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15 Top Paying IT Certifications for 2012

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Introduction

When the conversation amongst IT professionals turns to IT Certifications, one of their first thoughts is of high salaries – dollar signs dancing in their heads. While some certifications do command a six-figure salary, this is not true for all. With the recent completion of our annual IT Skills and Salary report, I thought it would be a great time to look at some of the more popular certifications – and their associated pay.

Note: The rankings below are based on certifications that received the minimum 200 responses required to derive a salary figure that is statically accurate. There are certifications that pay more that are not represented due to their exclusive nature. These include CCIE: Cisco Certified Internetworking Expert and VCDX: VMware Certified Design Expert, for example.

1. PMP® – Project Management Professional – (\$111,209)

The Project Management Institute's (PMI) Project Management Professional (PMP) credential is recognized as the most important certification for project managers and is globally recognized and in heavy demand. The PMP credential demonstrates that you not only have the requisite, real-world experience, but that you also have the education to successfully lead and direct projects. The PMP credential should only be attempted by experienced project managers as the qualifications and testing for this certification are very rigorous. In addition, the PMI requires continued validation through required continuing education requirements. All of these factors ensure that the PMP credential is widely respected. The PMP experience and exam requirements focus on five process groups: Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling, and Closing.

2. CISSP® – Certified Information Systems Security Professional – \$110,342

The Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) credential is for security managers and professionals who develop policies and procedures in information security. The CISSP certification has become the gold standard in information security certifications. Earning and maintaining a CISSP certification is required for many governmental, military, and civilian security positions. The CISSP was the first credential in the field of information security, accredited by the ANSI (American National Standards Institute) to ISO (International Organization for Standardization) Standard 17024:2003. Earning your CISSP certification is not only an objective measure of excellence, but it is a globally recognized standard of achievement.

3. CCDA® – Cisco Certified Design Associate – \$101,915

The Cisco Certified Design Associate (CCDA) demonstrates that the individual who has passed the required exams has the requisite knowledge, experience, and understanding required to design a Cisco converged network.

A CCDA-certified individual has the skills to design a routed and switched network infrastructure and services involving LAN, WAN, and broadband access for businesses and organizations.

4. ITIL® v3 Foundation – (\$97,691)

What is this ITIL that we hear so much about? The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITILv3) is a foundational process that provides for quality IT Service Management. The success of ITIL is through the use of documented and proven processes that cover the entire Service Lifecycle. The ITIL Expert level is the third of four levels. The ITIL Expert level certification is aimed at those individuals who are interested in demonstrating a superior level of knowledge of ITIL Version 3 (v3) in its entirety. Once you have achieved ITIL Expert level, you will also satisfy the pre-requisite entry criteria for the ITIL Master Level. This is the highest level of certification within the ITIL v3 scheme, though the Master level is still under development

5. MCSE – Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer – \$91,650

The Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certification ended with Server 2003, though you can still earn it (as well as the MCSE on Server 2000, though many of the tests are retired). The continued use of Windows Server 2003 in the market suggests that the demand for related expertise will continue for some time. The MCSE certification demonstrates to clients and employers that you are skilled in designing, implementing, and administering infrastructures for business solutions based on Windows Server 2003 and Microsoft Windows 2000 Server. Implementation responsibilities include installing, configuring, and troubleshooting network systems. In order for you to earn your MCSE on Windows Server 2003 certification (or Windows 2000 Server), you must pass seven exams: four exams on networking systems, one exam on client operating systems, one exam on design, and one elective exam. One thing to be aware of is that many of the exams are retired or will be retiring soon. If one of the required exams is retired and you have not passed the exam, then you cannot earn the certification. If you have passed the exam before it retired, then it still can be applied to the certification.

6. VCP – VMware Certified Professional – \$91,648

Virtualization and those who are knowledgeable on virtualization products are in heavy demand. VMware is one of the leading vendors of virtualization products and earning a VMware certification is the first step toward gaining industry-recognized expertise in virtual infrastructure and the industry recognition that goes along with it. The VMware Certified Professional (VCP5) demonstrates that you have the skillset to successfully install, manage, and deploy VMware vSphere 5.

7. CCNP® – Cisco Certified Network Professional – \$90,457

There are two tracks available at the Associate and Professional levels: Cisco Certified Design Professional and Cisco Certified Network Professional. The Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) demonstrates that you have the ability to plan, implement, verify, and troubleshoot local and wide-area enterprise networks. A CCNP-certified individual is expected to work collaboratively with other Cisco specialists on advanced security, voice, wireless, and video solutions.

8. CompTIA Server+ – \$84,997

CompTIA certifications are international, vendor-neutral certifications that validate a candidate's knowledge of a specific field. The CompTIA Server+ certification demonstrates the IT professional's knowledge of server hard-

ware, software, storage, IT environment, disaster recovery, and troubleshooting. It is recommended that technical support professionals have 18 to 24 months experience in supporting servers and server technology. While not a prerequisite, it is recommended that candidates have a CompTIA A+ certification as well.

