

IT Certifications Improve Results for Organizations and Employees



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Table of Contents



CLICK BELOW TO NAVIGATE TO EACH SECTION IN THIS DOCUMENT

Digital Transformation and the IT Skills Gap.....	3	Increased Impact of Domain-Specific Certifications.....	11
Difference Between Certifications and Skills/Training	5	Certification Lengthens Employee Retention	12
Difference in Professional and Career Outcomes Between Certified Versus Non-Certified	6	Certifications Benefit All Stakeholders	13
Improving the Quality of Candidates and Time-to-Fill Metrics.....	7	Advice to Executives.....	14
Certifications Lead to Greater Talent Retention.....	8	Essential Guidance	15
Certified Professionals Have Greater Impact and Performance.....	9	Appendix: Supplemental Data.....	16
Certified Individuals and Teams Have Higher Performance.....	10	About the IDC Analysts.....	18
		Message from the Sponsor.....	19

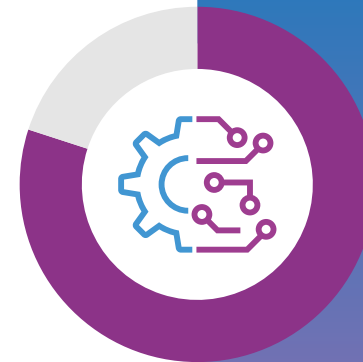
Digital Transformation and the IT Skills Gap

People are the make-or-break element of a high-performing IT organization.

There is simply no replacement for people with the right skills, attitudes, and traits to deliver on the promise of digital transformation.

More than 60% of organizations agreed that IT skill shortages would delay their digital transformation-related journeys, impact revenue, and slow the development of new products and services.

Leveraging IT certifications throughout the IT employee life cycle can help organizations identify and develop their IT professionals.



By 2027, **80%** of **Global 2000 organizations** will mitigate technical skills shortages using certifications and IT training.

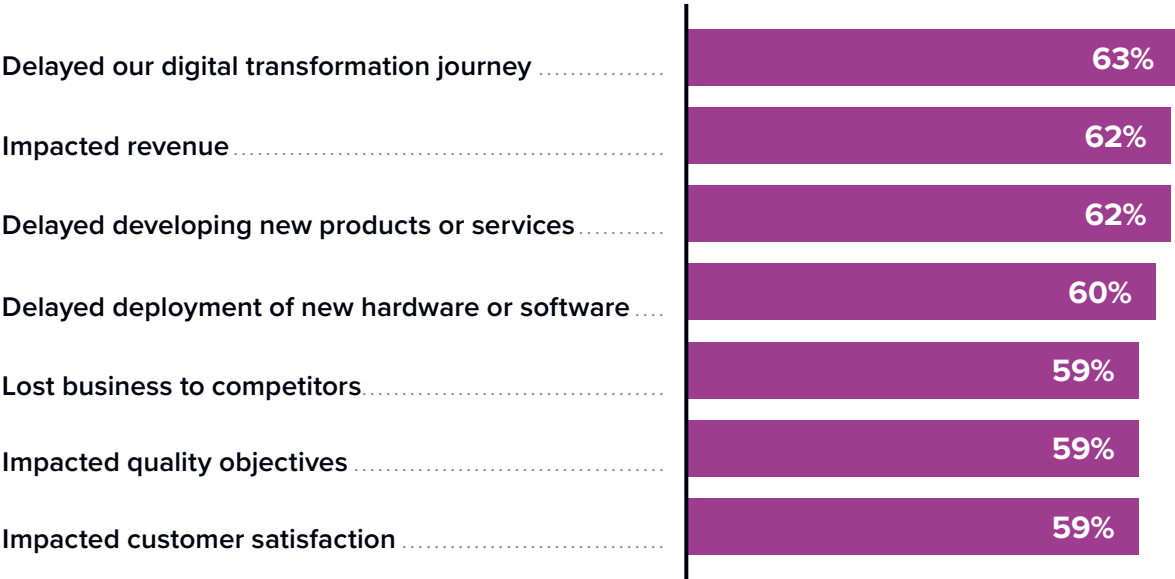
Digital Transformation and the IT Skills Gap (continued)

Enterprises recognize the importance of a skilled workforce.

