

Certification Solutions in **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

McAfee, Inc. is attracting and retaining the top security engineers for their customers and their business

Business Challenge

McAfee, Inc. is a leader in intrusion prevention—helping consumers, businesses, and governments prevent network and system intrusions and attacks, protecting against this and the next generation of blended attacks and threats. As customer needs have grown and the whole environment of information system security has become more complex, McAfee significantly broadened and deepened the competency requirements for its pre- and post-sale system engineers, those experts most closely associated with ensuring successful application of the firm's products and systems.

Benefits Provided by CompTIA

McAfee's most recent workforce development effort began with a survey of security certifications. Senior managers in Europe, where the initiative started, wanted not only to train, but also to validate mastery, and certification was an ideal means of validation.

Furthermore, customers respect and trust third-party certifications – there is credibility associated with personnel who've earned respected security certificates. Based on their findings, McAfee managers instituted an approach to development that would begin by benchmarking and validating foundational knowledge and then progressing to higher-level topics and certificates.

CompTIA Security+™ certification was selected by McAfee as the initial benchmark for best practices. This determination was made based on the breadth and depth of the foundational security-specific topics covered by the certification, the appropriate amount of networking and server technical information to be mastered, the fact that CompTIA Security+ reflects current industry standards and best practices, and CompTIA's acknowledged leadership in developing foundational vendor-neutral certifications. Managers believed that once CompTIA Security+ certification was achieved, personnel would be well prepared for taking on the challenges of higher-level vendor-neutral and vendor-specific certifications from ISC2, TruSecure, Microsoft, Cisco, and others.

To train personnel to the CompTIA Security+ standard, McAfee developed a blended learning regimen that included two-and-a-half days of instructor-led classroom training, hands-on labs, computer-based training, mentoring by senior personnel, and the availability of a host of reference materials. The firm also provided exam preparation workshops and practice exams.



"Benchmarking foundational skills through the CompTIA Security+™ certification and then adding progressive layers of expertise seems to us to be absolutely the right thing to do, from both the customer and employee standpoints. Customers want assurances they are in good hands and employees want to know they have careers that are progressing ever deeper into their specialties."

–Steve Jordan
Vice President, System Engineering & Consulting , McAfee, Inc.

CompTIA
Certifications

A+

CDIA+

CTT+

e-Biz+

HTI+

i-Net+

IT Project+

Linux+

Network+

Security+

Server+

Results

McAfee European personnel had a first-time certification exam pass rate of 75 percent, which indicates the exam is sufficiently demanding. By the end of the third quarter 2004, the region had reached its goal of having 85 percent of the pre- and post-sale system engineering team certified. A number of senior personnel already holding security certifications served as mentors during training. Feedback from system engineers who went through the program indicated that the training and certification process was clearly worthwhile in terms of gaining insight into the wider context of security. Many expressed surprise at the challenges presented by the CompTIA Security+ certification exam preparation.

Following the benchmarking effort in Europe, McAfee began rolling out the benchmarking program for personnel in North America and the Asia/Pacific regions. Plans call for all customer support employees to become certified as well. Approximately 300 employees in total will ultimately receive training and certification to the CompTIA Security+ standard. As employees complete the required certification process they begin to identify and prepare for higher-level certifications in this on-going development program.

"Customers want to be assured they are working with talented, competent individuals," said Weiss. "Validating the skills of our personnel through globally recognized certificates such as CompTIA Security+ clearly demonstrates to customers they are working with a tier one supplier. It's one thing to say you have the best consultants. It is quite another to be able to prove it through the third-party certification of the entire team."

—Kevin Weiss
Executive Vice President,
Worldwide Sales, McAfee



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