9. MCITP – Microsoft Certified IT Professional – \$84,330

The Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) certification helps validate that an individual has the comprehensive set of skills necessary to perform a particular job role, such as database administrator or enterprise messaging administrator. The MCITP certification validates that the IT professional is capable of deploying, building, designing, optimizing, and operating technologies for a particular job role.

MCITP certifications build on the technical proficiency measured in the Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) certifications. Therefore, you will earn one or more MCTS certifications on your way to earning an MCITP certification. Currently, there are 15 MCITP certifications available from Microsoft:

- MCITP: Enterprise Desktop Support Technician on Windows 7
- MCITP: Enterprise Desktop Administrator on Windows 7
- MCITP: Consumer Support Technician on Windows Vista
- MCITP: Enterprise Support Technician on Windows Vista
- MCITP: Enterprise Administrator on Windows Server 2008
- MCITP: Server Administrator on Windows Server 2008
- MCITP: Virtualization Administrator on Windows Server 2008 R2
- MCITP: Database Administrator 2008
- MCITP: Database Developer 2008
- MCITP: Business Intelligence Developer 2008
- MCITP: Enterprise Project Management with Microsoft Office Project Server 2007
- MCITP: Enterprise Messaging Administrator on Exchange 2010
- MCITP: Enterprise Messaging Administrator on Exchange 2007
- MCITP: SharePoint Administrator 2010
- MCITP: Lync Server Administrator 2010

10. CCNA® – Cisco Certified Network Associate – \$82,923

The Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) validates the holder's ability to install, configure, operate, and troubleshoot medium-sized route and switched networks, including implementation and verification of connections to remote sites in a WAN. CCNA curriculum includes basic mitigation of security threats, introduction to wireless networking concepts and terminology, and performance-based skills. This new curriculum also includes (but is not limited to) the use of these protocols: IP, Enhanced Interior Gateway Routing Protocol (EIGRP), Serial Line Interface Protocol Frame Relay, Routing Information Protocol Version 2 (RIPv2), VLANs, Ethernet, and access control lists (ACLs).

11. MCSA – Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator – \$82,923

The Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator (MCSA) certification helps validate your ability to manage and troubleshoot network environments based on the Windows Server 2003 operating system. It reflects a unique set of skills required to succeed in a variety of job roles, such as systems administrator, network administrator, information systems administrator, network operations analyst, network technician, and technical support specialist. The MCSA on Microsoft Windows 2000 Server certification is no longer be available as of December 31, 2011

12. CompTIA Security+ – \$80,066

CompTIA certifications are international, vendor-neutral certifications that validate a candidate's knowledge of a specific field. The CompTIA Security+ certification validates the knowledge of security professionals in one of the fastest-growing fields in IT. The Security+ certification validates the security IT professional in: network security, compliance and operational security, threats and vulnerabilities, access control and identity management, cryptography and application, and data and host security. Candidates will also be tested on their knowledge of security concepts, tools, and procedures to react to security incidents. It ensures that security personnel are anticipating security risks and guarding against them. The CompTIA Security+ certification is accredited by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The CompTIA Security+ certification may be kept current through the CompTIA Continuing Education program.

13. MCP – Microsoft Certified Professional – \$79,363

The Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) certification was awarded by passing one or more exams, though there was no designation as to what product you earned with your MCP.

The MCP program itself was designed for both IT Professionals and developers. The MCP was replaced by the Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) certification. The MCTS certification is designed to help validate your skills on the features and functionality of a specific Microsoft technology. The MCTS certification is tied to the end-of-life for Mainstream Support the product itself. You can show your depth of knowledge in one specific technology, earn multiple MCTS certifications to show breadth across different products, or build on the MCTS to earn a Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) certification

14. CCENT® – Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician – \$74,764

Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician (CCENT) validates the ability to install, operate, and troubleshoot a small enterprise branch network, including basic network security. With a CCENT, network professional demonstrates the skills required for entry-level network support positions - the starting point for many successful careers in networking. The curriculum covers networking fundamentals, WAN technologies, basic security and wireless concepts, routing and switching fundamentals, and configuring simple networks. CCENT is the first step toward achieving CCNA, which covers medium-size enterprise branch networks with more complex connections.

15. CompTIA Network+ – \$71,207

CompTIA certifications are international, vendor-neutral certifications that validate a candidate's knowledge of a specific field. The CompTIA Network+ certification demonstrates the professional qualifications of a network-

ing professional. The Network+ exam covers installation and configuration, media and topologies, management, and security. The CompTIA Network+ certification is accredited by the ISO and ANSI. The CompTIA Network+ certification may be kept current through the CompTIA Continuing Education program.

Summary

Having a certification does not mean you will walk into one of these higher paying jobs. It is certification and experience that will count. There was a time when, if you had a certification, you were reasonably assured of getting a job. Now it is more of a disqualifier – not having a certification means you may not even get an interview.

Learn More

Learn more about how you can improve productivity, enhance efficiency, and sharpen your competitive edge. Check out the following Global Knowledge training areas.

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About the Author

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