Leveraging personalized technology skills development for employees will drive **\$1 trillion in productivity gains** by 2026, enabled by generative AI and automation everywhere.



Business Impacts from Lack of IT Skills (% of respondents agree)



n = 811; Source: IDC's North American IT Skills Survey, February 2024

Difference Between Certifications and Skills/Training

Certification and skills are two different things, but they are often related.



Certification is a formal recognition of an individual's knowledge and expertise in a particular field. Certifications impact professional outcomes for employees in terms of talent retention, promotions, solving business challenges, etc.



Skills refer to a person's ability to perform a specific task or activity. Skills are often developed through practice, experience, and training. They can be acquired through education, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, self-study, etc.



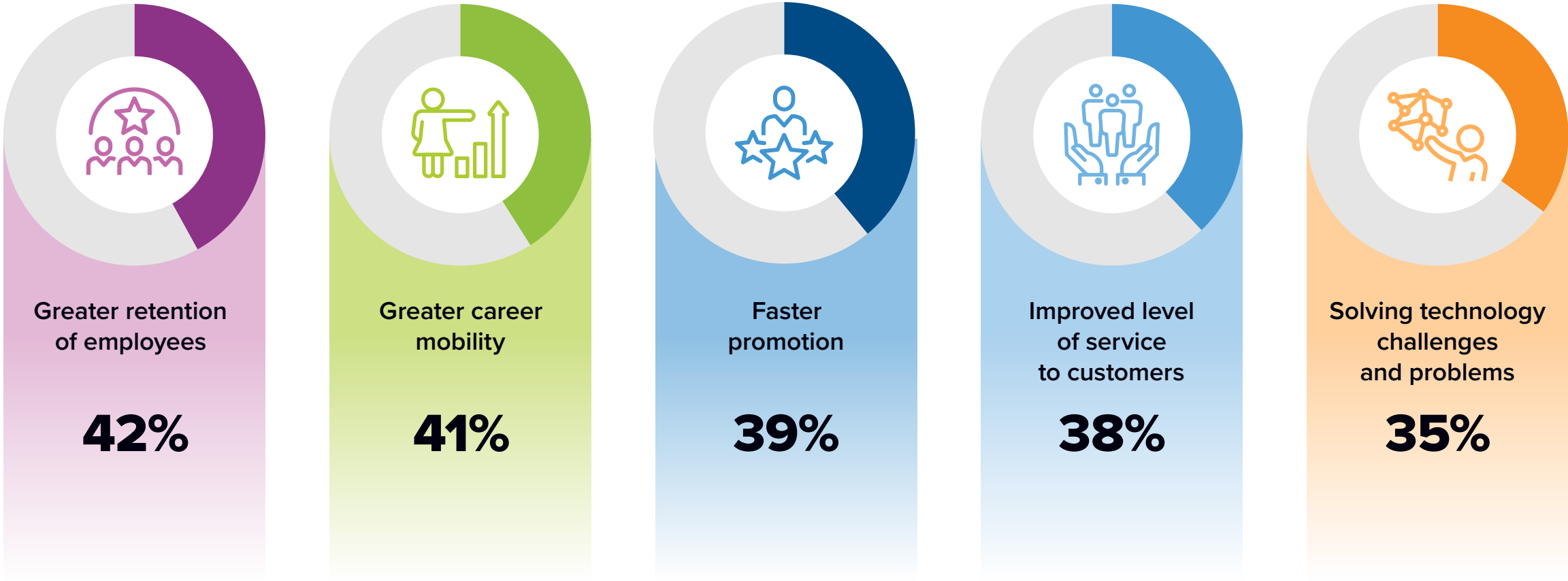
It is important to develop a structured approach to team assignments that **includes both skills assessments and certification programs.** This will improve both team competence and the level of service to customers.

In these rapidly changing times, technology is critical to business success. Certified IT professionals are particularly valuable to their organizations because of their greater adaptability and deep understanding of the capabilities and limitations of technologies.

n = 811; Source: IDC's North American IT Skills Survey, February 2024

Difference in Professional and Career Outcomes Between Certified Versus Non-Certified

In your experience, how do technology vendor certifications impact professional/career outcomes?



n = 811; Source: IDC's North American IT Skills Survey, February 2024

Improving the Quality of Candidates and Time-to-Fill Metrics

IT certifications can be instrumental in reducing the burdens of recruiting and onboarding new employees.



