



Evaluating the Benefits of Check Point Certification

An IDC White Paper

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Introduction: Benefits of Certification

Despite the recent slowdown in many of the world's economies, most companies still face a critical shortage of skilled IT workers. In fact, a recent IDC study predicts that the worldwide shortage of networking professionals will reach 1.4 million by 2003. In the United States, the recent influx of IT professionals from the demise of dot-coms has actually exacerbated the hiring process for IT talent. IT managers now have a larger pool of candidates from which to recruit but are less certain about their skill sets. Certification provides both employees and employers with an objective understanding of the skills gained by IT professionals through testing and training.

Check Point Certified Security Engineer Certification

The rapid development of Internet, intranet, extranet, remote access, and mobile networking infrastructure technologies has left end users at all levels of the corporate structure demanding increased network access to greater amounts of information from variable locations. This unprecedented level of network accessibility is being leveraged to enable all stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, partners, and suppliers) to access internal corporate information and allow users to engage in ebusiness activities to purchase and transfer goods and services over the public network. The need for skilled network security professionals is emerging as threats expand.

To understand the demand for and benefits of certified network security professionals, IDC conducted a survey of 80 companies that use Check Point software for network security and currently employ network security platforms. The roles of Check Point certified security engineers (CCSEs) may include, but are not limited to, network administrators, network security engineers, and network consultants and integrators. (See www.checkpoint.com/ccpp for more information.)

By completing training and certification, CCSEs have the skills to implement Check Point VPN-1/FireWall-1 with full firewall and VPN functionality. These professionals are also able to construct an enterprise VPN for organizations that have distributed computing environments with multiple branch offices and remote workers. CCSEs are able to accurately configure a robust and secure

security solution with centralized management capabilities and advanced encryption schemes.

Summary of Results

Results from the survey reveal that CCSE certification is a good investment for both the employer and the employee. Some key findings from the survey include:

- A majority of respondents stated that CCSE certification is either required or desirable when hiring IT security professionals.
- CCSE-certified employees are typically not more difficult to retain than their noncertified associates.
- Over 90% of respondents support IT employees becoming CCSE certified, and a vast majority of these companies cover the full cost of training and certification testing.
- Specific benefits of CCSE certification that respondents cited include:
 - Nearly 90% of respondents agreed that investing in CCSE certification improved the level of support offered to end users.
 - Most respondents believe that CCSE-certified employees are more productive than noncertified employees in the area of Internet security platform management.
 - Hiring and retaining CCSE-certified personnel have improved Internet security, which leads to increased sales from enhanced customer trust.
- CCSE-certified employees also reap benefits through higher salaries and employers' preferences for certification for promotions.

This white paper shows the importance of certification on hiring IT staff or outside firms, the operational improvements and efficiencies gained by companies investing in CCSE certification, and the benefits to employees of becoming certified.

