

Re: MCS D and MCSE

Source:

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/DotNet/microsoft.public.dotnet.general/2006-10/msg00841.html>

- *From:* "Dave Sexton" <[dave@jwa\[remove.this\]online.com](mailto:dave@jwa[remove.this]online.com)>
 - *Date:* Thu, 26 Oct 2006 21:58:26 -0400
-

Hi Scott,

I had no idea that you worked in HR, so it's nice to hear those comments from someone with real experience in seeing how people measure up. But my personal experiences still differ so I'm not sure I can concede to your perspective without some other opinions from HR people too. Just out of curiosity, if you don't mind me asking, where exactly have you conducted interviews for solution developers?

Here I've tried to create a comparison of different credentials to each other and on-site testing used when determining whether a candidate is suitable for job placement. In each row I list the minimum set of proof that I believe can be safely assumed, in general, for each credential and in each of the metrics listed. The purpose was to help me organize, and therefore understand, the relationships between the credentials and their potential value to employers, but I really like how it turned out so I'm going to post it ;)

(Originally, I wrote this chart in a grid layout but out of a fear of misalignment I chose horizontal partitioning instead – I hope it's legible :)

College

Cost At least some; usually high
Time Invested At least some
Learning Some proof
Studies At least enough to pass
Knowledge At least enough to pass; acquired through studies
Experience No proof
Skill No proof
Person No proof

Certification

Cost At least some
Time Invested At least some; more for those without experience
Learning Some proof
Studies At least enough to pass or supplemented by experience
Knowledge At least enough to pass; acquired through studies and/or

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experience
Experience No proof
Skill No proof
Person No proof

Resume

Cost Generally free
Time Invested None
Learning No proof
Studies No proof
Knowledge No proof
Experience Some proof, but only when job history is supplied and can be verified
Skill No proof
Person No proof

On-Site Testing

Cost N/A
Time Invested N/A
Learning No proof
Studies At least enough to pass or supplemented by experience
Knowledge At least enough to pass; acquired through studies and/or experience
Experience No proof
Skill Some proof
Person Some proof, but only after meeting them in person

All other things being equal, it's clear to me that certifications and degrees can make up for some of the places where resumes lack. It's also clear that on-site testing is the best means for finding a suitable employee. Since you can't very well meet and test everyone that has applied for a position, in many cases, it makes sense that you should probably value degrees and/or certifications over resumes when choosing who you are going to interview.

I've worked with several college grads that I wouldn't hire for my own business and I'm sure the same would be true for some MCSDs, but I find that many of the developers I've worked with that don't have any credentials really have been novice programmers with well-written resumes. They are hired many times without adequate testing and are expected to author WinForms and web applications, design databases, analyze business requirements; generally architect and implement solutions far beyond their ability. In the past, a lot of them have relied on me for help, and in many cases I was learning myself so I was just doing the research for them. Training for these new hires ends up being a free course on entry level .NET in some cases. Therefore, I'd prefer at least some credentials over those candidates that only supply a resume, but I respect your experiences as well. Therefore, I would just caution employers to be wary when inviting people in for an interview based solely on their certification and/or educational achievements,

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although there isn't really much else to go on, and should test them as you have suggested to get a better idea of their knowledge and skills (although not necessarily their ability). But I definitely don't think that certifications should be completely disregarded when browsing the market.

I don't want to get carpal tunnel, so I'm done for the night. (sorry for the excessively long post :)

--
Dave Sexton

"Scott M." <s-mar@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:OuOdVDV%23GHA.360@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Well, I do happen to have quite a bit of experience in HR (with a specialty in recruitment and selection). If I am looking for a software developer, engineer or architect, I will put in requirements for applicants such as college degrees and minimum experience requirements. Those are the things that will weed out the folks without the minimum requisites I am looking for.

Now, if I had 2 applicants with identical backgrounds and one had the certs and one didn't, I have to tell you that the certs wouldn't, in any way, shift my focus to the one that has them. I've just seen too many people that have the certs, but not the skills & knowledge.

I would (as most tech employers do) give each applicant either a test of my own or ask them to provide examples (not written, code) of projects they have worked on and solutions they have created.

It's just my opinion, and I am in NO WAY saying that anyone who has a cert doesn't have knowledge. I'm simply saying that a cert doesn't tell me what "skills" and "experience" they have. And, that's what I need to know if I'm hiring someone.

:)
-Scott

"Dave Sexton" <dave@jwa[remove.this]online.com> wrote in message
[news:emd\\$gvT%23GHA.5092@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:emd$gvT%23GHA.5092@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Hi Scott,

I hear you Dave, I just disagree that you can say (with any generality) whether or not a cert holder knows more than a non-cert holder.

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I think experienced human resource personnel would disagree.

The mantra that has worked well for me in these situations is
"show me
what you can do" don't "tell me what you can do".

I agree that's a better approach to finding the right employees for the job than hiring only on the criteria of certifications and degrees. The point is, who do you ask to show you what they can do? I would choose a person with a cert or degree over someone without, because the person that possesses the credentials are telling you what they can do and that's the first step. The question I posed before tries to clear up whether or not certs actually tell an employer what the person can do, and that's why I've asked for feedback from people with a lot of experience interviewing job candidates with and without certifications and degrees, but my experience tells me that MCSDs are generally better solution developers.

Resumes are complete nonsense and I think they should be generally ignored by any serious employers as credentials. Certs and degrees fill in the spot nicely because they are neutral, just like SSL certs. They also look nice on a wall if they aren't damaged during shipment :)

—
Dave Sexton

"Scott M." <s-mar@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:u42qFiT%23GHA.1224@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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"Dave Sexton" <dave@jwa[remove.this]online.com> wrote
in message
news:eW3YpkS%23GHA.3456@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Hi Scott,

[Just having some knowledge, e.g., enough
to pass the tests, isn't
usually
enough to potential employers so I guess the

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real question is, are MCSDs generally more knowledgeable and experienced than those without certification?]

I think only those experienced in interviewing could accurately answer this

I think you've hit the nail on the head with this. My experience tells me that employers care about what you know and what you can do for them, cert or no cert. For programmers anyway, most employers ask for examples of programs that the candidate has written or worked on and ask them to explain their solution. Some employers give a "test" of their own during an interview to weed the "talk the talkers" from the "walk the walkers".

True, but I was just stating that I think experienced interviewers know better if MCSDs commonly "walk the walk" and whether those that aren't certified generally just "talk the talk". In my limited experience working with MCSDs and interviewing people in general, both points seem to be true. If so then employers would benefit from holding MCSDs in a higher regard over the general population of developers.

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Dave Sexton