

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

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Association of Test Publishers**

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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

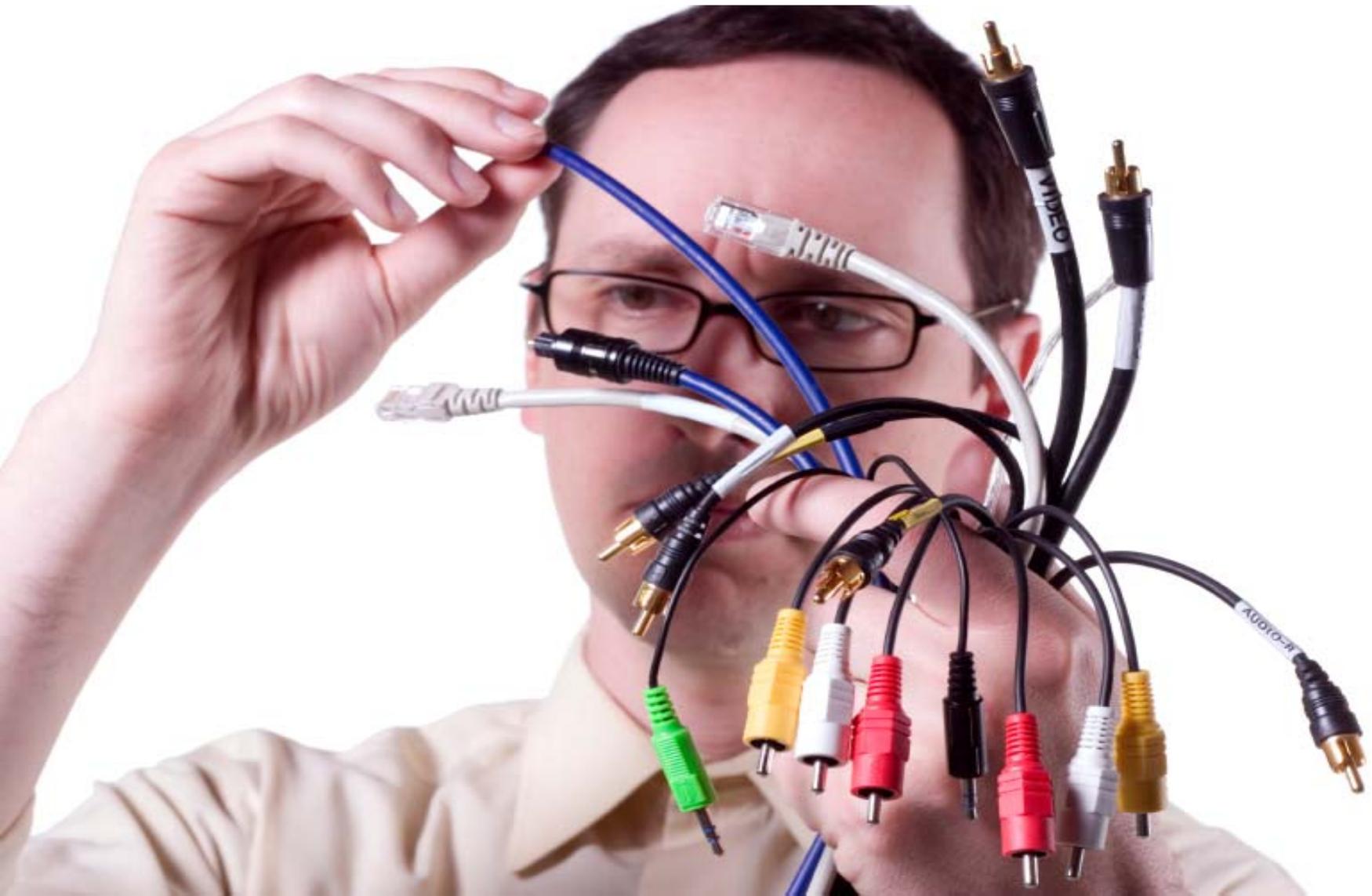
- Relationships are key
- Research critical
- Market price sensitivity
- Tremendous interest and volume
- Globalization drives demand for certifications
- Certifications continue to grow
- Interest in credentials
- Preference given to credentialed individuals



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

