



Global Knowledge™

Expert Reference Series of White Papers

# The New Microsoft IT Pro Certifications and Exams

# The New Microsoft IT Pro Certifications and Exams

Randy Muller, MCT, MCSE, MCSA, MCDST

---

## Introduction

If you have been in the IT field for any length of time, you are more than aware of the plethora of certification providers and their certifications. Trying to fathom what each certification means; the worth of a certification, and how a certification from one vendor compares to a certification from other vendor (where applicable, of course – having a certification on MS SQL cannot readily compare to having a certification with Juniper Networks).

One question that is asked repeatedly by both employers and IT pros is whether there is value or worth in obtaining a certification. This question comes from a number of different quarters. To answer the question succinctly: yes, certifications are valuable, to both employers and for IT pros. This white paper will address why certifications are valuable. It will also cover the new Microsoft certifications in general and the MCSA/MCSE Windows Server 2003 to MCTS/MCITP Windows Server 2008 upgrade path specifically

## Microsoft Certifications

### Reasons Why You Should Get Certified

There are a number of valid reasons why an individual should certify, and why companies should encourage their employees to become certified and hire certified individuals. Several studies show that companies that hire certified individuals and encourage their employees to earn certifications do prosper better than companies that don't.

### Top Ten Reasons To Hire a Microsoft Certified Profession (MCP)

#### 1. Improve Project Deployments

Independent research<sup>1</sup> has shown that organizations with a majority of their teams certified by Microsoft reported significant improvements in delivering projects on time and within budget.

#### 2. Increase Customer Satisfaction

Certified staff help to increase customer satisfaction through improved service, higher productivity, and greater self-sufficiency.

#### 3. Improve Support Costs

Independent research<sup>2</sup> has shown that organizations with certified staff experience less network downtime and lower dependency on unplanned support.

#### 4. Validate Vendor Qualifications

When outsourcing projects, certification provides assurance of vendors' technical qualifications.

## **5. Gain a Competitive Advantage**

Employees who hold Microsoft certifications bring more advanced skill sets to provide higher levels of service and productivity, giving your business a competitive advantage.

## **6. Benefit by Investing in Your Staff**

Organizations that invest in certifying internal technicians generally attain successful revenue results <sup>3</sup>.

## **7. Increase Employee Satisfaction**

Employee satisfaction and retention are higher when management facilitates employees' career goals.

## **8. Objectively Benchmark Your Staff's Talent**

Certification serves as a reliable benchmark for hiring and promoting staff employees, and ensures your organization is built on top-quality technical talent.

## **9. Reward Employee Expertise**

Certification recognizes and rewards productive employees by validating their expertise. Certification also provides re-training opportunities so existing employees can work more effectively with new technologies.

## **10. See Objective Results of Your Training Investments**

Certification provides an excellent return on training and certification investments by providing a standard method of determining training needs and measuring results.

### **A November 2006 IDC study found that team performance increases when each new team member becomes certified—every time.**

- For each new team member who becomes a Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP), team performance increases every time.
- The skill level of a team is directly responsible for how an organization performs in several key IT functional areas.
- When you increase the concentration of Microsoft certified team members on a team, you directly affect team performance.
- On average, MCPs make up 40 percent to 55 percent of top performing teams.
- Seventy-five percent of managers believe that certifications are important to team performance.
- Sixty-six percent of managers believe that certifications improve the level of service and support offered to customers.
- "...for each additional member of a team certified, team performance increases. Whether the increase is from 37 percent to 38 percent of the team being certified or from 60 percent to 61 percent of the team, the team performance increases overall." IDC, Value of Certification: Team Certification and Organizational Performance, November 2006

## **The Value and Worth of a Certification Is Validated**

Individuals and employers have enough difficulties trying to understand the value and worth of a certification, and this is made even more difficult when a major certification vendor changes the entire structure and naming of their certification program. Microsoft started such a restructuring last year and continues to do so with the announcement of their new Master Certification and exams. To give an example, there are some employers who do not understand or know about the new MCTS and MCITP certifications and seek to hire new employees who have their MCSE (Microsoft Certified System Engineer) on Windows Server 2008 – even though this certification doesn't and won't exist.

