

A Review of An Online Cert Training Tool- Test Out CE

Introduction

Just think about it. You have just finished college or graduate with your new degree in either Computer Science or Information Technology, and are embarking on an exciting, new job. Or it could be the case, you are a seasoned IT professional who is looking to climb the corporate ladder. But, despite the level or education that you may possess, you find that others are out competing you on that raise or promotion.

How is this possible, you may be asking. Well, it all very well comes down to one thing: That IT Certification. It is like a mini degree, but instead, it shows to your employer (or even future ones) that you have a specific skill set and/or knowledge in one Vendor related area of IT.

Although having that degree is no doubt a requirement, but also showing that you are specialist in a certain of area (such as Networking, Databases, Cyber Security, Code Development, etc.) will just make you that much more marketable.

But, now here comes the problem: There are so many IT certifications (also known affectionately as “certs”) and training tools out there, where do you even start deciding what track to pursue or even what study material you need? Well, this is a very difficult question to answer, A lot of it depends upon which field of IT you are in, and the career path you want to take after getting that cert.

For example, if you are in the Security field, taking the CISSP exam could be a very good route to take. Although this is a general scope exam, you could further specialize by taking the CEH exam (this stands for the “Certified Ethical Hacker”) if you are involved in Penetration Testing.

Of course, the next difficult question to ponder is what kind or type of training material you need to get (as eluded to before) in order to prepare and successfully pass the cert exam.

There are many out there, ranging from zero to little cost. For example, you could probably find old exams and preparatory questions/answers by simply Googling for those items. Or, you could go to eBay or even Amazon and literally get the testing materials you need for essentially pennies on the dollar.

The of course, you can always obtain these testing materials straight from the Vendor themselves. This is not really a recommended option, unless your employer is going pay for/or reimburse the cost of obtaining it.

The primary reason for this is that it is very expensive. Keep in mind that simply registering for your cert exam will probably cost at least a couple hundred of dollars, and if you choose this route to get your testing materials your total costs could come to well over \$1,000 USD.

So, what other options are there except for going through eBay or Amazon? Well, there is the online route. With this, you do not have to purchase any DVDs or heavy books, everything is

located conveniently all in one place in one online portal. This includes both the material you need to master the concepts, as well as the practice exams. In this article, we review such a portal called the “Test Out CE”.

The Portal

The objective of the company is obviously self-evident from its name, but you might be wondering at this point what does “CE” stand for? Well, it stands for “Continuing Education”.

This what differentiates this Vendor from the rest of the crowd. In other words, they just don’t prepare you for taking the actual IT cert exam, they actually view their relationship with the customer as a total partnership.

After you take an IT cert exam, and get those letters behind your name, the Vendor (especially those of Cisco and Microsoft) make you take stay proactive in your field in order to keep your cert active. This is often done by taking continuing education classes and earning credit points.

Many IT cert companies only get you up to the point of passing your exam, and leave it to you after that in terms of your continuing education. But this where Test Out CE is different. They not only prep you for taking the actual IT cert exam, but they also work with you on a very proactive basis for continuing education in order to keep your cert active.

Test Out CE has been in the IT cert business for well over 18 years, so they know very well how to prepare students to pass their IT cert on the very first attempt. In fact, it is believed that their success rate in this regard is well over 90%.

But, their approach to training is very unique from that of other IT Cert Vendors. Rather than simply selling you a massive, 600-page training book and a separate test taking CD with sample exams and answers, they offer all of this via an online portal.

So, if your IT job dictates a lot of traveling, you don’t have to worry about lugging all that above-mentioned stuff around in your suitcase. As long as you have your computer and a decent Internet connection, you can prepare for your IT cert at any time, and anyplace you are at.

But, also realizing that as an IT professional your time is scarce and valuable, the IT cert portal developed by Test Out CE does not make you scroll through pages of content after content. Rather, they make the information easily readable as well as understandable by distilling only those crucial pieces that you need to know in order to pass your particular exam.

So, for example, rather than having to read and parse through ten pages of web content on Public Key Infrastructure (also known as PKI), the concepts which are associated with it is broken down into tables, charts, and other types of visuals, such as Infographics.

They make heavy use of visual cues in developing the content, so it makes it much easier for the test taker to not only read this information, but to also understand at on the first attempt.

The Video Aspect

But hey, Test Out CE has even taken the use of visuals even one step further. They understand also that IT professionals have long and very demanding days (especially those of Network and Database Administrators). Obviously, at the end of the day, you are just too exhausted to even think of reading up for your IT cert. So, they also have even implemented the use videos with instructors which actually teach the material to you, just like you were sitting in a classroom setting.

Once again, the videos are kept short and to the point, so you only get the material which you need to know. They are only a few minutes long, nothing longer than that. Test Out CE understands that the attention span of an IT cert candidate is short when it comes to watching training videos, so thus, they keep them short and very engaging.

OK, now suppose your IT job also requires that you be hands on with your equipment on a daily basis. Your IT cert is not only going to ask you multiple choice questions, but as part of the examination process, IT Vendors now also require certain lab type of questions as well. Well, Test Out CE even offers lab simulation videos as well.

So, if you are Network Administrator preparing for a Windows IT cert, you can guarantee that questions on how to install and troubleshoot a certain Windows Server Operating System will be asked.

Of course, you have done this in the past, but the questions in the IT cert exam will often ask those types of questions which may seem to be the most obscure or even the least trivial on installing an Operating System. But, no need to fret, the lab simulation videos in the Test Out CE modules will prepare you to tackle these tough questions. In fact, you these lab simulation videos replicate well over \$30,000 worth of IT hardware and software.

Pricing

You now may be asking that since prep material relating to IT certs is often very cost exorbitant, just how expensive are the online training portals from Test Out CE? Well the truth is, it is actually quite affordable. For example, you can first start out with a seven-day free trial.

A monthly subscription costs about \$79 per month, and if you choose to get a one year license or even a bundled package, the costs range anywhere from \$349-\$895. This pricing is very competitive even when compared to the online IT cert stores from the Vendors themselves.

Conclusions

I have been in the IT field for over 20 years, and even I have attempted to take various cert exams, most notable that of the CISSP. I took some to review what kind of online portals Test Out CE has for the Security based Certs, and to be honest, I was quite impressed with the content that I saw. One of the portals I reviewed was for the Security Pro Cert, and here is a

sampling of the topics which are covered (which includes the content, training videos, and the lab simulation videos):

- Access Control Models;
- Cryptography;
- Security Policies;
- Physical Security;
- Network Layer Security;
- Network Devices;
- Malware;
- Web Application Attacks;
- Redundancy;
- Vulnerability Assessment.

When I compare this with the Table of Contents for the CISSP, the two are very similar. So, if I had my choice, I would opt for the Test Out CE in a heartbeat. They also have training portals for all of the other IT Vendors as well, which include primarily the following:

- CompTIA;
- Microsoft;
- CISCO;
- Linux.

I think probably the best aspect of the Test Out CE training portals is that they are always constantly being updated with the latest and most recent developments in the IT space, so there is no need to having to purchase brand new material in order to just keep with the latest trends.