

# **View from the East: Professional Certification in the Asia Pacific Region (APAC)**

**Presentation for the  
Association of Test Publishers**

**Joan Knapp, Ph.D.**  
**Knapp & Associates International, Inc.**

**Denny Smith, Ph.D.**  
**Project Management Institute**



**Why the Asia/Pacific Region (APAC)?**

- US market peaking for popular certifications
- New burgeoning marketplace, hungry for credentials
- Largest growing segment for those certifications that have already entered this marketplace



- Industries in global economy need competent workforce
- More meaningful and sought after than in other global regions



# Who is interested in this region and why

Existing IT certifications

New IT certifications

Healthcare certifications

Financial certifications

Project management certifications

Graduate and professional schools

Licensure federations and councils

# A bit of history and culture



# CHINA

- Long history in China of requiring examinations
- Civil service examinations were given in 2000 BC
- Forbidden City was China's first test site
- Examinations are still part of its culture
- Focus on what is good for the masses; sharing of information is good
- Principle of guanxi; mutual back scratching



**A bit of history and culture**

# INDIA

- Not as long a history as China
- Testing brought to Colonial India by the British
- Part of the civil service system
- Post-liberation situation
- Attitudes toward testing
- Both countries have different attitudes from Europe

# Two examples . . .

1. If I knew then what I know now: A mature certification program entering the APAC market space

**Report of experiences of a mature program entering a new market**

2. What's good for the company is good for APAC: A new certification program entering the APAC market space

**Report of market research conducted prior to launch of a new program**



**PMP – A global credential . . .**

# A mature program entering the APAC market space

## Project Management Institute

- Project Management Professional (PMP®)
- Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM® - January 2005)
- Program Management Professional (PgMP)

# PMI's structure

- Not-for-profit professional association
- 250+ chapters around the world
  - **Independently incorporated**
  - **25 individuals minimum to form chapter**
  - **+ other criteria**
- Chapters are the face of PMI
- Provide networking and educational opportunities at the local level

# Why PMI exported the PMP program

- Chapters
- Market demand
- Interest in project management soaring

# How PMI entered the market space and the extent of impact in China and India

- Industry demanded more effective project management
- PMI addressed needs of chapters, training partners
- Impact of credential



# Challenges



- Pricing
- Training
- Languages
- Market confusion
- Entry into countries
- Certification maintenance

# Challenges (cont'd)

- Security
- Competition
- Desire for localized content
- Desire for exclusive relationships
- Perception of what certification means
- Deliver certifications at country's pleasure