## Microsoft Certification

The MCSE certification was Microsoft's premier certification up to 2006 when the Microsoft Certified Architect (MCA) was announced. The Microsoft Certified Professional program (MCP) has been in place since 1992, with more than 2 million people having achieved a Microsoft Certification worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

The MCSE certification itself has been around since the NT3.5 days (mid-'90s). It is 12+ years old in its current form, and we have developed a certain comfort and familiarity with it. An entire generation of IT Professionals has "grown up" knowing exactly where an MCSE fits into the certification scheme, and they also have a good idea of what is involved in earning the MCSE, as well as the worth of this certification, both financially and professionally.

This does not mean that there haven't been additions and other enhancements to the program over the years. The original MCSE was earned on a specific variant of the NT system. Let's say you earned your MCSE on NT 3.51 and then on NT4. You were certified on those two systems – as a Systems Engineer. This same naming approach held true for Windows Server 2000 and Server 2003. This meant that you were an MCSE, MCSA, or an MCP (this white paper addresses the IT pros, not database administrators [DBA] and developers).

## Earlier Microsoft Certifications (MCP, MCSA, MCSE)

Up until the release of the new generation of certifications (from the IT Pro side), there were just four certifications that roughly equated to four distinct levels: MCP, MCSA, MCSE, and MCA. These were not product-specific (for the most part, there some that were platform-specific), nor did they denote cross-product expertise.

### **Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP)**

The first level in the certification hierarchy was the Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP). The MCP certification meant that you had taken and passed a Microsoft certification test, any test at any level (with some caveats based on upgrade tests). This was one of the key issues with this certification. The MCP never denoted on what product you had tested – just that you had passed a test and were certified as an MCP. This did not in any way diminish the value or worth of the MCP, but it did create confusion for IT managers, human resource departments, and the IT pros themselves. What value could be placed on an MCP certification (or rather the test that was passed to achieve the MCP)? What did it mean for the IT pro? "Was there a qualitative value difference between what test the individual passed in order to earn their MCP? These were all very good questions, and they were answered with the MCTS and MCITP certifications.

\

### **Microsoft Certified System Administrator (MCSA)**

The next level in the old Microsoft Certification hierarchy is the Microsoft Certified System Administrator (MCSA). The MCSA certification came long after the Microsoft Certified System Engineer (MCSE). This certification was supposed to represent a differentiation between the SA (System Administrator) and the SE (System Engineer) with respect to the job role that the IT pro would fulfill, based on these certifications. Unfortunately, many people saw the MCSA as more of a precursor or a stepping stone to the MCSE – it was believed (rightly or wrongly) to be not as "valuable" as the MCSE, and there were some who didn't want to "settle" for the MCSA

## Older Certification Numbers

As stated earlier – there are over 2 million Microsoft Certifications that have been earned by individuals since 1992 (as of 9 July 2008). That is an amazing number of certifications – in fact, it is slightly more than the entire population of New Mexico. But this figure is misleading as this includes ALL certifications earned over

the years. (There are over 395,798 MCSEs on Windows NT4 alone!) Table 1 is a list of the current certification numbers for the MCSE and MCSA certifications on Windows Server 2000 and 2003. In both cases, there are more MCSAs than there are MCSEs.

Certification	Number *
MCSA 2003	127,610
MCSE 2003	197,658
MCSA 2000	290,359
MCSE 2000	147,762
MCP	2,296, 561

**Table 1. Current certifications held for MCSE and MCSA (\* as of 9 July 2008)**

## New Generation of Microsoft Certifications

### Why the New Certifications?

The new certification titles and tracks were developed by Microsoft in response to demands from their customers (corporate and individuals). There are a plethora of certifications, even from Microsoft, and knowing to what audience each certification is targeted and the “worth” of these certifications to the individual and the company has been problematic. The concerns from IT individuals, IT managers, and corporations have been addressed by Microsoft. Microsoft now targets the new generation of certifications at various levels – at the product level, job role and function, and at higher levels (the new Masters series and Architect) on depth and breadth of knowledge

## The New Microsoft Certifications (MCTS, MCITP, MCM, and MCA)

There are now four levels of “new” certifications: The Microsoft Certified Architect, Microsoft Certified Master Series, Microsoft Certified Information Technology Professional and the Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist.

