. You are now tasked with ...’. But it does not verify that candidates had actual experiences of doing such cases. It supports and ensures only that

candidates know what to do when they face such cases in their job environments. Certifications cannot guarantee that candidates have practical capabilities to do. When they do not know about questions, candidate may randomly and blindly select answers hoping that their random answers may be correct. Certifications cannot verify that candidates choose such choices because they actually know to do so.

That is why, experts from searchsecurity.com said they had seen a number of smart security professionals without any certifications and also incompetent ones with a number of certifications.

Like I mentioned above, certifications have such weaknesses that they cannot validate candidates' actual knowledge and expertise in complete and perfect way. There are only a few of certifications that have both exam (theoretical) tests and lab tests. Certifications that have only lab tests are not good as it may leave some background theories and concepts.

In security certifications, I have seen only one exam that includes lab test. This is OSCP – Offensive Certified Security Professional. OSCP authorities give you one day to complete the lab assignment. This also has flaws that as the assigned job is not at testing center, candidates may hire a security geek to do assignment for them.

We now know that almost all certifications have more or less weaknesses and difficulties to assess candidates' skills and experiences thoroughly. To get best benefits from certifications, we should take exams with the No.1 priority of improving our knowledge and expertise. We should not prioritize for getting better jobs or boasting and shining our CV – if so, we tend to forget all stuffs after taking exams. We should take exams only after we have learnt and done experiments a lot. Finally I would like to suggest Certification Authorities that certification exams should be designed and developed as fully interactive applications with exam takers and should also include real-world-like lab environments to test candidates' real-world practical capabilities.