

Teaching the Teachers: IT Trainer's Influence Spreads Throughout Thailand

Chances are if you're involved in Thailand's industrial technology industry, Charles Singh has had a hand in your professional development.

In a country devoting a fair share of government-funded resources to the generational foundation of a highly competitive technical workforce, individuals such as Singh may be among its greatest assets. Singh, 40, an accomplished IT trainer whose whirlwind schedule recently included a certification course for government IT professors, installation of a cyber cafe in Hong Kong, and his family-run cyber cafe in Bangkok, credited his own development to CompTIA. "It made me who I am today," said Singh.

A successful textile trader who built his own business during the mid-90s boom, Singh sought to transition extracurricular activities installing computer networks and security for friends and colleagues into a new career path in 2004 as the bottom dropped out of the economy. "I always had a passion for IT since I was a kid," said the Nonthaburi resident. "It had always been in my blood since the DOS days. I said, let me do something I love. Let me get into computers."

Singh started to research "how to get my infrastructure sorted out" as he set foot in the IT industry, when a friend told him about CompTIA. "It gave me a clearer picture of what was needed to enter and succeed in the IT industry," Singh said.

He said groundwork provided through the CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security+ certification programs was invaluable before subsequent accreditations in Microsoft, Cisco, and the certified ethical hacking degree, one of the first in his country to do so.

He's since become a true zealot for certification causes in his field. "For every IT company you go to, the number one thing they look for is your certification," he said. "For people getting jobs here, it's very, very important."

A new model for IT education

Singh opened his own training center offering diskless solutions for university labs and cyber cafes. In addition, he serves as technical consultant for Rajamangala University of Technology, a 37-campus program for IT groups numbering more than 80,000 students attached to the Thailand Ministry of Education. His recent charges included a group of 26 professors in the Rajamangala program seeking CompTIA A+ certification by early 2011.

PERSONAL
SUCCESS STORY

CHARLES SINGH



Following CompTIA's roadmap for IT certification has helped Charles Singh become one of the leading IT trainers in Thailand.

“You need to have standards according to international standards,” said university president Suwut Tumthong. “All professors have the basics, but to get them certified and to get what you really need to know, they need an international certification, which is the reason why we’ve chosen CompTIA A+ followed soon by Network+ and Security+,” he said.

Tumthong, a former IT professor himself for nearly two decades before entering administration, said he’s seen the role of certification in Thailand grow in significance in recent years. Students who earn their degrees in the government-funded program who have additional certifications, he said, “will really stand out and it will help them get jobs faster. IT firms the past few years are catering to degrees with international certification,” Tumthong said, noting about 70 to 80 percent of recent program graduates found employment, many in the government-sponsored maintenance sector for which their program affiliation earns them priority.

CompTIA was picked over other vendors who came calling on the university. “We’ve chosen CompTIA to be a starting point because it is vendor neutral and has a strong basic infrastructure of hardware, software, network, and security, which many students lack,” he said, noting many students tend to flock to “name brands” such as Microsoft and Cisco, “but when it comes to knowing it all, CompTIA is where they become strong in learning.”

Students praise the Rajamangala approach

Anuchon Homsiang, 48, a computer engineering teacher at Rajamangala University of Technology Lana (RMUTL) for more than 25 years, prepared for his own exam as he envisioned how it would alter his curriculum. “I find this very useful and I think for everyone to adapt and improve our classes, it’s been a good process,” said Homsiang. He planned to add some topics and eliminate others so his students were better prepared to enter the workforce and “have the basic correct knowledge of an international standard.”

“A lot has surprised me about this course,” he said. “You can always learn something new.”

Weeriya Supanich, 27, a recent computer science graduate who entered teaching 18 months ago, said IT in Thailand was gaining in popularity. Programs such as her recent undertaking were a necessity to remain current and competitive.

“It’s easy to learn,” said Weerayuth Khunrattanasiri, 32, a professor at RMUTSB in the center of Thailand. “It’s vendor neutral while other (courses) you are just stuck in specifics. You can use it in a wider variety. It’s easy to use in the real world.”

Singh, not content to rest on his laurels, has embarked on his CompTIA PDI+ certification to help master a recent purchase of a textile printing machine. His first love, however, remained his role as teacher. “In life you go through a stage where you can’t find yourself,” Singh said. “Going into IT, I found myself. I’m a born trainer. I get very happy hearing someone say they learned something from me.”

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