Importance of Certification in Hiring IT Staff or Outside Service Firms

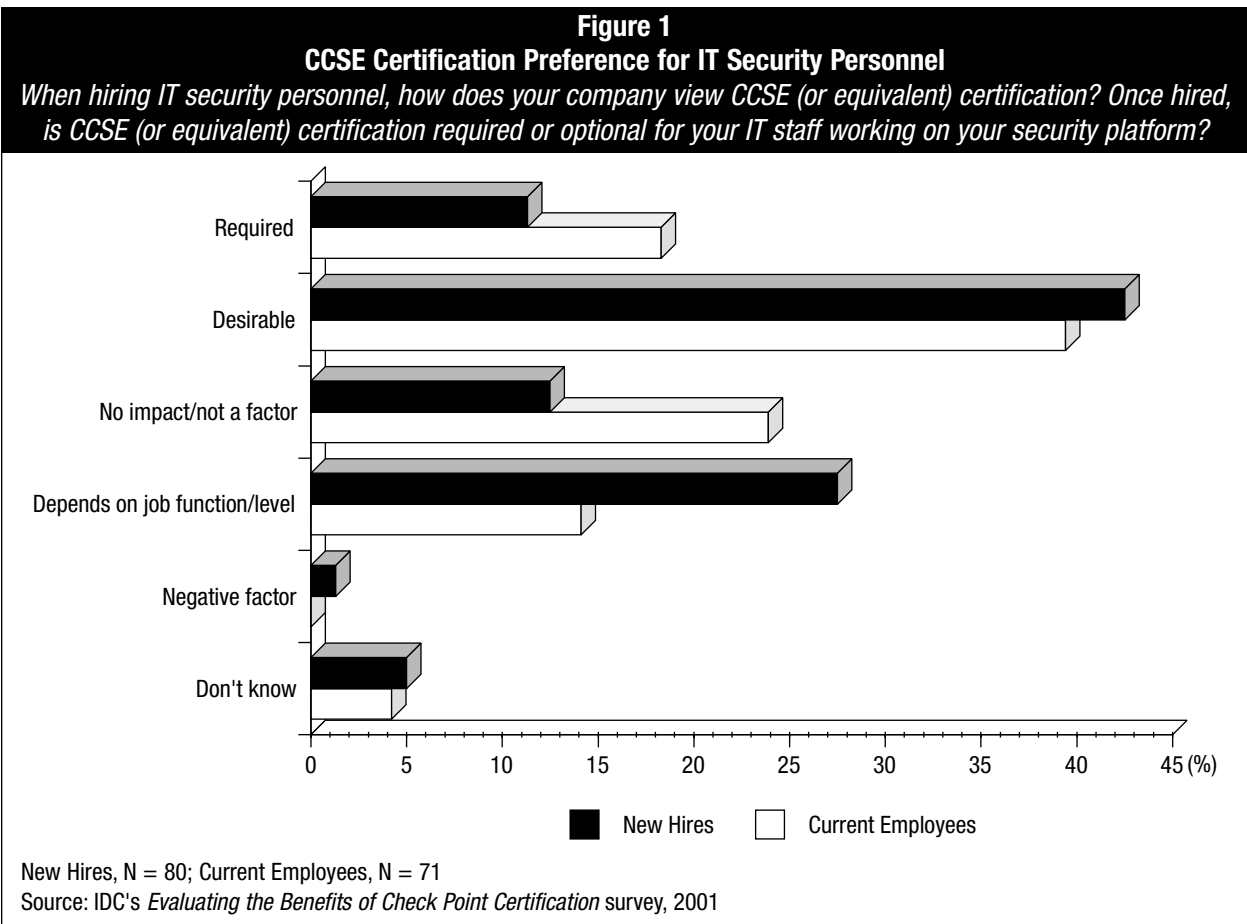
Based on IDC's survey, a majority of companies view CCSE certification as an important characteristic of their new and current IT security professionals. Survey results revealed that over half of the respondents claimed that CCSE certification is either required or desirable when hiring IT security employees. Once hired, almost 58% of respondents stated that CCSE certification is required or desirable (see Figure 1).

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When looking to outside firms to manage Check Point's security platform, the requirement for CCSE certification rises dramatically. Seventy-five percent of respondents claimed that they would only choose an outside service provider to manage its security platform if its staff were certified. An additional 13% of respondents would prefer certified staff but may choose a firm/consultant with noncertified staff (see Figure 2). The results from the survey demonstrate that companies recognize the value of certification and actively seek out CCSE-certified professionals when hiring IT security staff or contracting with an outside service provider to manage their Internet security platforms.

Impact of Certification on Employee Retention

When IDC asked respondents about retention issues involving Check Point certified employees, we were surprised by the findings. Although one may assume that certified employees are more difficult to retain, the survey results reveal that employee retention and attrition do not appear to be an overriding issue with regard to Check Point certified employees. In other words, almost three-quarters of the companies with CCSE-certified employees (71%) believe that it is no more difficult to retain certified employees than it is to retain noncertified employees (see Figure 3). These results should be encouraging to employers that fear

Figure 2
Certification Requirements for Hiring Outside Service Providers
If you were to hire an outside services firm or subcontractors to work on your security platform, how important is it that the outside services firm or subcontractors you work with be CCSE (or equivalent) certified?