Reduce the cost of hiring

Organizations consistently report that each new hire incurs substantial hard costs (advertising, recruiters, etc.) and employee time (HR and line-of-business teams).



Identify potential candidates faster

IT certifications that align with job roles can be used as a screening tool. Almost all organizations (92%) believe IT certifications save time and resources when evaluating a potential IT candidate.



Reduce the time to hire

Organizations report that having certified candidates speeds up the hiring process. The IT director at a software company explained, *“Hiring is faster because the screening process is simplified with certification as a criterion. The weeding out of candidates happens more quickly.”*



Accelerate time to productivity

New hires with certification reach full productivity levels substantially faster than non-certified hires — a full month sooner. According to the IT manager at a transportation company, *“Certification improves productivity right out of the chute. It also strengthens their commitment to the job.”*

Certifications Lead to Greater Talent Retention

Certifications obtained early in a career increase the value of IT professionals, leading to faster promotions.

Employees who are more valuable to their organization are promoted faster.



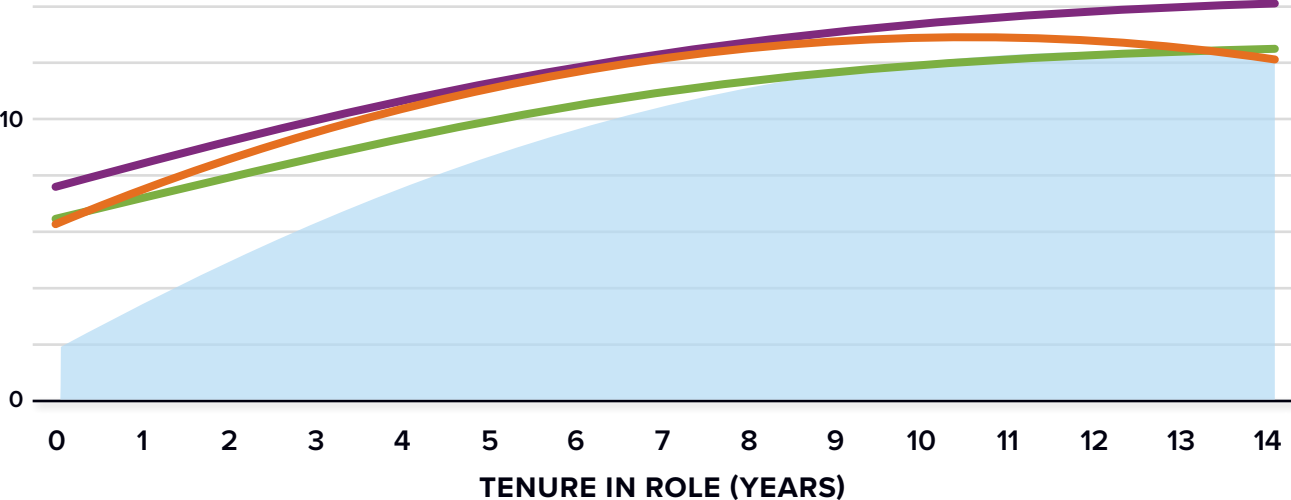
n = 556 (certification before first IT position), n = 525 (certification after first IT position), n = 107 (no certification); Source: IDC's *The Critical Value of IT Training*, 2020

Certified Professionals Have Greater Impact and Performance

Professional impact on digital transformation projects in 2022 by tenure in the role and by the number of certifications held

(Professional Impact Score)

- Average professional impact with 0 certifications
- Average professional impact with 1 certification
- Average professional impact with 2–5 certifications
- Average professional impact with 6+ certifications



- ▶ IT professionals with one certification have **2.5 times** the influence on digital transformation projects as IT professionals with no certifications in their first year in a role.
- ▶ IT professionals with two to five certifications have **as much professional influence** after three years as IT professionals with no certifications after six years.

