

Listing your Microsoft credentials

Contributed by David Noel-Davies

The confusion began late last year when Microsoft announced that its certifications would not be retired. Now, some three months later, many questions have been ironed out regarding Microsoft's revamped cert program. However, one area of uncertainty still exists: What's the proper way to list your credentials if you earned Windows NT certifications and don't want to mislead others into believing you're a Windows 2000 MCSE?

From the time of the announcement, Microsoft has said that IT professionals could differentiate between their certifications by stating that they're an MCSE on Windows NT 4.0 or an MCSE on Windows 2003. But that can quickly become a logistical problem. Just think how long my e-mail signature would run if I listed all my certifications in such a manner:

David Noel-Davies Network+, MCP on Windows XP, MCP+I on Windows NT 4.0, MCSE on Windows 2000, MCSA on Windows 2003

Many of you have additional certifications, so your signatures would be even more unwieldy. While there is room on a resume to list the exact manner in which credentials were earned, the following don't provide sufficient space for clarification:

- Business cards
- Bylines
- Directory listings
- E-mail signatures and letter salutations
- Letterhead
- Short biographies

Fortunately, the solution isn't that complicated, nor is it confusing.

Once an MCSE…

Once you've earned MCP or MCSE status, you can continue listing your name and title minus the version clarification. For example, it's acceptable to refer to my accreditations as follows:

David Noel-Davies N+, MCP+I, MCSE

Certification retirements were eliminated because the technologies and skills measured by those certifications are still relevant. Thus, you are still officially certified and can still list your certifications without the on X platform tags.

However, it's imperative that you don't mislead others into believing that you're trying to take credit for a Windows 2000 MCSE by listing only MCSE everywhere, including on your resume. In fact, your resume should explicitly list and clarify each of your certifications and the platforms you earned them on.

Anne Marie McSweeney, Microsoft's director of certification skills and assessment, told me via e-mail, "We develop certifications with a specific job function in mind. The value of a credential is realized when another person can correctly identify you as someone who possesses the skills necessary to fulfill a job role. Referring to yourself as 'MCSA on Windows 2000' will allow you to leverage your hard-earned title with your client or prospective employer."

In another e-mail message, Dan Truax, Microsoft program manager, said, "Listing the specific version of our certification is a great way for individuals to distinguish their skills from others. In the MCSE example, it is a great advantage for someone to say he or she is an MCSE on Windows 2000. We believe that hiring managers will also start looking for this level of specificity—just as they do when looking at versions of our software products. Credential versions will always appear on the individual's transcript, as well as on his or her certificate."

In other words, it's best to specify which certification version when you can, but you are not required to create lengthy titles when room doesn't permit.

"Versions are not part of the credential logo, and we do not mandate the use of version when referring to the credential in text," Truax confirmed. "However, we believe this will become common practice as a means for individuals to demonstrate their knowledge and skills."