

Why should I get certified?

By Michael Gladstone, CBAP, Vice President Certification and CIO

It was just under four years ago (November 2006) when the first group of 15 business analysis professionals got together in Orlando, Florida to sit for the first offering of the Certified Business Analysis Professional™ (CBAP®) exam. And, ever since then, we at IIBA® have been continually asked the same question: Why should I become certified?

The question has been asked in many different forms:

- What is the value of certification?
- Are employers and/or clients looking for people to be certified?
- Will I get paid more if I'm certified?
- I already have something else (such as a certificate from a training provider); why should I also get certified by IIBA?

Each of these questions boil down to the same thing: if I invest my time, energy, and money in seeking an IIBA certification, what am I going to get out of it?

Let's look at some answers to the questions on value...

What's in it for me...personal recognition.

I had been a BA for two or three years when I started looking for something to recognize me in my role as a professional. In essence, what I meant was that I saw myself in a certain way: that I was able to execute the various aspects of my job effectively, I had the requisite knowledge to do the job, I acted ethically and in the best interests of my employer, etc. If I was an accountant or an engineer or a project manager, a professional certification would have been the obvious next step. So, why should it be different for me as a BA? Once I was eligible to obtain my CBAP® designation, it gave me the sense of recognition as a professional within my field that I had been seeking.

What's in it for me...increased income.

In these difficult economic conditions, organizations know that they can ill afford to make the wrong decisions. As such, they're willing to pay to get the right people in the right positions. CBAP® recipients are identified as the senior members of the BA profession, and organizations have begun to compensate them as such. You can see this for yourself with this [salary survey](#). You'll notice CBAP® recipients are receiving a premium, and one that is significantly more than the cost of the certification itself.

What's in it for my employer...professional development opportunities for me.

One of the challenges for senior BAs that is recognized by their employers is the limited number and types of professional development opportunities there are. For an entry-level BA, an "Introduction to Business Analysis" course makes sense, but certainly this course would not be appropriate or beneficial

for a senior BA. The work required to seek professional certification—getting the right opportunities for work experience, studying for the exam, etc.—would certainly be both appropriate and beneficial for such staff. In addition, professional certification itself represents a significant opportunity to recognize senior BAs for what they have accomplished.

What's in it for my employer/client...effective business analysis execution.

When it comes to business analysis, organizations face many challenges: finding the right people, getting them on the right projects/tasks, and ensuring that they do the work as effectively as possible. Professional certification addresses a number of these concerns:

- Hiring/retaining a professionally certified business analyst gives the employer/client the comfort of knowing that an independent organization has assessed the knowledge, skills, and expertise of the individual.
- Employers/clients have the knowledge that they can place professionally certified BAs on the appropriate projects (e.g. CBAP® recipients working on the largest, most complex, most risky projects).
- Employers/clients have the knowledge that their staff is using industry standard techniques—as documented by the *Business Analysis Body of Knowledge® (BABOK®) Guide*—to execute their business analysis activities.

So overall, does the value exist?

The CBAP® designation has been around for a little under four years. Yes, it will take time for the value of it to be easily identified. But, does that value exist today? Absolutely. For the individual, the recognition received from obtaining the CBAP® or Certification of Competency in Business Analysis™ (CCBA™) designation is of intrinsic value. Increased income is a benefit we're starting to see, making the financial investment in certification easier to justify. Do we need to ensure employers/clients are aware of our certifications in order to enhance the value of it? IIBA as an organization certainly has a role in this. At the same time, it becomes easier for organizations to see the value in it if they actually experience it, and they will only experience it if they have certified BAs amongst their staff. Increasing the population of certified BAs is the most direct way of doing so.

In late 2010, IIBA will be launching the Certification of Competency in Business Analysis™ (CCBA™) designation, targeted to intermediate-level business analysts. While the name recognition of CCBA™ will be low upon initial launch, the high demand for the designation from both individuals (those who want to be professionally certified but are not yet eligible for the more elite CBAP® designation) and employers (those who want to professionally certify their intermediate-level BAs) will result in a fast uptake of the designation. This, in turn, will cause the value of the designation to be seen quickly, as it becomes the standard BA designation. It won't be long before the value of both the CCBA™ and CBAP® designations snowballs such that BAs will be seeking certification in significant numbers, and employers/clients will be demanding that their BAs be certified.