Professional impact is determined by the frequency with which IT employees performed various project roles such as: project sponsor, subject matter expert, implementer, tester, etc., in the past two years.

n = 1,181; Sources: IDC's IT Professional Performance and Career Milestones Survey, 2019; IDC's Certifications and Professional Influence | For an accessible version of the data on this page, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

Certified Individuals and Teams Have Higher Performance



Certified individuals perform better.

- ✓ Certified application developers are **90% more productive** than application developers without certifications.
- ✓ Certified employees supporting servers and applications **reduce the impact of unplanned downtime on users by 56%**.
- ✓ Certified IT professionals responsible for core IT activities are **17% more productive**.
- ✓ Certified security engineers have **37% fewer network-related security incidents**.
- ✓ Certified cloud data engineers spend **33% less time building and testing** a machine learning model.



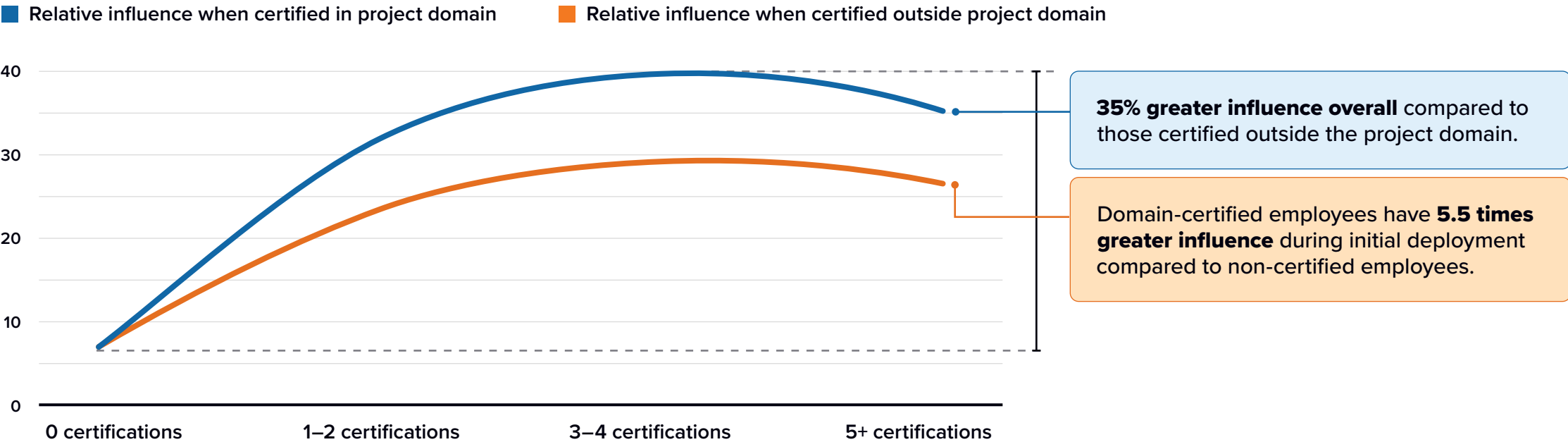
Teams with more than 75% of the team certified have benefits, too.

- ✓ Teams with certified members complete projects about **25% faster**.
- ✓ Certified teams have **80% greater success in reducing IT the budget**.
- ✓ Certified teams have **74% greater success in modernizing enterprise applications**.

n = 1,181; Sources: IDC's *IT Professional Performance and Career Milestones Survey*, 2019; IDC's *Do Certifications Increase IT Professional Impact in the Enterprise?*, Doc #US46090520, February 2020

Increased Impact of Domain-Specific Certifications

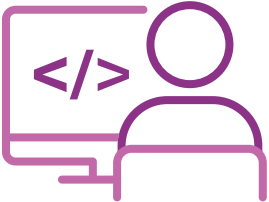
General certifications help with IT professional impact, but certifications specific to the tasks at hand can help even more. When projects are related to a specific domain, such as cloud computing or cybersecurity, IT professionals certified in that domain are about 35% more influential than IT professionals who are certified in other areas.