# Lessons learned

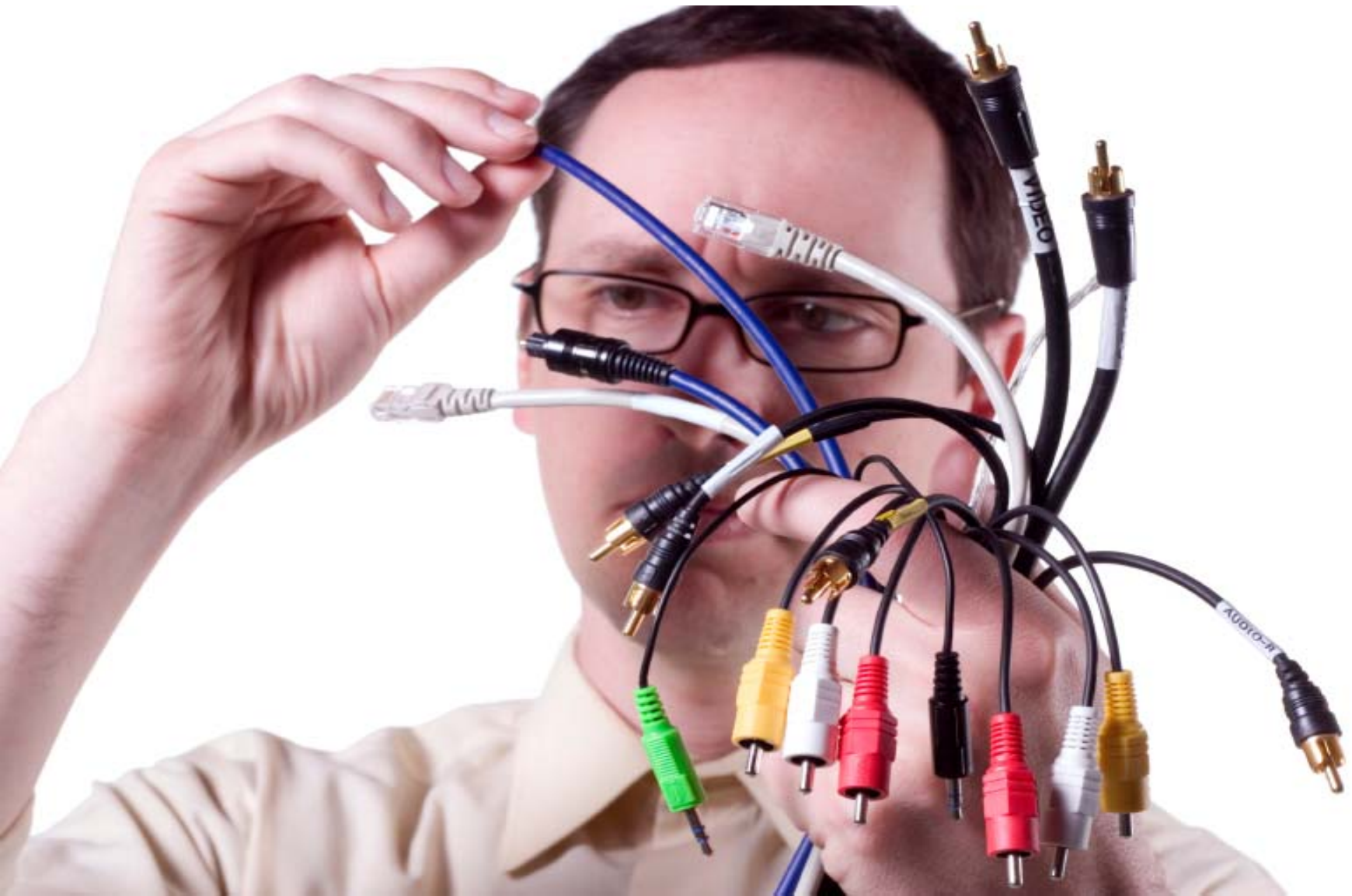
- Relationships are key
- Research critical
- Market price sensitivity
- Tremendous interest and volume
- Globalization drives demand for certifications
- Certifications continue to grow
- Interest in credentials
- Preference given to credentialed individuals



# Lessons learned (cont'd)

- Awareness and perceptions of certifications and organization
- Value add of credential vs. non
- Engaging government and educational organizations crucial
- Level of maturation of discipline is key
- High regard for education and certification
- Need to anticipate and manage growth
- Need to create value

# A new IT program entering the APAC market space



# Background

- IT company wants a certification for a new product
- First time as a certifier
- Conducted employer-based market research and industry research, developed certification model
- Made decision to move ahead
- Program under development

# About the company

- Very large, recognized and respected US-based company
- Has developed a new product that already has significant competition
- Has an established global reach through its sales and service of hardware and software

# Why was APAC targeted as the market for a new program?

- Technology will be manufactured in these countries
- Programming of the technology will be outsourced to China and India
- Size of the potential market very attractive

# The Process

- Purpose of the market research was to identify make or break features of the program
- Focus group methodology was used
- No quantitative research re: whether there was a demand for the program
- Resulted in a business model and a structure and description of the program

# Findings

- Understanding of product and technology and its perceived benefits limited
- Training partners should be selected carefully
- Limited employer support for external training
- Employers have similar views on what makes a certification valuable

# Findings (cont'd)

- Employers use certification as a screening tool
- Word of mouth is the most trusted source about new certifications
- Company name and brand would be an asset in promoting training and certification programs

# Challenges

- Conducting meaningful market research
- Training insufficient to prepare market for certification
- New certification has no brand recognition
- Employer support and perception of value
- Price and cost
- Doing business with government and NGO's
- Governance



# Lessons learned

- A few focus groups not enough to understand the perceptions of the market
- What is good for the company may not be wanted by the market
- Be prepared to develop relationships and infrastructure
- Lay groundwork for acceptance of the technology/product

