

Making the Difference

Microsoft® Office Certification Enhances Employee Skills and Effectiveness

CERTiPORT®



FAST FACTS *The survey, conducted in 2008, verifies the value of being certified in Microsoft Office and illustrates that employees (along with supervisors) recognize the benefits of obtaining certification:*

FAST FACT: **Microsoft Office certification increases employee proficiency at all levels.**

- Seven out of 10 certified workers say they made moderate to substantial proficiency gains.
- 89% of supervisors say that Microsoft Office certified employees are more proficient users of Microsoft Office programs.*

FAST FACT: **Microsoft Office certification supports job satisfaction and loyalty.**

- Longer tenured, certified employees say the opportunity to utilize skills gained from certification contributes to their overall job satisfaction.

FAST FACT: **Microsoft Office certification increases employee effectiveness and initiative.**

- Nearly 70% of certified employees say they make a greater contribution to their employers with certification.
- Six out of 10 certified employees say they take on more complex or difficult assignments after certifying.

FAST FACT: **Microsoft Office certification raises the efficiency and productivity of individuals and organizations.**

- 62% of certified employees say that they are more productive than their non-certified co-workers.
- 85% of supervisors say Microsoft Office certified employees are more productive because of their certification.*

FAST FACT: **Microsoft Office certification provides employees with the skills and confidence to assist co-workers and impact the workplace in a positive way.**

- Seven out of 10 certified workers say they reach out to co-workers and show them how to use a Microsoft Office tool if they think it will help them with a work-related task.

Overview

The anecdotal evidence is everywhere.

Microsoft Office certification makes a difference. One Fortune 500 firm found that training and certifying 30 of their financial analysts and technicians resulted in a cost savings equal to four additional head count.

Perhaps that's why studies indicate that both managers and workers recognize the value of obtaining certification. A recent survey performed by Certiport regarding the broader impact of certification on performance and working environment indicates that workers increase in proficiency, job satisfaction, initiative, productivity, and informal co-worker training after becoming certified.

Consequently, obtaining Microsoft Office certifications does more than teach employees a few additional skills—it empowers and motivates employees to contribute in ways that raise overall organizational effectiveness.

Research Design

Supervisors and managers are interested in a common theme: How to get the most from their employees. Implementing a Microsoft Office certification program is an effective way to increase and leverage employee skills. Unfortunately, managers who aren't involved in the intricate details of how their workers perform assignments may not recognize the need for greater desktop-computing skills. In fact, of the over 500 certified employees from North America and Japan questioned in this study, two-thirds stated their supervisors have marginal to no knowledge of how they carry out assignments.

Considering that up to 80% of these employees' work days involve using Microsoft Office applications, it is imperative that supervisors understand the impact of certification on their employees.[†]

For the main thrust of the research, an online survey was issued to a target population of certified full-time employees in an office setting who use a personal or laptop computer for the greater portion of their work activities. Reaching such a highly specific target audience was achieved through a two-stage screening process prior to granting respondents access to complete the survey.

Portions of a previous study completed by International Data Corporation (IDC), which looks at the value of Microsoft Office certification from the manager's perspective, have been included. While it is beneficial to understand the impact of certification as perceived by managers, the bulk of this document looks at the impact of certification from the employee's perspective.

Both studies reach the same conclusion: Microsoft Office certification is a valuable resource to help businesses reach their full potential and gain a competitive edge.