Source: IDC's *Cloud Skills and the Impact of Training on Successful Cloud Implementations*, August 2017 | For an accessible version of the data on this page, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

Certification Lengthens Employee Retention

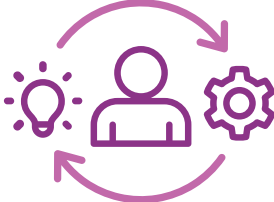
Increased employee retention is great news for an enterprise. Not only does the organization avoid the cost and inconvenience of replacing well-trained, experienced employees, but the organization can leverage the expertise of those professionals longer. The average tenure for certified employees is about 15% longer than non-certified staff.



Certified **developers** have **13% greater tenure.**



Certified **administrators** have **22% greater tenure.**



Certified **solution implementers** have **15% greater tenure.**

“Employees with certification generally stay longer. They perform better, have more subject-matter expertise, and are more satisfied employees.”
IT MANAGER AT A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY

Source: IDC's *The Five Value Propositions of IT Certification for the Enterprise*, September 2018

Certifications Benefit All Stakeholders

Many technology firms have developed robust certification programs to help their employees, IT managers, and partner network effectively select, configure, and deploy their technologies to meet clients' requirements. Leveraging IT certifications can help IT organizations be more agile and successful with their strategic IT projects.

The value propositions for leveraging IT certifications seem clear to several stakeholders.

Overall enterprise:

- ▶ IT certifications improve organizational IT performance, reduce IT hiring costs and risks, and increase quality hires.
- ▶ Applications and systems perform better and have less unplanned downtime when supported by certified IT staff.
- ▶ Certified application developers are more productive and efficient, leading to more rapid innovation and greater agility.

Project leaders and stakeholders:

- ▶ IT managers highlight that certified IT consultants improve successful implementation of new technologies.
- ▶ Fully certified teams have greater project success and higher client satisfaction with improved service to customers.
- ▶ Certified teams experience greater team cohesion and on-the-job performance, leading to advancement of IT professionals.

IT partners and consultants:

- ▶ IT organizations often hire IT consultants to support their strategic IT objectives. Identifying consulting partners with appropriate certifications ensures more successful projects and increases the quality of installed solutions.
- ▶ Greater alignment between the partner team and the client improves project outcomes and raises the focus on business and technology value expectations and key performance indicators.

Advice to Executives

Skills gaps delay digital transformation journeys by an average of 35 weeks.
Take these actions to avoid those delays.

To effectively leverage IT certifications for increased digital transformation success, it is essential that the certification program be a good fit for your organization. Consider the following six criteria as a starting place for selecting an appropriate IT certification program:

- 1** Is the certification program from a significant provider of your IT infrastructure? Or is the certification program so significant industrywide that it is an industry standard?
- 2** Is the certification program aligned to roles, skills, and domains that are relevant to your organization's current and future requirements? Are you willing to be committed to these roles, skills, and domains for the long term?
- 3** Are the skills represented by the certification program evolving with the technology?
- 4** Does the certification program have a progression that is sufficiently robust to grow with your staff?
- 5** For appropriate roles, does the certification program validate business knowledge and skills in addition to technical competence?
- 6** If you are going to use the certification program for selection or promotion, does the program ensure that the exams have not been compromised to ensure honest results?



Essential Guidance

A robust IT certification program has the potential to significantly impact every stage of the employee life cycle. A certified workforce benefits the individual employee and the organization as a whole.

Improved recruiting and onboarding

- ✓ Establish baseline certification requirements to successfully fill a role
- ✓ Provide critical markers to recruiters to quickly identify top talent

Professional development for employees

- ✓ Create career trajectories aligned with the rate of promotion and level of professional influence
- ✓ Provide faster promotion and skill growth
- ✓ Identify certifications within leadership personas and create guideposts for succession planning, ensuring a smooth transition in top positions

Greater professional influence and performance

- ✓ Benefit the organization through demonstrable improvement in individual and workload productivity
- ✓ Raise project success rates with the right skills, identified by the right certifications and experience
- ✓ Improve company perception for employee experience, driving added business and increased revenues

Stronger employee retention

- ✓ Bolster employee satisfaction through the effective use of IT certifications for development and project strategies
- ✓ Increase retention by up to 15%, reducing impact of skills gap
- ✓ Improve professional influence and IT professional's impact on organizational performance
- ✓ Improve employee productivity

Appendix: Supplemental Data

The tables in this appendix provide accessible versions of the data for the complex figures in this document. Click “Return to original figure” below each table to get back to the original data figure.