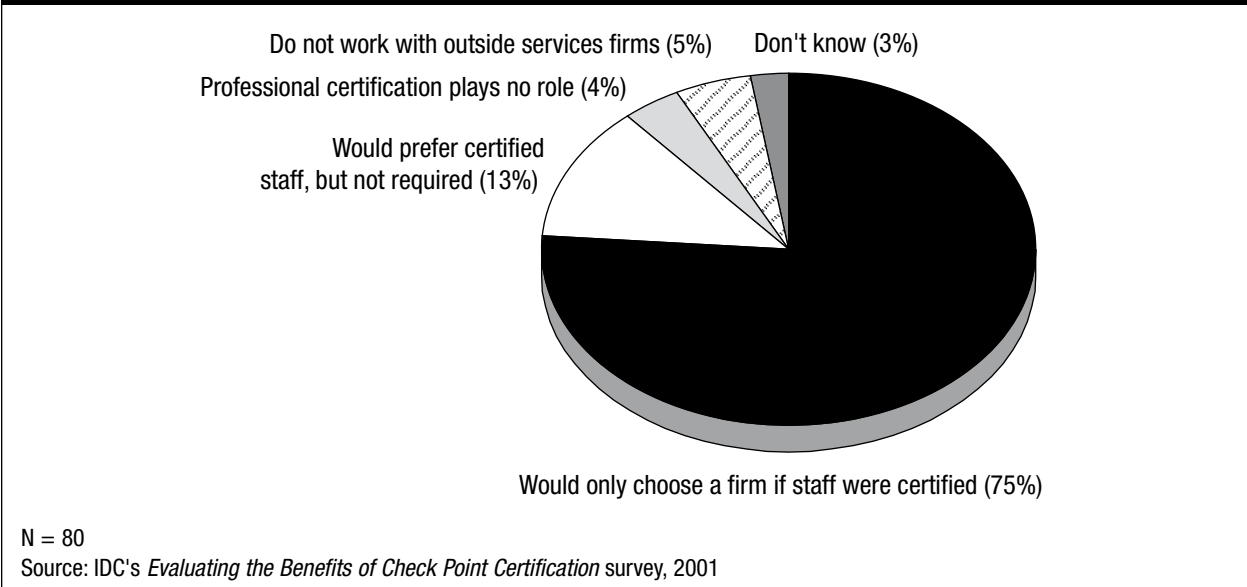
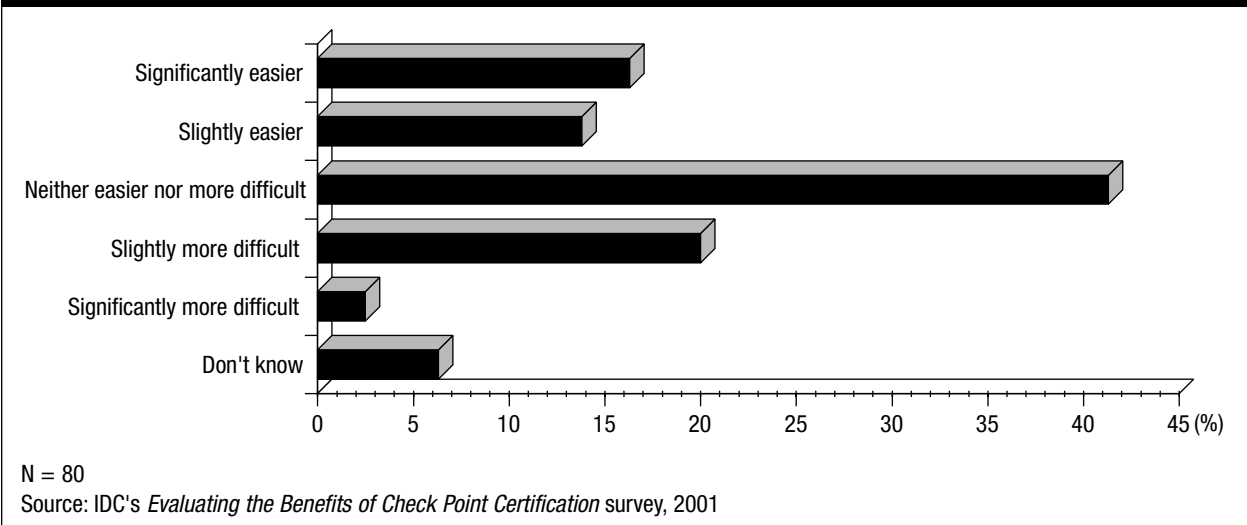
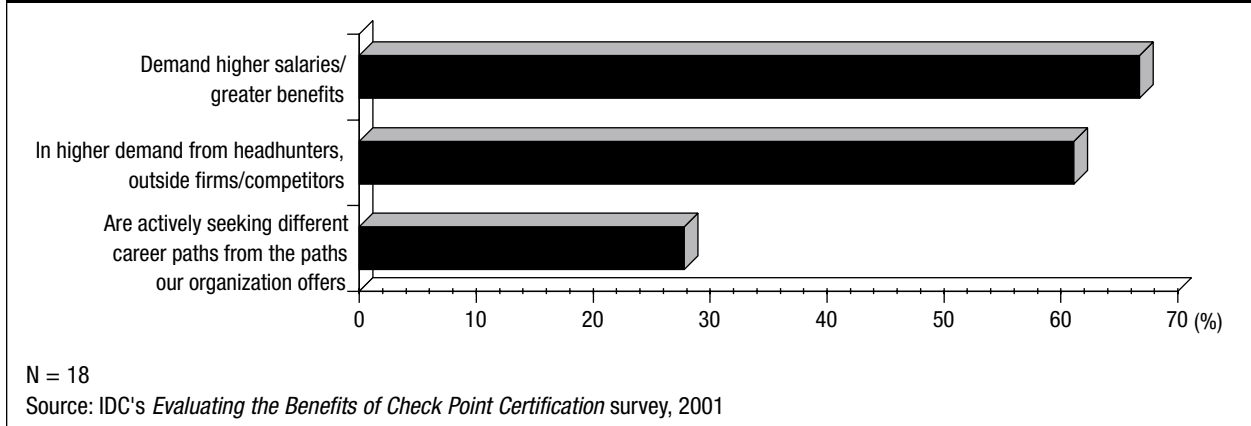


