

Certifications for Success



6 Ways to Build Confidence for the Cisco Certification Challenge

Posted by [Gary Pfitzer](#) in [Certifications for Success](#) on Oct 18, 2013 11:22:16 AM

This past June, I found myself assisting at the Cisco Live conference in Orlando by checking in Cisco certification test takers at the testing center there. I processed scores of certification candidates in the minutes before they headed into the exam room for their written test—and was impressed by the quiet air of self-assurance that many of you showed while checking in.

It all got me to wondering about how you arrive at that feeling of confidence heading into a certification test, especially your first one.



Catching some cool, calm, and collected last-minute studying before the test

At Cisco, I've had the pleasure of interviewing Cisco certified individuals with impressive success stories. Tobias Caldwell and Martin Brown are two individuals who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and dared to push their way to multiple certifications. (You can read more about them [here](#) and [here](#).) What gives those of you the confidence to make the commitment and keep building upon it even as the going gets tough?

For those embarking on the Cisco certification journey, I'd like to offer my list of ways to build confidence for the challenge:

1. **Know why you want to get certified**—and keep those reasons in heart and mind. Of course, there are the external motivators, like an eventual promotion at work or a possible salary boost, but it would also pay to look at your intrinsic motivators, such as being able to contribute more confidently to issues in your job, or filling in knowledge gaps so that you can gain a better overall grasp of your field. You can often experience a powerful sense of accomplishment with these personal drivers early on in your campaign to succeed, and they can keep you fired up when everything is new and somewhat overwhelming. When Martin Brown hit "rock bottom" in his job and made the decision to dig himself out with Cisco certification, it was a personal desire to answer day-to-day networking questions more confidently that really drove him to seek a change.

2. While you need a clear vision to anchor you and stay confident, **don't think too big all at once**. If you are at an entry level in your IT role, think about the ICND1 exam and CCENT certification before trying to wrap your head around the ICND2 exam and CCNA Routing and Switching. If you are more advanced and are thinking about branching out to another track or a higher level, concentrate on the value of that first course or first exam that you are shooting for and what it is doing to make you better—don't let concerns about whether you can bite off the whole certification sink you. Dream those dreams, of course, but manage

to stay in the present. For Tobias Caldwell and Martin Brown, it has always been a matter of taking incremental steps on the way upward. The confidence gained from one step has built more confidence to keep going.

3. **Get actively involved in the certification community** and use that energy to build inspiration and a sense of purpose. As a certification aspirant and member of the Cisco Learning Network, you can converse with folks at various levels of experience in the discussion threads of the [CCENT/CCNA R&S Study Group](#) or attend a [member-led study session](#). Or you can reach out to others in the Cisco certification social networking environments of [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Linkedin](#). Somewhere there's a support network for you. Even if you don't actively participate much in these forums, just following the conversations can bring confidence in knowing that there are others out there who are succeeding, and in gaining insight as to how they are succeeding.

4. A big one, obviously, is **practice, practice, practice**. Other posts on this blog have spoken to the importance of this and for good reason. Nothing is going to make you feel more confident on test day than knowing that you have taken your deep dive into the subject matter and left no stone unturned in your quest for knowledge. Register for a [Cisco training course](#) (delivered in a physical or virtual classroom), especially if your employer will pay for it. Pursue any number of learning modalities available through the Cisco Learning Network Store such as [classroom training](#), [e-learning](#), [training on demand](#), [Cisco Learning Labs](#), or self-study with [Cisco Press e-books](#). The Cisco Learning Network Store also offers [practice exams](#). Martin Brown even set up a CCIE rack in the hallway of his home to practice on.

5. **Embrace your inner geek.** A couple Cisco certifications have made Tobias Caldwell a go-to person at his company for vital networking questions and allowed him to travel on business to places like Paris and Milan. Says Tobias of these confidence boosters, "Geek is cool now."

6. **Think like a winner.** Thinking like a winner means not only making the time to prepare well and help guarantee your certification success; it means taking the initiative to push yourself in this pursuit and do what it takes to shine. Think beyond passing a test to showing people in the real world, and yourself, that you truly know your stuff. That will keep you working hard and ready to emerge victorious.