**Architect Series:** The Certified Architect program makes it easy for companies to identify experienced IT architects who have completed a rigorous peer review process

**Master Series:** Master certifications identify individuals with the deepest technical skills available on a particular Microsoft product.

**Technology Series:** Specialist certifications train IT professionals in implementation, building, troubleshooting, and debugging of a specific Microsoft technology.

**Professional Series:** Professional credentials validate the skill set required for a particular job.



## Microsoft Certification structure

**Architect Series:** The Certified Architect program makes it easy for companies to identify experienced IT architects who have completed a rigorous peer review process

**Master Series:** Master certifications identify individuals with the deepest technical skills available on a particular Microsoft product.

**Technology Series:** Specialist certifications train IT professionals in implementation, building, troubleshooting, and debugging of a specific Microsoft technology.

**Professional Series:** Professional credentials validate the skill set required for a particular job.

Figure 1. Microsoft Certification Structure

The **Microsoft Certified Architect (MCA)** is not a certification many will achieve as it is not designed as such. There are only 198 MCAs (as of 9 July 2008) worldwide, and they go through a rigorous evaluation process (exam and board review).

Then there is the recently announced **Microsoft Certified Masters Program (MCM)**. There are currently three tracks available: **Exchange 2007**, **SQL 2008**, and **Windows Server 2008**, with two more coming out soon: **Office Communication Server 2007** and **SharePoint 2007**. You will have to have your certified Masters Certificate to apply for any of the MCA technical tracks. The Certified Master shows that you have a very deep understanding as an expert on a specific product. If you earn this certification, it demonstrates that you can design and implement highly complex business solutions.

The **Microsoft Certified Information Technology Professional (MCITP)** demonstrates your knowledge and ability to work on a "comprehensive set of Microsoft technologies"<sup>5</sup>

The **Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS)** is earned by taking a test on a particular product and demonstrates that you have a deep understanding and knowledge of that product. It is also expected that you perform day-to-day operations and are involved in short-term planning

### New Certifications and Number of Individuals Certified

Under the new Microsoft Certification program there are now 9 MCITP (Microsoft Certified Information Technology Professional) tracks and 36 MCTS (Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist) tracks available. Expect an increase in the number and types of both MCITP and MCTS certifications available as new products are released. (See Table 2 below.)

<b>Certification</b>	<b>Number Certified *</b>
Business Intelligence Developer	691
Consumer Support Technician	710
Database Administrator	5,234
Database Developer	2,053
Enterprise Administrator	3,136
Enterprise Project Management with Microsoft Office Project Server 2007	211
Enterprise Support Technician	5,266
Enterprise Messaging Administrator	2,236
Server Administrator	1,736

**Table 2. Current MCITP Certifications (as of 9 July 2008)**

<b>Certification</b>	<b>Number Certified*</b>
.NET Framework 2.0: Distributed Applications	6,647
.NET Framework 2.0: Web Applications	23,758
.NET Framework 2.0: Windows Applications	11,797
SQL Server 2005: Business Intelligence Development	1,624
SQL Server 2005	32,279
BizTalk Server 2006: Custom Applications	2,332
Business Desktop Deployment with the BDD	3,741
Enterprise Project Management with Microsoft Office Project Server 2007	563
.NET Framework 3.5 – Windows Communication Foundation Applications	109
.NET Framework 3.5 – Windows Presentation Foundation Applications	125
.NET Framework 3.5 – Windows Workflow Foundation Applications	82
Managing Projects with Microsoft Office Project 2007	1,189
Microsoft Exchange Server 2007: Configuration	7,399
Microsoft Forefront Client and Server: Configuration	422
Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2006: Configuration	834
Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007: Configuration	1,293
Microsoft Office Groove 2007: Configuration	64
Microsoft Office Live Communications Server 2005	783
Microsoft Office Project Server 2007: Configuration	53
Microsoft Office PerformancePoint Server 2007: Applications	329