Figure 3
Companies' Ability to Retain CCSE-Certified Employees
How difficult would you say it is to retain employees that have CCSE (or equivalent) certifications?



losing candidates after the company has invested in their certifications. Among those companies that disagree, the primary reasons certified employees are more difficult to retain are that they seek greater compensation and are in higher demand from headhunters and other firms or competitors (see Figure 4).

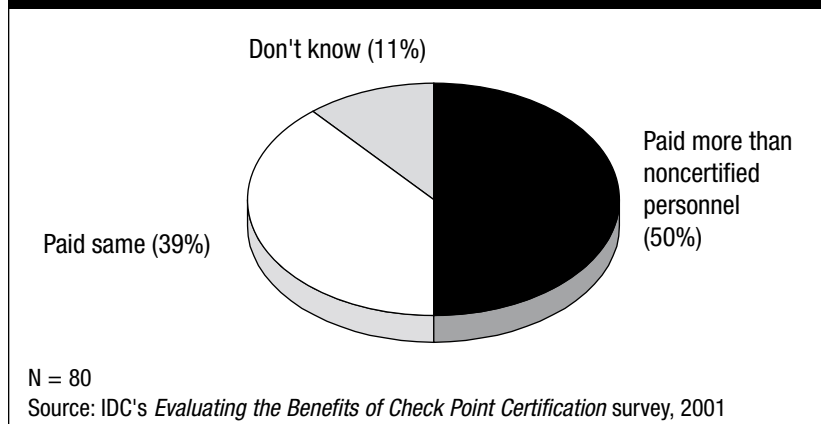
Figure 4
Reasons for Difficulty in Retaining CCSE-Certified Employees
Why would you say that CCSE-certified (or equivalent) staff members are more difficult to retain than other IT employees?

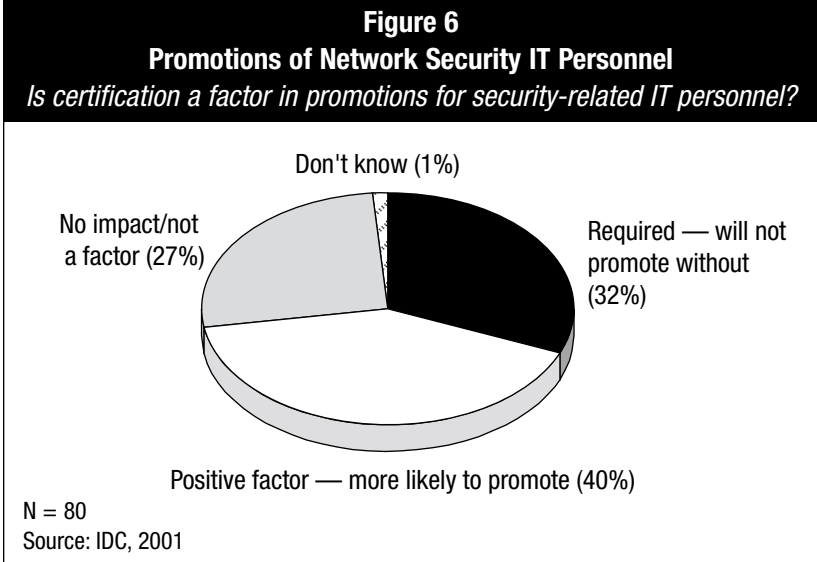


Compensation and Promotion of CCSE-Certified Employees

According to the survey, holding a CCSE certification also carries benefits for the employees. Half of the responding companies say that CCSE-certified employees are paid more than noncertified employees performing the same function (see Figure 5). According to IDC's survey, on average, CCSE-certified employees make 13% more than their noncertified counterparts. Moreover, 32% of respondents require CCSE certification for promotions for security-related IT personnel. An additional 40% of respondents say that, while not a requirement, they are more likely to promote Internet security personnel that have CCSE certifications (see Figure 6).