This list is only a start—those of you reading this post probably have your own points to add on this topic. I'd enjoy hearing from you. What are you doing, or have you done, to build confidence in your certification pursuit and help ensure that you meet with success?

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59 Comments



Farshad Oct 19, 2013 8:40 AM

Thanks For Your Information

[Actions](#)



Gus Nov 9, 2013 6:44 PM (in response to Farshad)

Great article..Thanks for sharing it with us at the CLN. Have a great weekend.

[Actions](#)



Igor Nov 14, 2013 2:30 AM (in response to Gus)

I once received an advice by a CCIE regarding my certification path.

"Enjoy the journey" he said.

I think it's a big piece of advice and very important to keep going. This will keep you motivated.

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Nov 14, 2013 4:31 PM

That's a great addition to my list above, Igor--thanks! "Enjoying the journey" reduces the fixation on passing the test at the end. If it's about what you're learning and experiencing along the way, there's a greater chance you're going to ignite your passion, and that will only add to your confidence.

[Actions](#)



brown.dlb@live.com Dec 2, 2013 1:01 PM



Awesome stuff. Thanks Gus for pointing me to this article. This is the kind of support and guidance one needs in picking up the pieces and moving his/her career forward.

Actions



Gus Dec 2, 2013 1:11 PM (in response to brown.dlb@live.com)



You're welcome David.

Actions



Carita Dec 8, 2013 6:10 AM



Great information right here. Thanks Gary!!

CJ

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Dec 9, 2013 6:19 PM (in response to Carita)



You are welcome, Carita! Wishing you satisfaction and success with your CCENT certification.

Actions



Pankaj Dec 9, 2013 10:45 AM



Thanks dear Gus I really needed a artical like this so that I can build a good relation with my studies. .especially I can enjoy the journey. ... I appreciate your suggestions

Actions



Gus Dec 9, 2013 10:51 AM (in response to Pankaj)



You're welcome Pankaj, but all the credit goes to Gary Pfitzer. Lets not forget, that Gary created such a great document. The only thing I am doing is sharing this valuable document with whom may need it. Thanks, Gus.

Actions



juelm Dec 18, 2013 3:22 AM



That awesome Gary. thank you very much for the article

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Dec 20, 2013 8:03 PM (in response to juelm)



Thanks, Joel! It looks from one of the study groups that you're in that you might have your sights set on CCNP certification. Way to go, and best of luck to you.

Actions



Mark Dec 18, 2013 6:29 AM



excellent, many thanks

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Dec 20, 2013 8:06 PM (in response to Mark)



You are welcome, Mark. I'm impressed by the range of study groups that you've been involved in!

Actions



palesa Jan 8, 2014 4:56 AM



Thanks those words really motivates me as I am about to start my journey with Cisco - CCENT.

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Jan 10, 2014 2:14 PM (in response to palesa)



Thanks much! Good luck with an exciting venture to start off the new year. I hope that the community here on the Cisco Learning Network will prove helpful and encouraging to you as you embark on CCENT!

[Actions](#)



Peer Mohamed Raja Jan 13, 2014 9:06 PM

Gr8

[Actions](#)



Uma Shankar V. Jan 18, 2014 8:33 AM

Hi Gary,

Really motivated by reading the 6 golden rules. Especially I love the fifth one [[Embrace your inner geek](#)].

Its helps not only for CCENT, but for all people.

Thank you, for sharing it with us !!

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Jan 21, 2014 7:02 PM (in response to Uma Shankar V.)



Thanks, Uma--very much appreciated! Yep, Tobias Caldwell was the inspiration for that fifth point. In case, you missed it in the article, here's a link to his certification story:

https://learningnetwork.cisco.com/static/13CS3901_Case_Study_r1.4-A.pdf. Wishing you the best with CCENT.

[Actions](#)



Uma Shankar V. Jan 21, 2014 8:59 PM (in response to Gary Pfitzer)

Thank you, Gary!! Well, I'm already a CCNP switching certified and currently pursuing for my NP route !!

But, the golden tips will still help me alot, to improve my skills !!