**Table 3. Current MCTS Certifications (as of 9 July 2008)  
(Continued on next page)**

<b>Certification</b>	<b>Number Certified*</b>
Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007: Application Development	2,394
Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007: Configuration	7,845
Microsoft Office Visio 2007: Application Development	46
Microsoft Team Foundation Server: Configuration and Development	344
Windows Mobile 5.0: Application Development	307
Windows Mobile 5.0: Configuration	504
Windows Server 2008 Active Directory: Configuration	12,873
Windows Server 2008 Applications Infrastructure: Configuration	11,270
Windows Server 2008 Network Infrastructure: Configuration	12,924
Windows SharePoint Services 3.0: Application Development	1,897
Windows SharePoint Services 3.0: Configuration	4,416
Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007: Configuration	486
Microsoft System Center Operations Manager 2007: Configuration	503
Microsoft Virtual Earth 6.0: Developing Applications	25
Windows Server 2003 Hosted Environments: Configuration and Management	553
Windows Vista: Configuration	30,64

**Table 3. Current MCTS Certifications (as of 9 July 2008) (Continued)**

### Upgrading Your MCSA on Windows Server 2003 Certification

Let us say that you have your MCSA on Windows Server 2003, and you want to upgrade your certification to Windows Server 2008, or you are not certified at all on Windows Server 2003 and want to earn your MCTS on Windows Server 2008. The first thing to remember is that this is a series of new certifications and while there is an upgrade path from Server 2003 to Server 2008, you are NOT earning an MCSE on Windows Server 2008, rather an MCTS or MCITP on windows Server 2008. Also remember that the era of the MCSA/MCSE certifications has ended – it is now MCTS and MCITP (and others beyond the scope covered here) and have an entirely different focus.

The Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) has a different focus than the Microsoft Certified Information Technology Professional (MCITP), and the former is not a prerequisite for the latter (nor is it a “lesser” certification!). The MCTS certification is aimed at IT professionals who work with a specific Microsoft product or platform. An IT pro who has earned an MCTS is expected to possess depth and breadth of knowledge and skills on a particular product or platform. They are expected to manage and maintain the product or platform on a daily basis. They are also more concerned with the day-to-day operations and short-term planning rather than long-term planning and design and design.

There are three MCTS tracks available on **Windows Server 2008: MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Active Directory Configuration; MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Network Infrastructure Configuration, and MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Applications Infrastructure Configuration**. You can take each of the tests individually, or you can take the upgrade path by taking only one test.

The easiest route to upgrade your certification, if you are already an MCSA on Windows Server 2003, is take (and pass, of course) the **70-648 TS: Upgrading your MCSA on Windows Server 2003 to Windows Server 2008, Technology Specialist** exam. Passing this exam will earn you the MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Active Directory, Configuration (equivalent to the 70-640 exam) and the MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Network Infrastructure Configuration (equivalent to the 70-642 exam). The last of the three MCTS certifications – MCTS: Window Server 2008 Application Infrastructure Configuration – is earned by passing the 70-643 exam. The other part to earning your MCTS on any one of the three paths is to pass the **70-646 exam Windows Server 2008, Server Administrator**.

### Upgrading Your MCSE Certification on Windows Server 2003

You have your MCSE on Windows Server 2003, and you want to upgrade to Windows Server 2008. The first thing to remember is that this is a series of new certifications and, while there is an upgrade path, you are not earning an MCSA or MCSE on Windows Server 2008. Rather, you will earn a MCTS or MCITP on Windows Server 2008. Also remember that the era of the MCSA/MCSE certifications has ended – it is now MCTS and MCITP (and others beyond the scope intended here), and they have an entirely different focus.

The **Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS)** is concerned with and focused on a deep understanding and use of a specific Microsoft product. The MCITP, on the other hand, represents a broader view of a series of products or integrated products, and it is concerned with planning and developing of the network architecture and design. The important thing to remember is that the MCTS is not a prerequisite for the MCITP, per se. In other words, you earn the MCTS de facto by simply passing the required tests for MCITP. You will earn the MCTS on several products if your goal is to earn the **MCITP Server Administrator or Enterprise Administrator on Windows Server 2008**.

There are two MCITP tracks available for Windows Server 2008, the **MCITP: Server Administrator** or the **MCITP: Enterprise Administrator** (doesn't mean you can't get both; they are two separate certifications with different requirements and target audiences). Regardless of which track you wish to pursue, you will need to take the **70-649 TS: Upgrading your MCSE on Windows Server 2003 to Windows Server 2008, Technology Specialist** exam. Passing this exam will earn you the: **MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Active Directory, Configuration** (equivalent to the 70-640 exam), the **MCTS: Windows Server 2008 Network Infrastructure Configuration** (equivalent to the 70-642 exam), and the **MCTS: Window Server 2008 Application Infrastructure Configuration** (equivalent to the 70-643 exam). One thing to keep in mind is that if you take and pass the 70-649 test, you also earn the same MCTS certifications that you would have earned by just taking the 70-648 exam.

