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Brian Bourne President, CMS Consulting

IT Professionals Ace the Test with CMS Consulting’s MCITP Boot Camp

CMiC and Bulletproof Solutions are two Canadian IT companies targeting different sectors. While CMiC serves the construction industry with its software and services, Bulletproof Solutions provides IT consulting services for a variety of businesses. To stay ahead of the competition, both companies focus on ensuring their employees have the skills and industry credentials required to apply their technical expertise in a variety of situations. But it’s not always easy for busy IT professionals to get important designations like the Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) Certification. That’s why each company sent their top consultants to the CMS Consulting MCITP Certification Boot Camp. After 10 intense days, each employee emerged from the training fully certified, and with new skills they could apply in their jobs. As a result, their employers are able to pursue new business opportunities.

Situation:

In business for over 35 years, Toronto-based CMiC creates integrated software solutions for the construction industry. The company’s IT experts work closely with some of the largest architectural, engineering and construction firms in North America. On Canada’s East Coast, Bulletproof Solutions is a full-service IT provider that supports businesses in a variety of capacities -- be it restoring network operations after fires or designing systems to help law enforcement keep drunk drivers off the roads.

Both companies strive to provide clients with excellent service by having qualified, expert IT professionals on staff. Because their reputation is important to business success, ensuring their employees have industry credentials -- such as the Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP) designation -- is of the utmost importance.

“Our customers rely on us to perform critical IT functions. They need to be confident that we’re up for the job, so they demand consultants with industry certifications,” says Perry Reagon, Senior Technical Architect, Bulletproof Solutions. “I have worked as an IT consultant for over 15 years. Potential and existing customers need to know that I’m an expert in my field, so for me personally, achieving MCITP certification is crucial to upholding my reputation.”

MCITP certification is also important for Vincent Di Piazza, a Network Administrator from CMiC who has been working in IT for the past 15 years.

“I have a strong Linux background that I acquired through a variety of job functions. Recently, my company migrated towards a Microsoft Active Directory Server in an effort to better support our clients. My clients also started requesting solutions that are compatible with Windows Server 2008,” says Di

Piazza “I quickly realized that I needed to become an expert on Microsoft’s newest technologies, and I needed to do it fast. One of the best ways to gain this knowledge was through MCITP certification.”


Solution:

Because the MCITP exams cover a broad range of technical topics, preparing for certification through self study can take several months, which means more distractions from work. Both Di Piazza and Reagon wanted to avoid self study and traditional training courses because they didn’t want to waste time focusing on material that they already mastered as seasoned IT professionals. That’s why they opted to enroll in the MCITP Boot Camp offered by professional services firm CMS Consulting, a Toronto-based Microsoft Certified Gold Partner. The Boot Camp compresses 44 days of training into 10 intense days of lectures, demonstrations, labs and technical instruction.

“For me the Boot Camp idea was great because it’s hard to find the time to go through the regular courses and prepare for the exams. This format was ideal because you could get away from everything for a couple of weeks and be totally immersed in it,” says Reagon.

The Boot Camp, conducted at the CMS Consulting offices, prepares qualified Microsoft professionals to earn a total of six designations. The two main designations are Server Administrator and Enterprise Administrator for Windows Server 2008.

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A silhouette of a man in a suit and tie, standing with his hands in his pockets. In the background, several other silhouettes of people are walking up a ramp.

dent, CMS Consulting. “Students should come prepared to work 12 hours a day, and at least half a day during the weekend.”

The session Di Piazza and Reagon attended was taught by Mike Holder, who has been working as a consultant for 22 years. To better serve IT experts working in the field, CMS selects instructors who are senior consultants that understand how Microsoft products actually work in a variety of situations. “The beauty of the CMS Boot Camp was that Mike presented me with real-world experiences with every single little tiny topic that he covered, and that is way more valuable to me than the actual certification,” says Di Piazza.

For Reagon, who has been doing Microsoft consulting for the past 14 years, the course was valuable as well. “I’ve taken a lot of other courses where, if the instructor didn’t know the answer, he would try to make something up. That doesn’t benefit the students whatsoever,” says Reagon. “Mike was very knowledgeable, but if he didn’t know something, he would admit it, then would find the answer. Overall, Mike was very approachable and I thought he did an excellent job.”

Benefits:

Not only did Di Piazza and Reagon pass the certification exams with flying colours, but both IT professionals gained skills that they could apply in their day-to-day jobs. On top of this, their employers can now pursue new business opportunities, having validated the skills of their customer-facing professionals.

Enhanced Real-World IT Skills

The course provided Di Piazza with valuable real-world tips and tricks that he is now applying on a regular basis. For example, before Di Piazza took the course, he was tasked with creating a new back-up strategy for Windows Server 2008. His Boot Camp instructor clearly described the Microsoft theory and how to successfully make back-ups. On top of this, Di Piazza also became familiar with Windows PowerShell, which he is now using to perform administrative tasks on both local and remote systems. “It was the absolute best way to learn. If you just read a book, you may be able to pass the exam, but you wouldn’t get the same level of knowledge that you can apply on a day-to-day basis,” Di Piazza. As a result, Di Piazza was able to effectively execute a back-up strategy for Windows Server 2008.

For Reagon, earning the MCITP Certification has validated his proven experience and knowledge in using Microsoft products and solutions. Co-workers have always described Reagon as a

“service champion” because he has strong troubleshooting skills and a “get it done” attitude. With the certification, prospective customers instantly understand the depth and breadth of Reagon’s skills and also appreciate his potential contributions to helping them achieve their business goals.

More Efficient Certification Process

Both Di Piazza and Reagon emerged from the 10-day Boot Camp, which was admittedly intense at times, fully certified. Because both professionals came to the certification exams well-prepared, they had little difficulty handling the exam questions.

“I would absolutely recommend to anybody who’s working in the industry and doesn’t have free time. I think it’s phenomenal to get it done and over within two weeks and come out certified,” says Di Piazza.

“I am well-versed in all Microsoft’s latest technologies, but there are certain details I needed to know for the exams that I wouldn’t necessarily need to know by heart to do my job effectively,” says Reagon. “With the Boot Camp, CMS has really zoned in on the technical details I needed to commit to memory to successfully pass the test. This allowed me to gain the knowledge I needed in a very short timeframe. It was great that I didn’t have to worry about wading through a whole lot of extraneous material.”

Solid Return on Investment

Because MCITP certification creates future business opportunities, the Boot Camp was also a sound return on investment for the senior leadership teams at MCiP and Bulletproof Solutions. For \$7,995, the course fee covers all the materials, instructions, meals, and required exams. Depending on their current level of certification, students will take between four and six exams. Businesses can also cash in their Microsoft Training Vouchers when enrolling their employees in the Boot Camp.

Because Reagon is a consultant who bills by the hour, the real savings for his employer comes from being able to minimize the amount of time he is not focusing on billable work. Additionally, certification provides professionals with access to exclusive Microsoft resources and benefits, such as the Microsoft Certified Professionals member Web site, and other career-building tools. “Now that I’m certified, we have the ability to leverage Microsoft partner programs. Having this designation definitely opens doors,” says Reagon. “My employer is very happy that I got it.”