[Actions](#)



Mithun Adhikary Jan 21, 2014 2:51 PM

Great info.....Thanks

[Actions](#)



potha Jan 22, 2014 8:57 PM

this is a good one

[Actions](#)



wayne Feb 20, 2014 2:01 PM

Really informative. Thanks.

[Actions](#)



Mark Feb 27, 2014 12:44 AM

i really like this article, very inspiring

[Actions](#)



Iacadaoyan Mar 3, 2014 5:15 AM

Wonderful! Thanks for the great tips Gary! I've been in the industry for a while now and have my fair share of certifications but I love articles like this, it's very motivating and inspiring. You can always apply it, whether you're just starting or an expert on your field.

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Mar 4, 2014 1:38 PM (in response to lacdaoryan)

Thanks very much "Roadcal_15" (and others). I'm glad that you found some motivation and inspiration in the article. I agree with you: you're never so far along in your pursuits not to benefit from a morale boost from another corner once in a while. Hopefully, it's also an opportunity for you to look back and take stock of what you've accomplished so far. Congrats on that!

[Actions](#)



Bart Mar 13, 2014 6:02 AM



Great article :-)

[Actions](#)



Pradeep George Apr 17, 2014 2:54 AM



A very helpful article Gary. I like the "practise, practise, practise" and the "don't think too big all at once" tips. I was getting overwhelmed at first when thinking about the three CCNP exams. But recently I have made it a point to take it one step at a time and just concentrate and focus solely on studying for the ROUTE exam and after I pass that to then start on SWITCH and so on. I've also built a small home lab to practise on at home and have access to a full rack at the training center which helps tremendously. I hope to have ROUTE done by next month.

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Apr 17, 2014 8:15 PM (in response to Pradeep George)



Thank you, Pradeep, for the comment. Yep, with CCNP certification, you make that step up to taking three exams, and that starts to feel like quite the commitment. And so, it sounds as if you've realized that you do need to enjoy what the journey is giving you at each individual step without getting too far ahead of yourself. Passing ROUTE will be its own reward to be sure, and you are definitely taking it seriously what with having built a lab at home. Best wishes next month!

[Actions](#)



Harish Lakkimsetty May 1, 2014 4:41 AM



Wonderfull article, Really inspiring !!!

[Actions](#)



Stefan May 8, 2014 9:52 AM



hy guys, i want an sincerely advice from you. I have 27 years, i graduated law at university, i'm from east europe and here the crises takes me all the chances to a good and normal life. I have some basic knowledge of HTML, CSS, XML, and java , and i want a carrer in IT . I ask you and i expect an sincerely answer from you , i have a future if i invest my energy to learn for cisco certification at my level, at my age, and without an IT specialization university ? I want make a step change my life, and i must ask you this IF IT IS POSIBILE TO ME to make this change and get a job after CCENT to have a minimal financial stability to learn for the others certification exams CCNA etc... Thanks for reading this and i wait your answer at my mail adress psajustice@gmail.com

[Actions](#)



Rich May 30, 2014 6:08 AM



Great information! Will pursue!

[Actions](#)



Sandeep Singh Jul 26, 2014 5:15 AM



Great information . Thanks Gary!!

[Actions](#)



suaybaguio Sep 28, 2014 4:51 PM



Wonderful and Great article Gary.... Also, thanks to Gus for posting the link.

[Actions](#)





Gus Sep 28, 2014 6:02 PM (in response to suaybaguio)

You're welcome Suaybaguio! Indeed this is a great blog by Gary.

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Sep 29, 2014 9:26 AM (in response to Gus)



Thanks for the comment, "suaybaguio," and thanks for sharing, Gus! I'm glad you found this post to be meaningful, and I wish you both well in the ongoing learning journey.

Actions



Gus Sep 29, 2014 3:08 PM (in response to Gary Pfitzer)



You're welcome Gary! Also I appreciate your good wishes toward my learning journey.

Actions



ShaneFaulkinbury Nov 28, 2014 5:42 PM (in response to Gus)



Yeah thanks Gus, I hadn't seen this yet and saw you post on another thread!

Actions



Gus Nov 28, 2014 5:46 PM (in response to ShaneFaulkinbury)



You're welcome Shane! Enjoy the reading.