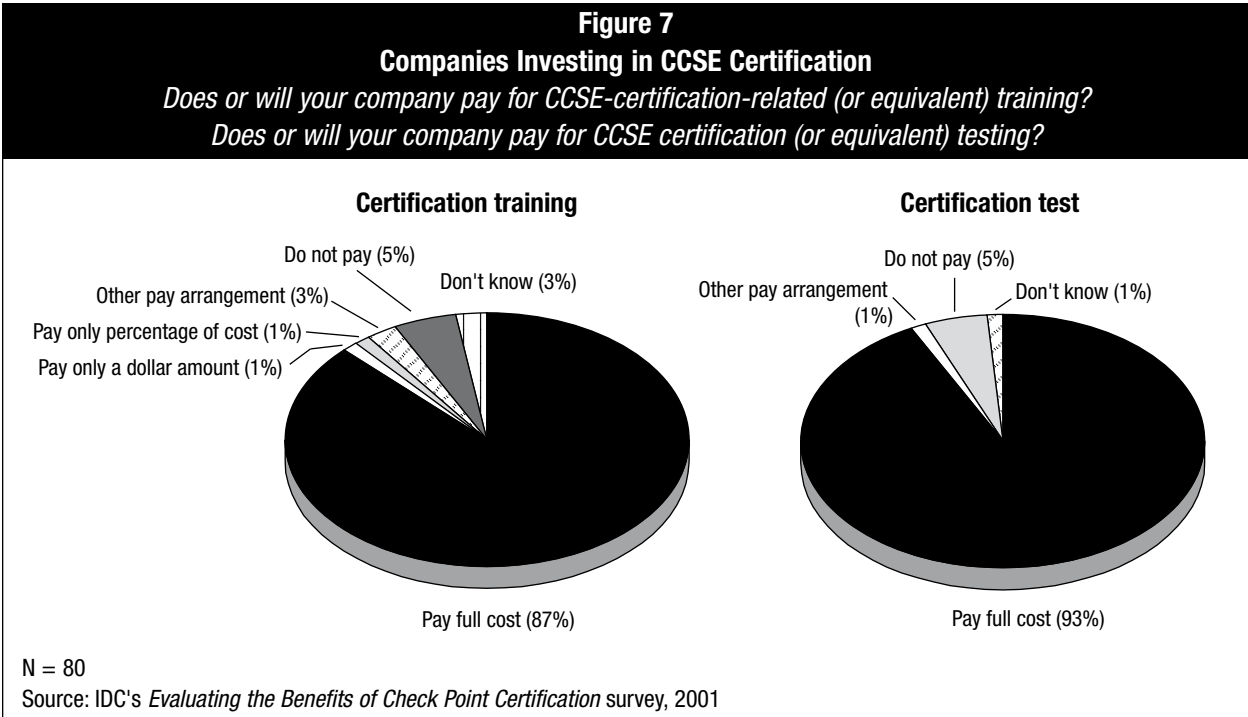
Figure 5
Salary Increases of CCSE-Certified Employees
Are CCSE (or equivalent) certified employees typically paid more than noncertified employees performing the same function?





Investing in Certification

The good news is that most employers not only recognize the value of CCSE certification but are also willing to pay for their employees to become certified. According to the survey, a whopping 93% of respondents claim that they support IT employees becoming CCSE certified. The survey also revealed that employers do not only support certification but also help their employees prepare for certification testing through training programs. Of the respondents, 92% stated that they would pay for CCSE-certification-related training (see Figure 7). Over 87% of respondents will pay the full cost of training.