Increased Proficiency at All Levels

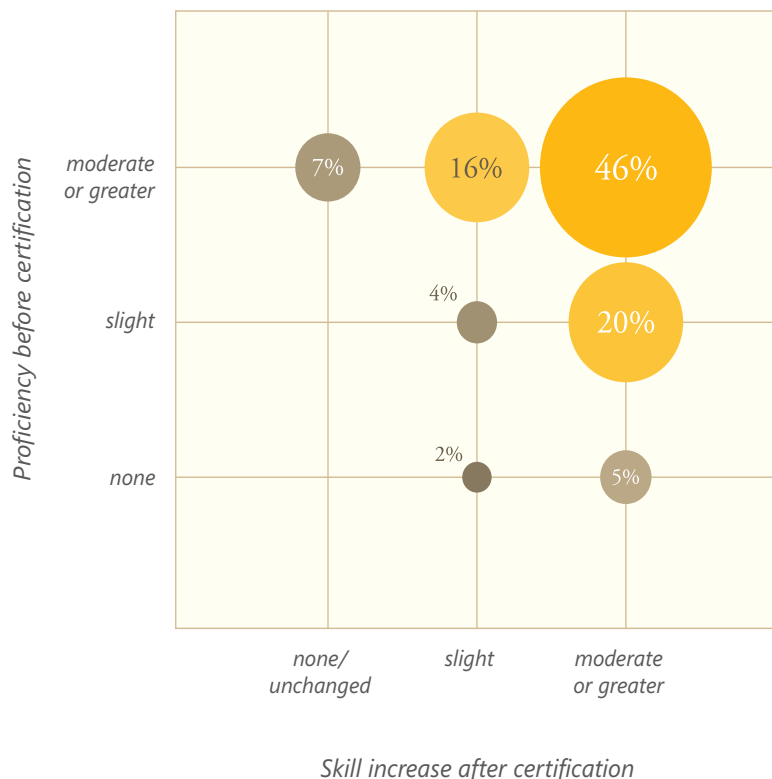
An old truism states, "You don't know what you don't know." Most workers are familiar with the basic functions of Microsoft Office applications. Yet, while they are comfortable using certain aspects of the software and are confident they can figure out more complex functions, perusing the application for answers is time consuming and often leads to inefficient solutions. In fact, many do not even realize certain Office functions exist. Proficiency among new employees may be even worse. *A new hire takes an average of 13.5 months to reach "maximum efficiency" with programs commonly used by a business.*[†]

But with training and certification employees can fully leverage the spectrum of functionality available to them in Microsoft Office. Of the over 500 certified employees surveyed, 69% of the respondents viewed themselves as already "moderately" or "very" proficient in the application before they became certified.

However, of these same self-proclaimed proficient users, more than nine out of ten reported making proficiency gains through the certification process.

These remarkable results show that regardless of how much employees knew before certification, they gained new skills through becoming certified. Furthermore, while the vast majority of respondents thought they were good enough, even classifying themselves as very proficient before certification, most of them discovered that their Microsoft Office certification provided them with an increased set of skills and understanding of the software suite.

Skill Gains Relative to Prior Proficiency



The Best Become Better

Ninety-three percent of all respondents reported becoming more skilled in the application they certified in, with 71% reporting 'moderate' to 'great' skill increases.

Most telling are those who reported the biggest gains. Two-thirds of the respondents (66%) who considered themselves already 'moderately' or 'greatly' proficient in an application prior to certification reported achieving 'moderate' or 'great' skill increases in the same application through certification.

The certification process *really* does teach savvy workers new tricks.

Greater Job Satisfaction and Loyalty

Utilizing Microsoft Office certification can save companies time and money by increasing job satisfaction and loyalty. When used as a hiring technique, it leads to better hires, improved job fit, and increased satisfaction and retention. Employee turnover costs somewhere between 120 to 200 percent of an employee's annual salary, and given that nearly a quarter of bad hires fail on the job due to inadequate administrative or computer skills, implementing a certification program is a useful and cost-saving tool for businesses.[†]

Additionally, obtaining Microsoft Office certification can reduce feelings of boredom and lack of fulfillment that can lead to dissatisfaction and employee turnover. Retention is improved by providing employees opportunities to learn and utilize new skills. *In a study by IDC, 43% of hiring managers said that investing in employee development reduces turnover as it increases job satisfaction and feelings of engagement.*[§] The process of Microsoft Office certification can provide employees with the increased confidence and capacity that leads to greater job satisfaction and loyalty.