Actions



Hussain Jan 14, 2015 11:21 PM



Dear Gus, thank you for directing me to this article. Gary truly motivating thank you :)

Actions



Gus Jan 22, 2015 2:03 PM (in response to Hussain)



You're welcome Hussain!

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Jan 23, 2015 10:48 AM (in response to Hussain)



Thanks much, Hussain and Gus! I hope the fresh year has got you excited about working toward some new goals.

Actions



Gus Jan 23, 2015 10:50 AM (in response to Gary Pfitzer)



You're welcome Gary! Yes, I have some new goals I am starting to work toward them. Thank you for your support.

Actions



Ldavis Feb 1, 2015 3:21 PM



very interesting. Thanks!

Actions



Darby Weaver CCNP/CCDP Mar 2, 2015 6:16 PM



Great tips Gary!

Thanks

Darby Weaver

<http://www.darbyslogs.blogspot.com>

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Mar 3, 2015 11:35 AM (in response to Darby Weaver CCNP/CCDP)

Thanks much, Darby! It looks like you've got a nice blog going. I trust that's helping a lot of people and keeping them motivated!

[Actions](#)



Darby Weaver CCNP/CCDP Mar 4, 2015 11:22 AM (in response to Gary Pfitzer)

Thanks for the vote of confidence Gary.

I appreciate it.

Darby Weaver

<http://www.darbyslogs.blogspot.com>

[Actions](#)



Hans Mar 30, 2015 12:44 PM



Great article Gary, it really get's me thinking. And thanks Gus, for sharing.

[Actions](#)



Ismael da Silva Mariano May 13, 2015 1:57 AM



I have some experience with networking and became CCNA, CCNP and also took the CCIE written exam with success. All my certifications are expired by now (since 2012) and i decided to begin again. Surfing cisco site i discovered CLN and im with a feeling of inspiration and motivation that i never felt before. Its all about these 5 points you showed us. Im completely involved in this journey towards CCIE again. Im 51 years old but with a feeling of my 20's.

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer May 19, 2015 1:15 PM (in response to Ismael da Silva Mariano)

Wow, I am so glad to hear about your renewed efforts at certification, Ismael, and that the article has helped give you some inspiration. You've given me some inspiration with your comments! Wishing you the best in the journey. May it keep you exhilarated the second time around.

[Actions](#)



Joseph Chan Jan 12, 2016 9:09 PM



Great and inspiring article

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Jan 13, 2016 10:02 AM (in response to Joseph Chan)

Thanks much, Joseph. Wishing you luck with your pursuits in the year ahead!

[Actions](#)



David Mar 5, 2017 2:53 AM



thank you for your tips

[Actions](#)



Gary Pfitzer Mar 5, 2017 5:30 PM (in response to David)

David, so glad that these tips were helpful to you. I hope you're looking forward to some learning or training goal coming up!

--Gary

[Actions](#)



David Mar 7, 2017 3:02 AM

Hello **Gary Pfitzer**. Honestly, I read this post quickly. After your last message, I've thought "this man merit more time", and I've printed the post and I readed again. Thank you again. I summarize that if you desire something, enjoy your way doing it and go to your goal. Better if your company pay you a course, exam, videos, etc..

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Mar 9, 2017 12:19 PM (in response to David)



David, I'm glad you were able to dig into this blog post a second time for a deeper look! In regard to your comment about how much better it can be when you can get your company to pay for your certification training or exams, we just happen to have created an e-book that aims to help our learners with that aspect of things. Take a look at this when you have a moment: <https://mkto.cisco.com/HowToPayForCiscoTraining>. On p. 21 of the e-book, there are even a couple templates you can download for suggested wording to pitch the idea of employer funding to your manager. Wishing you the best with your training journey ...

--Gary

Actions



David Mar 13, 2017 3:27 AM



enroled, I love to learn...anything aroud this World where we live. including my English, of course

Actions



Keith Craycraft Apr 26, 2017 6:49 AM



Really informative. Thanks.

Actions



Gary Pfitzer Apr 26, 2017 1:32 PM



Keith, I'm glad that you found this useful to you. Let us know if there are any tips you would add to the ones in this list. Good luck with your pursuits!

--Gary

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