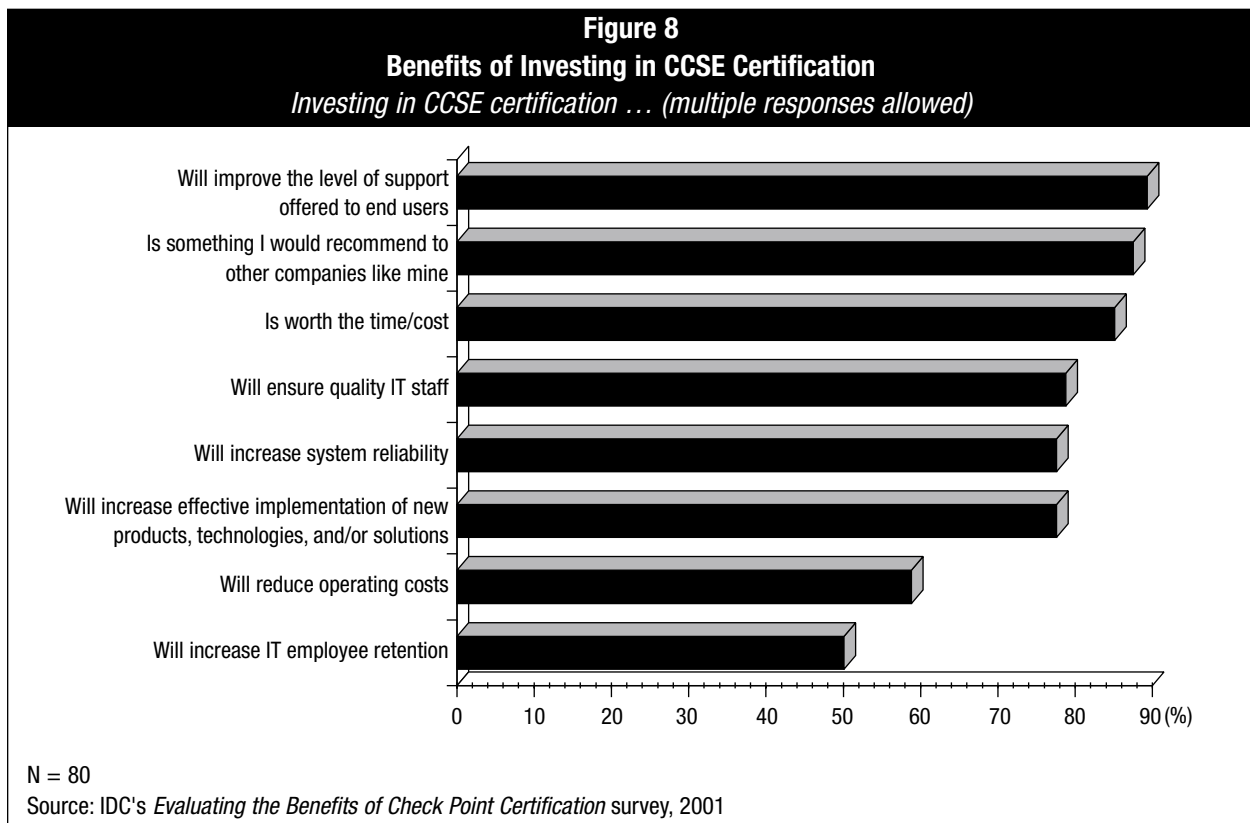


In addition to covering certification training costs, respondents also pay for certification tests. Almost 94% of respondents will pay for CCSE certification testing, with 93% of respondents covering the full cost of certification testing.

