



Microsoft Certification Translates into Customer and Partner Value

Microsoft Partners Worldwide Use Certification to Support Customers and Compete More Effectively

Microsoft technology partners across the globe leverage Microsoft Certification strategically to demonstrate their commitment to deliver the best possible customer value and compete with greater impact. In doing so, these partners connect the most valuable employees with the companies that need them, attract and retain highly qualified team members, and boost customer service delivery levels.

Although the benefits of [Microsoft Certification](#) seem intuitively apparent, especially for individual technology professionals, the findings of market researchers and analysts offered evidence for the relevance of Microsoft Certification and technical and professional certifications in general. For example, an executive brief based on wide-ranging research and a presentation prepared for Microsoft by Amazon Consulting make a strong case for the business advantages of Microsoft Certification and other certification programs.¹

Amazon Consulting performed in-depth research with technology vendors, their channel partners, and technology customers in the Americas and Europe. When customers responded to the question about what they deemed to be most important in technology solution providers, technical certification through a vendor—such as Microsoft Certified

IT Professional (MCITP) qualification—was top of mind for more than 35 percent of the respondents, outranking certified best practices, industry certifications, and more general qualifications. From a channel partner perspective, investing in the technical certifications of team members resulted in direct benefits in three areas: higher market credibility, increased customer satisfaction, and greater effectiveness in supporting customers. The Amazon Consulting research also found that “industry-level and solutions-level technical certifications are growing in importance to both end users and partners.”

The examples of three Microsoft Gold Certified Partners introduced in this article—MSEmploy, D2Hawkeye Services, and IMMIX Group—agree with research findings, but also offer additional proof points to illustrate the high value of Microsoft Certification and the innovation and insight brought to bear in using it to support the interests of partners, customers, and individual professionals.

MSEmploy: Building a Compelling Business Case for Certification

With headquarters in Paris, France, [MSEmploy](#) supports technology professionals, employers, students, and Microsoft partners with training and Microsoft Certification resources and supporting services. The company licenses its business model to facilitate the growth of the brand into other countries and regions, including the [United States](#), [Canada](#), and [Italy](#). Currently,

¹ Executive brief “The Value of Channel Training and Certification Programs”, June 2009, and presentation “The Value of Training and Certification”, November 11, 2009



MSEmploy is readying licensed operations in Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, and Spain.

MSEmploy was founded in 2005 to address several urgent issues faced by individuals with technology skills and technology companies. As Pierre François, CEO of MSEmploy, explains, “We aim to address the skills resource needs of Microsoft partners and companies that use Microsoft products, and at the same time, we want to support the professional growth of individual technologists and help them work in productive careers where they can be of great value to their organizations,” he says.

Starting with France, MSEmploy assessed the state of the labor market for Microsoft technology-related skills and found several gaps. Many highly qualified individuals don't have any Microsoft Certification, which puts them at a disadvantage when they apply for a position or try to prove their value to their current employer. Many Microsoft partners follow a business-to-business model and frequently recruit technical employees from other partners or customer organizations, but companies in the business-to-consumer realm often experience shortages of employees with proven skills and expertise. And, in the absence of a centralized tracking service, recruiters and employers could access the employment status and location of only a small portion of the professionals who have Microsoft Certification.

To help close these gaps, MSEmploy connects individuals with the training and testing providers that can help them obtain certification, putting to work a large referral network of service organizations in the countries where MSEmploy is active. The company also maintains a large database of certified professionals, employers, and open positions, which makes it possible to encourage direct relationships between employers and candidates. MSEmploy uses business intelligence (BI) tools to analyze employment opportunities, compare them to

the resumes submitted by job seekers, and facilitate optimal matches between potential employees and companies in need of technology expertise. In some countries, the company goes a step further and offers recruiting services. It proactively communicates with employers and job seekers to make introductions and highlight possible opportunities.

For individuals looking for work, MSEmploy also offers a series of events where market and technology experts from the company's team present the opportunities that may become available with training and Microsoft Certification in the technologies that businesses hope to benefit from. In facilitating these events, MSEmploy often collaborates with Microsoft or other Microsoft partners. Currently, many employers in the markets where MSEmploy operates look for people who have Microsoft Silverlight and Microsoft SharePoint Server skills; in addition, Microsoft SQL Server and BI expertise are also in high demand.