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 7

Professional impact on digital transformation projects in 2022 by tenure in the role and by the number of certifications held

(Professional Impact Score)

Average professional impact with:	Tenure in role (years)														
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0 certifications	1.8	3.5	5.1	6.5	7.7	8.8	9.8	10.7	11.4	11.9	12.3	12.6	12.8	12.8	12.6
1 certification	6.6	7.4	8.2	8.9	9.6	10.2	10.7	11.2	11.6	12.0	12.3	12.5	12.7	12.8	12.9
2–5 certifications	6.6	7.8	8.9	9.9	10.7	11.5	12.1	12.6	12.9	13.2	13.3	13.3	13.2	13.0	12.6
6+ certifications	7.8	8.6	9.5	10.2	10.9	11.6	12.1	12.7	13.1	13.5	13.9	14.1	14.4	14.5	14.6

n = 1,181; Sources: IDC’s *IT Professional Performance and Career Milestones Survey, 2019*; IDC’s *Certifications and Professional Influence*

[Return to original figure](#)

Appendix: Supplemental Data (continued)

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 9

General certifications help with IT professional impact, but certifications specific to the tasks at hand can help even more.

	Relative influence when certified in project domain	Relative influence when certified outside project domain
0 certifications	7.2	7.2
1–2 certification	23.4	31.8
3–4 certifications	29.0	39.4
5+ certifications	26.4	35.0

Source: IDC's *Cloud Skills and the Impact of Training on Successful Cloud Implementations*, August 2017

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About the IDC Analysts



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As a research director at IDC, Gina Smith is responsible for producing research in the IT Skills and Training sector. Her responsibilities include primary research, analysis and report writing, and the production of market insights worldwide. Gina has more than 25 years of experience in technology, journalism, publishing, and tech startup management. She was CEO of Oracle, founder Larry Ellison’s network computer startup in 2000, served ABC News as its first on-air technology correspondent, and was editor-in-chief of BYTE magazine.

[More about Gina Smith](#)



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Anu Mehta is a senior research analyst and is responsible for managing the research agenda, field research, and custom research projects for IDC’s Future of Work research program. She is focused on expanding the research portfolio around frontline workers, industry comparative assessments, skills, and hybrid work maturity. Prior to joining IDC, she worked with FTI Consulting and Ernst and Young as a senior research analyst in their telecom, media, and technology area. She has largely been focused on analyzing the key performance, business, and financial metrics of the players in the technology industry.

[More about Anu Mehta](#)

Message from the Sponsor



The IT Certification Council (ITCC) is a nonprofit organization committed to growing and promoting professional IT certifications. Our core purpose is to support the industry and our member companies by marketing the value of certification, promoting exam security, furthering innovation, and establishing and sharing industry best practices. Founded in 2007, ITCC is a community of 50+ of the most respected companies in the IT certification industry.

This research was commissioned on behalf of the ITCC membership. True to the organization's mission, ITCC has partnered with IDC to research the value certifications bring to employers and candidates and to make this available to our member companies. Additional white papers on the value elements of certifications to the certified individual and to IT companies can be found for download on the ITCC website.

For more information, please visit our website at itcertcouncil.org

Current ITCC member companies:

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- Adobe
- Alpine Testing Solutions
- Amazon
- Arcitura
- Avaya
- BenchPrep
- BrightLink
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- CertiProf
- Certiverse
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- Credly
- Dell
- F5 Certification
- Google
- Hashicorp
- HPE
- IBM
- Internet Testing Systems
- InterSystems
- ISACA
- Juniper Education Services
- Kryterion
- Lenovo
- Lineup
- Linux Foundation
- Linux Professional Institute
- Meazure Learning (ProctorU)
- Microsoft
- Netlogon
- NI (formerly National Instruments)
- Oracle
- Palo Alto Networks
- Pearson VUE
- PingIdentity
- PMI
- Prometric
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- Questionmark/Learnosity
- Rockwell Information Services
- Salesforce
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