Benefits of CCSE Certification

Benefits of Investing in CCSE Certification

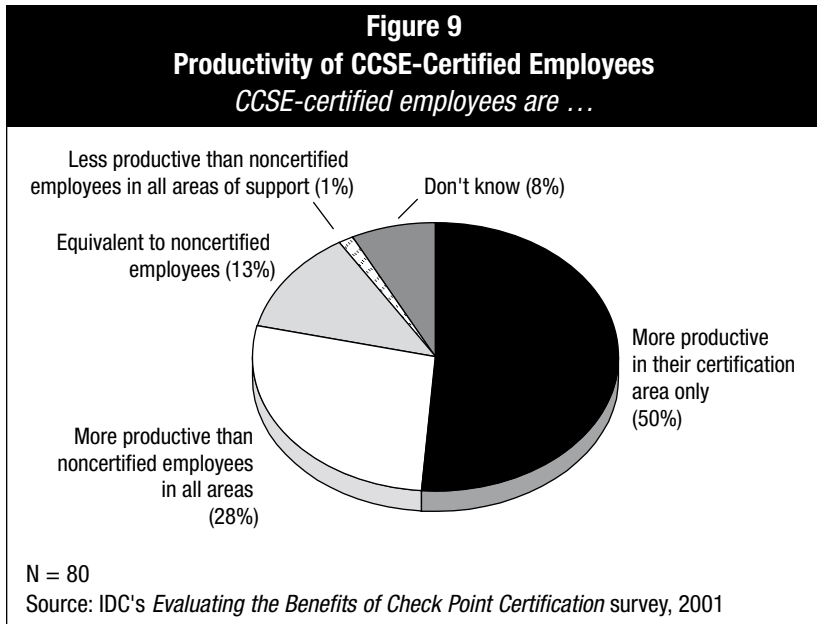
Survey respondents believe that investing in CCSE certification provides a number of key benefits (see Figure 8). Most notably, 89% of respondents agreed that investing in CCSE certification will improve that level of support offered to end users. Other benefits that followed closely include the belief that certification is worth the time and cost and will ensure quality IT staff. Over three-quarters of the respondents emphasized that CCSE certification will increase system reliability and effective implementation of new products and technologies. In addition, over half of the respondents agreed that CCSE certification reduces operating costs.



The multiple benefits of investing in CCSE certification justify employers' decisions to support and pay for CCSE certification training and testing. In addition to these stated benefits, almost 88% of respondents said they would recommend that other companies invest in CCSE certification, further validating these benefits.

Productivity of CCSE-Certified Employees

CCSE certification also tends to increase the productivity of employees (see Figure 9). Over half of the survey respondents stated that CCSE-certified employees are more productive than noncertified employees in the area of Internet security platform management. Approximately 28% of respondents believe that CCSE-certified employees are more productive than noncertified employees in all areas.