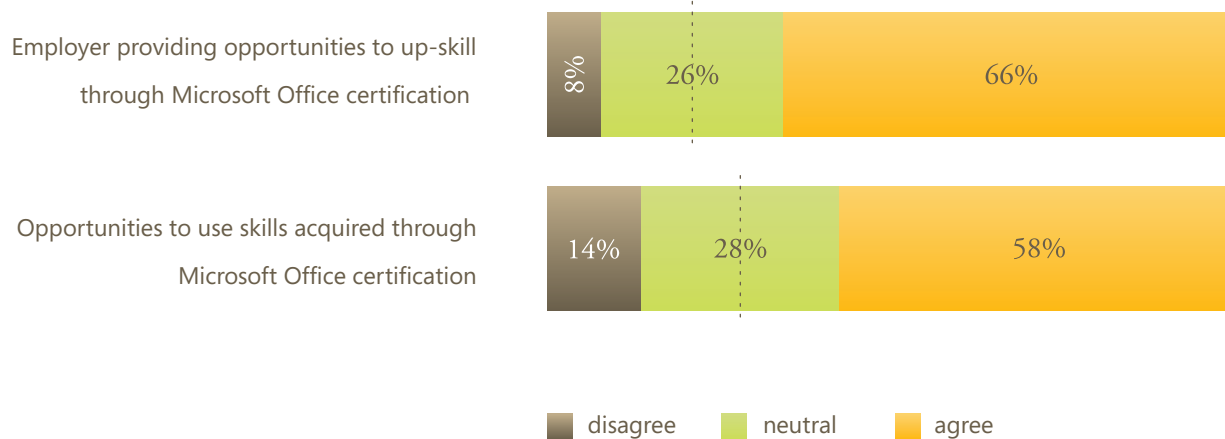
Similarly, survey results among employees indicate that 58% either "agree" or "strongly agree" that their job satisfaction depends, in part, on being able to use their newly acquired Microsoft Office skills. As 86% also reported that "moderate" or "tremendous" opportunity exists in their job to use their new skills, it is clear that an employee's perceived opportunity to use new skills, and obtain gratification for their efforts, contributes to greater job satisfaction.

Two-thirds indicated that an employer who provides Microsoft Office certification for employees increases the likelihood that their employees will be more dedicated to their jobs.

Interestingly, the longer respondents have stayed with an employer, the more they tend to believe putting their certified skills to work bolsters their job satisfaction.

Employees who go through the process of Microsoft Office certification are more likely to gain the skills that enable them to feel more confidence and satisfaction by progressing in their employment. By providing certification opportunities, managers not only increase the proficiency and productivity of their workers, but they retain the skilled and dedicated employees that are essential to an organization's success.

Job Satisfaction and Dedication to an Employer Are Enhanced by ...



Increased Initiative

Many employees are comfortable performing their work duties in Microsoft Office but lack confidence to move beyond their comfort zone. Without such confidence they lack the initiative to expand their efforts and contribute in new ways.

Among the respondents who indicated having some say over the type of assignments they receive, 61% reported they took on more "complex or difficult" assignments after going through the process of certification.

Microsoft Office certified employees have the skills in place that allow them to execute more challenging assignments than they could otherwise complete prior to certification.

Managers likewise see the benefits of certification as certified employees require less supervision and are also better prepared to accept additional responsibilities than their non-certified co-workers. Mark Smith, president of Smith and Company, an accounting firm says, "The more trained employees are, the more independently they can work [and] the less oversight they need."⁵

Certified employees recognize the opportunities available to use their skills to make a larger contribution in their jobs. The confidence and self-motivation that comes with obtaining certification makes them eager to find new ways to use their skills that better support the company.