Now that you have the 70-649 exam, you can decide which of the MCITP tracks you wish to pursue. If you want to earn the **MCITP: Server Administrator**, then you will need to pass the **70-646 Pro: Windows Server 2008, Server Administrator** exam. If, on the other hand, you are interested in the **MCITP: Enterprise Administrator**, you still need to take the **70-649 TS: Upgrading your MCSE on Windows Server 2003 to Windows Server 2008, Technology Specialist**, but in addition, you will also need to take two other tests (for a total of 3 tests). You can take either the **70-620: TS Microsoft Windows Vista,**

**Configuring OR 70-624 TS: Deploying and Maintaining Windows Vista Client and 2007 Microsoft Office System Desktop** (your choice here, but one of the two is required). The last test you need to take is the **70-647: Windows Server 2008, Enterprise Administrator**. Once you have taken all three – congratulations, you are now a **MCITP: Enterprise Administrator**.

The value of certifications cannot be over-emphasized. A certification clearly demonstrates that an individual has met certain requirements and has a specific level of knowledge and skills. There have been significant changes to the Microsoft Certification programs in response to new technologies, and pressure from companies and individuals. Introducing a differentiation of the ubiquitous MCP Certification (take a test, any test, and you are an MCP) and the MCTS (product-specific) provides a qualitative approach to certification and applicability to job roles. The new MCITP certification relates more closely to the real job roles of IT professionals as it can cover multiple disciplines. Understanding the upgrade path from Windows Server 2003 to 2008 can be daunting. There are several exams that can be used for different certifications and just understanding the difference between the MCTS and the MCITP can be challenging, but very rewarding in the end.

## Conclusion

There must be value and worth in earning a Microsoft certification if the program has lasted over 16 years and granted over 2 million certifications. Our old friend the MCSE is soon to be phased out. Those who hold this cherished certification should be proud of their achievements, and those who are on the path to earn the new MCITP will continue the Microsoft Certification tradition established in 1992. While the new certifications have different names and professional focus, they will still command respect within the IT community. Their relevancy is assured by tying the MCTS to a particular product and demanding a deep knowledge of this product. The MCITP assures that anyone possessing this certification has a breadth of knowledge on various products and is concerned with the network architecture and design. These are exciting times in the Microsoft Certification world.

## Learn More

Learn more about how you can improve productivity, enhance efficiency, and sharpen your competitive edge. Check out the following Global Knowledge courses:

[Microsoft 2003 MCSA Boot Camp](#)

[Microsoft 2003 MCSE Boot Camp](#)

[MCITP: Database Administrator Boot Camp](#)

[MCITP: Enterprise Administrator Upgrade Boot Camp](#)

[MCITP: Enterprise Support Technician Boot Camp](#)

[MCITP: Server Administrator Boot Camp](#)

[MCITP: Server and Enterprise Administrator Combo Boot Camp](#)

[Managing Projects with Microsoft Office Project Server 2007 Boot Camp](#)

[MCTS: Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, Configuration Boot Camp](#)

For more information or to register, visit [www.globalknowledge.com](http://www.globalknowledge.com) or call 1-800-COURSES to speak with a training advisor.

Our courses and enhanced, hands-on labs offer practical skills and tips that you can immediately put to use. Our expert instructors draw upon their experiences to help you understand key concepts and how to apply them to your specific work situation. Choose from our more than 700 courses, delivered through Classrooms, e-Learning, and On-site sessions, to meet your IT and business training needs.

## About the Author

Randy Muller, MCT, MCSE, MCSA, MCDST, is currently an instructor with Global Knowledge, specializing in teaching Certification Boot Camps, as well as courses on Exchange, Server 2008 and Office Communications Server.

## References

- 1 Burlington Consultants, April 2003.
- 2 Burlington Consultants, April 2003.
- 3 IDC Research, Gartner Studies, IT Skills Research, 2002.
- 4 <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp/certified.msp>
- 5 <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp/mcstp/default.msp>