To make a valid business case for Microsoft Certification and MSEmploy's services, the company conducted its own market research in the markets it has entered. Because MSEmploy began this research when an earlier generation of Microsoft certifications was still widely in use, especially in Europe, the findings refer to these older certifications. MSEmploy is currently updating with further research, which confirms the findings from the earlier market research. These research results included the following:

- Professionals who are qualified as Microsoft Certified Systems Engineers (MCSE) earn approximately 10 percent more than their systems engineer colleagues who do not have the certification. Systems engineers with the Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator (MCSA) certification earn approximately 8 percent more, and their peers with one or several Microsoft Certified Professional

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—Pierre François, CEO, MSEmploy

(MCP) qualifications earn close to 2 percent more, than systems engineers who do not have any Microsoft Certification.

- Salary differences are similar for developers in a Microsoft environment. Developers with Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (MCSD) certification earn close to 16 percent more, with Microsoft Certified Applications Developer (MCAD) certification almost 9 percent more, and with one or several MCP certifications approximately 5 percent more than developers without Microsoft Certification.
- Technical support professionals who have a Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician (MCDST) certification earn close to 7 percent more than support employees without the certification. MCP certification boosts earning potential by a relatively small—but noticeable—1 percent.
- Employee turnover is quite different for professionals with advanced Microsoft Certifications, with MCP certification, and without certification. People with advanced Microsoft Certifications, on average, spend 21 percent more time—and with MCP certification, 15 percent more time—with the same employer than professionals who do not have any certification. François comments, “We often hear from employers who are afraid that their employees are more ready to leave for another job after the company has made an investment in training and certification. Our research shows that the opposite is the case. Certified professionals are more loyal employees who feel valued for their contributions and skills.”
- Finally, the risk of unemployment is considerably smaller for professionals with Microsoft Certification. MSEmploy

research finds that technologists with advanced Microsoft Certification face an unemployment rate that is 22 percent less, and those with MCP certification confront one that is 13 percent less, than their counterparts who do not have any Microsoft Certification. “Microsoft technology and Microsoft Certification not only promote productive, well-paying jobs, they also provide a strong boost to job security,” says François.

D2Hawkeye Services: Using Certification to Compete More Effectively with Other Technology Providers and Employers

From its headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal, [D2Hawkeye Services](#) supports customers worldwide by developing software based on Microsoft tools and technologies. Most of the company’s customers are in the United States, and other large customers are in Germany and the United Kingdom. D2Hawkeye is owned by [Verisk Health](#) (NASDAQ: VRSK), a medical analytics software company in Boston, Massachusetts. Programmers at D2Hawkeye develop and refine the software solutions Verisk Health provides. D2Hawkeye development centers are in India and Nepal.

D2Hawkeye was founded in 2001 by two people and today has more than 300 employees, which makes D2Hawkeye the largest technology company in Nepal. In recent years, the team has grown by an average of 40 employees per year. Sajjan Sangraula, Principal Solutions Architect and Head of Research at D2Hawkeye, is responsible for mapping emerging customer needs to Microsoft technology road maps and company resources. “I always look for synergies between our current activities, our expertise, and new initiatives driven by customers’ business needs, where cloud computing figures prominently,” says Sangraula. “Microsoft Certification for our technologists puts us in a better position to act on these opportunities and demonstrate verified expertise to customers.”



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—Sajjan Sangraula, Principal Solutions Architect and Head of Research, D2Hawkeye Services

In the Nepalese technology market, governmental regulation is not as sharply articulated as in many other countries. The credibility of technology products and providers is a significant concern among businesses that depend on technical capabilities and vendor support. Many pirated software products circulate widely, and it can be difficult for a business user to ascertain the authenticity of a program. Technology vendors range in quality from highly qualified organizations like D2Hawkeye, which, as a matter of policy, uses only properly licensed software and garners appropriate employee qualifications whenever it can, to businesses that don't abide by quality and industry standards. These factors also lend an increased relevance to Microsoft Certification for D2Hawkeye consultants and technologists. "Certification figures prominently in our customer communications and marketing," says Sangraula. "It's also a critical element in our business planning. We always want to make sure we achieve the certifications that best enable us to help customers benefit from their technology investments."