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Certified employees took on more "complex or difficult" assignments after going through the process of certification

After becoming certified, workers have the skills to execute more difficult assignments

Certified employees are better prepared to accept additional responsibilities than non-certified co-workers

Certified employees recognize opportunities to make a greater contribution in their jobs using their new skills

The confidence that comes with obtaining certification makes certified employees eager to use their new skills to better support the company



Enhanced Efficiency and Productivity

Work is piling up, perhaps more than ever before in the face of recession with limited head count. Some employees could have a backlog of 200+ hours of uncompleted work.³

Without the skills that come through Microsoft certification, employees spend more work time concentrating on how to accomplish a project rather than on the final product itself. Insufficient Microsoft Office skills make completing assignments take longer than necessary, misusing time that could be allocated for important business needs. How much time can be saved by becoming certified? According to one manager: "Before training, it took an hour and a half to complete task X, but after the training, the time was reduced to 45 minutes."⁵

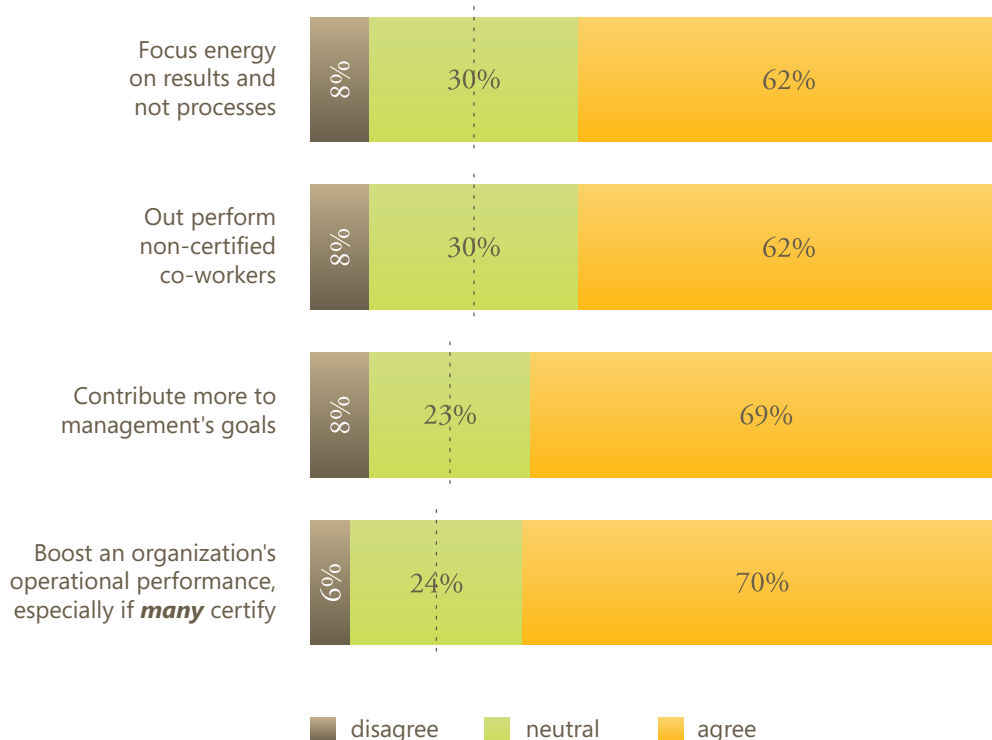
According to 62% of the respondents, the valuable, time-saving skills learned through certification allows employees to focus on the end results of assignments, rather than the tools used to accomplish the task. Sixty-two percent also "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they are more productive than their non-certified co-workers with similar job functions. In addition, nearly 70% say they make a greater contribution to their employers with certified skills.

Certified employees recognize they can contribute more to their jobs now than they could prior to certification.

Seven out of 10 respondents believe that an organization can improve its operational performance if more employees become certified in Microsoft Office.

Evidently, these employees recognize that those who up-skill through Microsoft Office certification gain essential tools that help them increase in efficiency and productivity, allowing them to spend more time on projects that really matter.

Microsoft Office Certification Allows a Worker to ...



Value to Experienced Workers

Workers who saw the most productivity benefits tied to certification also reported being at their jobs longer than the average time of respondents of the survey. In general, the level of agreement with the statements on this chart are 5-10 percentage points higher among this group—a significant increase over responses from shorter-tenured peers.