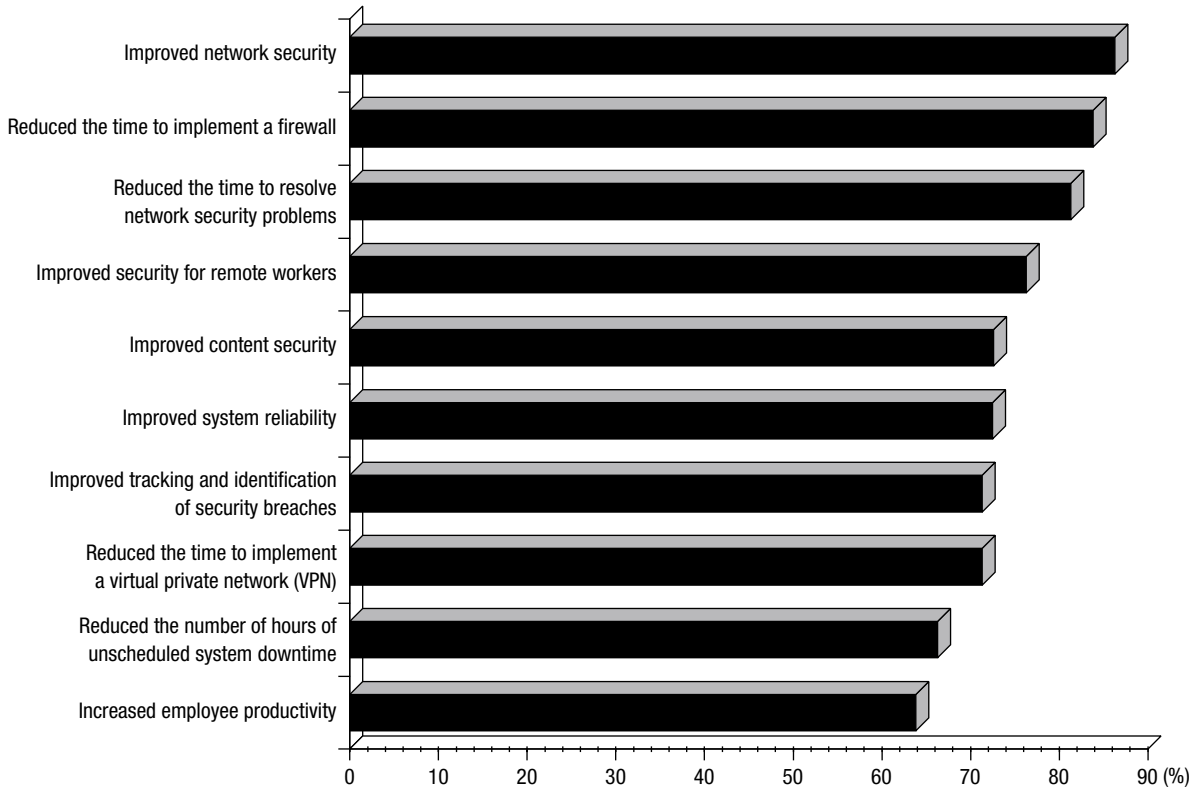


Operational Improvements and Greater Efficiencies

A large majority of survey respondents agreed that hiring and retaining CCSE-certified IT professionals generated numerous operational improvements (see Figure 10). Most notably, 86% of respondents believe that hiring and retaining CCSE-certified personnel have improved Internet security. In addition, as companies become more flexible with telecommuting, hiring and retaining CCSE-certified staff also address the issue of security for remote workers. Over three-quarters of the respondents see an improvement in security for remote workers that access their network due to CCSE-certified personnel.

Organizations have also realized greater efficiencies through CCSE-certified staff. Of the respondents, 81% have seen a reduction in time to resolve Internet security problems. In addition, a large majority of respondents also note shorter times to implement firewalls and VPNs with CCSE-certified professionals on staff. Two-thirds of respondents also agree that CCSE-certified personnel have helped reduce unscheduled system downtime.

Figure 10
Operational Improvement and Greater Efficiencies Achieved with CCSE-Certified Personnel
Do you strongly agree or agree that hiring and retaining employees with CCSE certification has yielded the following IT benefits?



N = 80

Source: IDC's *Evaluating the Benefits of Check Point Certification* survey, 2001

Additional Benefits

Survey respondents were also asked to provide additional benefits gained from having CCSE-certified IT employees. By examining the numerous responses, four major additional benefits become evident:

- **Improved Internet security leads to increased sales through enhanced customer trust and quality of service.** Organizations that employ CCSE-certified professionals can leverage these skills in their marketing efforts to customers. The knowledge that these organizations have certified Internet security professionals on staff makes customers feel more comfortable about engaging in transactions with these organizations. Improvements in system reliability also lead to increases in quality of service. Together, these benefits translate into more sales.
- **CCSE certification increases the knowledge base of the organization, which in turn raises confidence and competency levels.** Many respondents claim that CCSE certification has enhanced the

knowledge among IT professionals about their Internet security platforms. This knowledge generates additional benefits in terms of employee morale and IT competencies.

- **Having CCSE-certified IT employees reduces consulting costs and allows for internal configuration of the Internet security platform.** Because all survey respondents have at least one CCSE-certified professional on staff, these organizations have decided that they want to own the management of their Internet security platforms. These firms state that they have realized a reduction of costs associated with consulting and outsourced configuration based on their investment in CCSE certification.
- **CCSE certification increases the level of professionalism among the IT staff.** One benefit that organizations may not actively seek from CCSE certification is an increase in professionalism from their IT staff. By investing in certification for employees, some respondents note that attitudes became more professional. A likely reason for this change is the recognition by IT professionals that their employers have invested in them through certification training and testing. In return, certified professionals respond to this investment by showing their employers their commitments to achieve a return on this investment.

Conclusion

IDC's *Evaluating the Benefits of Check Point Certification* survey demonstrates that investing in CCSE certification leads to numerous benefits for a company. Although the survey primarily focused on how CCSE certification improved IT departments, responses also demonstrate that investing in CCSE certification improves relationships with customers and increases sales. Also, the large majority of companies that pay for CCSE certification testing and training signifies the belief that the subsequent benefits provide the required return on investment. As companies continue to build and expand their ebusinesses, Internet security will become increasingly important. Companies that continue to invest in CCSE certification to combat the threats of cyber attacks stand to gain numerous benefits and ultimately serve their customers better.

Appendix: Research Methodology for Evaluating the Benefits of CCSE Certification

IDC's *Evaluating the Benefits of Check Point Certification* survey is based on data collected from in-depth, one-on-one telephone interviews conducted in April 2001 with 80 North-America-based IT professionals across vertical industries. The respondents who participated in this survey were screened to meet the following characteristics:

- The respondents' respective companies currently use Check Point software for Internet security.
- The respondents are the most knowledgeable employees at their companies about both the professional certifications of IT employees at their firms and the overall operation and performance of their Check Point Internet security platform.
- The respondents' respective companies use an internal IT staff (as opposed to an outside firm) to manage their Check Point Internet security platform.
- The respondents' respective companies have at least one IT employee with CCSE certification.

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