What's more, the Nepalese labor market for people embarking on a career in technology is extremely competitive. D2Hawkeye competes for prospective employees with other companies in Nepal, including exciting, fast-moving startups, and in India. Many recent graduates and early-career technologists are eager to be interviewed by India-based companies and are ready to move to Bangalore and other Indian high-tech centers to work in positions they consider rewarding. D2Hawkeye engages with most of the nearly 20 colleges and schools where it might be able to recruit graduates. "Our facilitation of Microsoft Certification is a very important consideration for job seekers planning their next career steps. It often makes the difference between our ability to bring people on board and the capabilities gap we may experience when they go elsewhere," says Sangraula.

D2Hawkeye follows a thorough process to assess the abilities, skills, experience, and growth potential of employment candidates. After they join the company, new team members enter a three-month skills development program in which certification is a key component, to ensure they get up-to-speed quickly and can be effective on customers' behalf. In serving its global customers, the company becomes involved with almost all Microsoft technologies. For that reason, D2Hawkeye managers often encourage employees to gain more than a single Microsoft Certification.

As D2Hawkeye has experienced, slightly more than two-thirds of the Nepalese technology workers who moved to India eventually return to Nepal and are ready to contribute their experience and professional accomplishment to Nepalese businesses. They may already have obtained Microsoft Certifications while abroad, but once again, certification provides a distinction in favor of D2Hawkeye. Says Sangraula, "Professionals returning to Nepal see that we offer Microsoft Certification to our people and consider us more seriously as a company that supports employees' professional growth and wants to deliver best quality to its customers."

IMMIX Group: Translating Certification and Training Directly into Systems Availability And Improved Customer Service Levels

Located just outside of Johannesburg, South Africa, the [IMMIX Group](#) has been in business since 2000. Nearly 80 employees serve customers in South Africa and across Africa. IMMIX, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, has performed more than 100 implementations of Microsoft Dynamics business management software for customers in professional services, retail, manufacturing, logistics, and other market segments. In addition, the company provides consulting on many other Microsoft technologies and technology training.



IMMIX customers include banks, financial service providers, and large road logistics companies that keep fleets moving along the region's highways. Any interruption to these customers' business-critical systems impacts not only the companies but also their customers and communities throughout the area. All these customers rely on IMMIX to resolve any solution-related issues promptly and effectively.

IMMIX sought a way to receive and be able to provide effective, affordable support from Microsoft. "We need to minimize our customers' risks and help keep their operations going," says Warren O'Reilly, Director at IMMIX Group.

When Microsoft introduced the Partner Advantage Plan for Microsoft Dynamics partners, IMMIX joined a 90-day pilot program and has been renewing the program ever since. Through the Partner Advantage Plan, IMMIX gained access to a number of valuable resources, including round-the-clock support with response times as short as one hour; 150 technical support incidents per year; a dedicated account manager; unlimited access to Microsoft Dynamics e-learning materials for employees and the ability to customize and share training materials with customers; and up to 15 vouchers per year to take Microsoft Dynamics certification exams at a substantial discount.

In recent years, the company has used all the discounted Microsoft Certification vouchers it received, and many employees have several certifications. "I wish we could get more certification vouchers, because they're extremely valuable," says O'Reilly. For customers, Microsoft Certification verifies that IMMIX team members possess the qualifications and resources to help them effectively. Says O'Reilly, "Microsoft Certification carries a lot of weight with customers, especially when we need to demonstrate our expertise and credibility to prospects still evaluating their options. And, once we serve and support a customer, the effort our people make in obtaining certification translates directly into their ability to resolve customer concerns and keep business systems in operation with minimal downtime."

Through the e-learning and training resources available in the Partner Advantage Plan, IMMIX ensures that employees gain further expertise to help customers achieve their goals for technology and can grow professionally to meet greater challenges. IMMIX also helps customers enable their own employees by delivering Microsoft training materials customized and branded by IMMIX. "The training materials and e-learning resources directly benefit our customers and employees, and the savings to us in being able to use and share content that Microsoft developed are enormous," states O'Reilly.

"... [O]nce we serve and support a customer, the effort our people make in obtaining certification translates directly into their ability to resolve customer concerns...."

—Warren O'Reilly, Director, IMMIX Group

For more information about Microsoft Certification, go to www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/certification/cert-overview.aspx or contact Amber Reed at amreed@microsoft.com.