Broader Office Impact— The Unofficial Help Desk

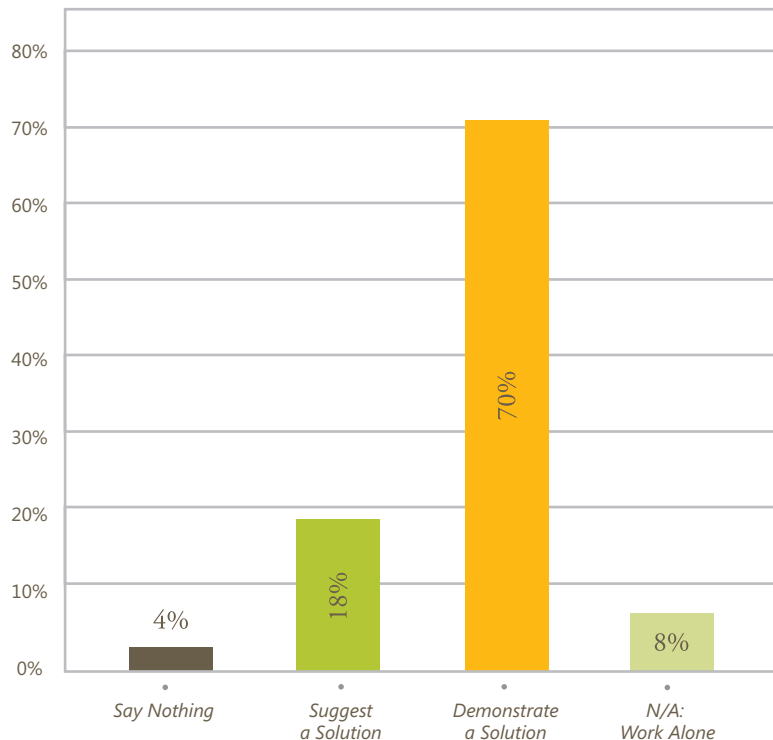
Many find satisfaction in helping a co-worker in the workplace. As employees learn new skills and share their knowledge with others, everyone in the office benefits. Certified employees are among those who share their newly learned skills with those around them.

Seven out of ten respondents stated that they reach out to co-workers, without being solicited by them, and show them how to use a Microsoft Office tool or feature if they think it will help them with a work-related task.

Employees who go through the process of Microsoft Office certification become valuable resources to their organizations as they serve as unofficial help desks in the office.

Particularly in team-oriented work environments, managers also recognize the benefits of knowledge-sharing and believe that certified employees have a greater credibility and are valued as a resource both internally and externally.⁵ Certified employees proactively look for ways to grow the company, utilizing their skills to assist co-workers, and contributing to the organization's bottom line by increasing the productivity of multiple employees.

How Do You React When You See a Co-worker Struggle with a Work Task You Can Solve with Microsoft Office?



70% show
co-workers
how to use a
Microsoft Office
tool or feature
if they think it
will help

Conclusion

This study of the impact of Microsoft Office certification demonstrates that becoming Microsoft Office certified has far-reaching benefits for both employees and employers. The knowledge gained through the certification process empowers employees in their ability to contribute successfully on the job. While many employees may know enough about Microsoft Office to get by, Microsoft certified employees gain valuable skills that improve their efficiency and productivity, encourage them to seek opportunities for more complex tasks and assist their co-workers, and engender more satisfaction in their employment.



Certified employees agree:
Microsoft Office certification makes a difference.

About Certiport

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* "Microsoft Office Specialist: Improving the Workplace," Credentio, 2001.

† "Post-Microsoft Office Certification Survey," Certipoint, 2007.

‡ "The Problem of Employee Turnover," CIGNA Behavioral Health, 2003.

§ "Preventing Bad Hires: The Value of Objective Prehire Assessment," IDC, 2007.

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