Certifications for Success

Love Conquers All, Including CCIE

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The road to CCIE certification can sometimes be a lonely one! Sure, there are your supporters cheering you on from the sidelines, and there's a great deal of bonding you can get from study groups and the Cisco learning community. But the months of training and preparation probably mean your family life, social life, or love life is going to take a hit for a little while as you "geek out." So, once you land the holy grail of CCIE, you might find yourself emerging from a bit of hibernation in your relationships.

In our rich and vibrant community of CCIE aspirants, however, there are always exceptions to the common notion. We have found three stories—in China—that show that the CCIE quest does not have to be synonymous with entering the lonely hearts club. In fact, it can make the heart grow fonder! Check out these CCIE victory stories, which show couples undertaking the challenge together, earning multiple CCIE certifications, and strengthening their connection to each other in the process.

Jiangtao He and Zhuolin Wang

Jiangtao He and Zhuolin Wang first met at their university. At the time, Jiangtao was studying daily for his CCIE certification while Zhuolin was majoring in atmospheric physics. She was inspired enough by what Jiangtao was doing to give up her major and join him in the CCIE pursuit.

Jiangtao He and Zhuolin Wang

The couple took their first CCIE exam together in 2009 and both passed, earning sequential CCIE numbers 25277 and 25278. They have each currently earned five CCIE certifications.

Says Jiangtao, "We have many hobbies, and love sports and traveling. And, we both enjoy studying for CCIE. Studying for CCIE is not a boring job for us. On the contrary, it makes our life richer and fuller. We encourage and help each other. We went to CCIE tests in Hong Kong and Dubai together so that we could shop and travel at the same time. I enjoy taking the CCIE tests with my wife."

Zhuolin even passed a CCIE Security exam just eight days before their wedding. CCIE certification was such a bond between them that the couple decided to make it the theme of a grand and romantic wedding ceremony in October 2013—an event that was attended by more than a hundred CCIE certification holders.

"In 1984," Jiangtao says, "the two founders of Cisco, husband and wife Leonard Bosack and Sandy Lerner, invented the first Internet router in the world. They also set up Cisco, creating a legacy in the IT industry. To me, CCIE certification is a part of my romance. My wife and I are a CCIE couple."

Zhuolin and Jiangtao currently work for Jiangsu Qingda Information Technology Co., Ltd., she as a senior product manager and he as a network presales sales director. They have their sights set on a sixth CCIE certification and a move to Australia. "Because we had CCIE certifications, the Australia Immigration Office considered our application a priority," adds Jiangtao.

Jiangtao He and Zhuolin Wang

Guangpin Yang and Bintao Tang

Budding romance and CCIE certification have also fit together successfully for Guangpin Yang, a support engineer at Cisco, and her husband Bintao Tang, a presales engineer at China CTTIC Shanghai Co., Ltd. Guangpin holds CCIE Routing and Switching, Wireless, and Data Center certifications, and Bintao lays claim to CCIE Routing and Switching and Data Center.

Guangpin Yang and Bintao Tang

The two met in 2013, and since then, Cisco certification has been an indispensable part of their lives, according to Guangpin. "Cisco certification symbolizes how hard we've worked for our lives and the pursuit of our careers," she says. "Being on this journey with a partner you can depend on means you not only learn a lot, you also make life's road even wider. Through all the years of studying, our cat Godzilla has sat there watching us prepare for our tests, getting fatter as we get smarter."

Meng Meng Zhao and Feng Xu

Meng Meng Zhao and Feng Xu

Our third source of CCIE romantic inspiration comes from Meng Meng Zhao, a consulting engineer at Cisco, and Feng Xu, a network architect at Optus Business. Now living in Australia, Meng Meng has CCIE Collaboration, Voice, and Data Center certifications to her credit while Feng sports CCIE Routing and Switching, Service Provider, and Data Center.

Meng Meng and Feng have been together for 16 years, and married for 10 years. They got to know each other as moderators on the same forum at their university. At the time, neither of them was pursuing an IT networking career.

Feng took the IT plunge first. "After we came to Australia," says Meng Meng, "my husband often spoke to me at home about IT—using English so he could practice his speaking—and there were, of course, tests and spot-checks. All of this was a foundation for me as I later learned about networking and got accredited by Cisco."

Meng Meng Zhao and Feng Xu

And so it would seem that the CCIE title need not automatically be the solo conquest of lean and hungry loners. These three couples were blessed enough to have Cupid smiling down upon them, adding extra spark and encouragement along the sometimes lonely road.

Guangpin Yang hopes this can be the story for others, if not as the result of a love interest, at least growing out of a strong interpersonal network. "What I wish for other CCIEs is that everyone supports each other and grows together while preparing for the test. The road will be hard and long, but the search for answers is never-ending. I believe that with everyone together, tomorrow will be better!"

Meng Meng Zhao adds her own note of warmth: "I hope that everyone takes the opportunity to continue to progress and finds both a profession and a person to love in the coming year."

Jiangtao He and Zhuolin Wang

Jiangtao He wraps up our feel-good story with some frank and friendly advice. "CCIE is the benchmark of the industry. Its whole training system, materials, etc., are unparalleled in the industry. My advice to friends who are undertaking CCIE now is that you need to have a firm foundation in CCNA and CCNP; only then will you be able to skillfully handle troubleshooting and lab configuration during CCIE testing. Don't become a 'paper CCIE.' It has no meaning. No matter if it's for tests or for a future job, truly knowing these technologies is the most important thing. After you master them, passing the CCIE will be par for the course."

Even though we can't promise love there, check out our Study Groups page here on the Cisco Learning Network, especially if you're in need of a little bonding in pursuit of your dreams.

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Gary Pfitzer is a content manager at Learning@Cisco, focused on bringing various aspects of today's IT journey to light through business papers, blogging, customer success stories, and other writing.

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