



Success Story

Microsoft Technology Associate Certification

Microsoft Technology Associate Starts British Youth on IT Career Path in Zenos Apprenticeship Programme

ZENOS

Apprentices Gain Experience While Validating Basic Technology Skills with Internationally Recognized Certification

ZENOS IT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

Location:

Banbury, Basingstoke, Bradford, Brighton, Birmingham, Bristol, Cheltenham, Coventry, Croydon, Derby, High Wycombe, Leeds, Leicester, Luton, Maidstone, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Newcastle, Oxford, Preston, Romford, Slough, Sheffield, Southampton, Stevenage, Telford, Wakefield, Watford, Wokingham, West London, Warrington England

Program Enrollment:

5000 apprentices per year

Success Metrics:

- Starting participants on Microsoft certification path
- Providing credential valued by local industry
- Introductory certification to prepare individuals for advanced studies



CHALLENGE

With headquarters near Banbury, England and a network of 31 training centres across the country, the Zenos programme helps thousands of young people every year. The Zenos Training Centres deliver training under the National Apprenticeship Service funded by the Skills Funding Agency, and also provides internationally recognized certifications from vendors such as Microsoft and CompTIA.

"The IT industry in the UK has a shortage of young talent, and we aim to make sure the right young people get the right skills and the right certifications in order to fill open jobs," says Jason Moss, Managing Director, Zenos. "We train young people on everything from customer service to business ethics to technology certifications."

The 39-week Zenos Apprenticeship Programme accepts young people aged 16 to 24 and includes up to 22 weeks in the workplace in addition to off-the-job training in a Zenos training centre. Zenos apprentices earn CompTIA A+ and Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) certification, and Zenos was looking for an entry-level certification to add to the program to help students prepare for these higher-level certifications.

"Previously, our apprentices were taking MCTS at the end of the apprenticeship program, but that was a big leap for beginners," says Zeshan Sattar, Curriculum Manager, Zenos. "Learning all of the different elements of networking, security and operating systems and jumping right into MCTS certification was too high level for apprentices who are brand new to the IT field. We needed a solution to bridge the gap and get them started on the right foot."

Zenos has delivered the MCTS certification for several years, but there was a large learning curve for most new students to pass the exam. Zenos looked for a certification that would serve two purposes – help to bridge the gap to MCTS and give students an introductory technology certification to boost their CVs.

SOLUTION

Zenos Apprenticeship training already included the installation of software, configuring software, installing networks and other basic technology functions. When Zenos heard about the new Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) certification, they believed the exams would fit well into the existing curriculum to bridge the gap to more advanced certifications and give program participants another impressive accomplishment on their CV.

Microsoft
Technology
Associate

"When the MTA program launched it actually sounded too good to be true," says Sattar. "Here was a certification covering security, servers, Windows, and other skills that fit really well into our program, and it was endorsed by Microsoft. Since we are the biggest Microsoft IT Academy in Europe, we wanted to be the first to offer any new Microsoft certification exams."

Zenos began by running a small pilot program where they invited some apprentices who had previously completed the program back to take a three-day course with the MTA exam on the last day. All of the apprentices passed the exam on the first time.

Since MTA was a perfect fit, Zenos decided to implement the certification on a large scale and purchased a campus license to deliver MTA. Zenos worked with Certiport's UK partner Prodigy Learning as the authorized provider of MTA and chose to deliver two of the MTA exams at their 31 centres across the UK – Networking Fundamentals and Windows Operating System Fundamentals.

Apprenticeship Programme participants across the country used study books and practice exams from MeasureUp to prepare for the MTA exams. One participant, Chirag Patel, explains how the practice exams helped him to prepare to earn MTA certification. "The practice examinations showed me my weak points and gave me explanations on what I got right and wrong. I went from there and preparing for the MTA exam was quite simple really."

RESULTS

As soon as Zenos was prepared to deliver the MTA exams, there were already approximately 2,000 apprentices ready to take the exam in a 24-hour period across all of the testing centres. Zenos was concerned about the testing system handling so many exams at once, so they worked closely with Prodigy Learning and Certiport to make it possible to upload all of the exams in one day.

"In July, 2,000 apprentices in England took the MTA exam and we had a fantastic pass rate," says Sattar.

Patel took the MTA exam with the first group and shared his feelings upon earning certification. "When I first passed my MTA exam I was really happy and confident. It gave me a sense that I had moved a piece on the chessboard to pursue my IT career. When going for interviews I knew it would show employers that I had taken the time to take the examination, and that I'm committed to a career in IT."

Today, 10,000 MTA exams have been taken at Zenos and the success rate continues. MTA helps Zenos Apprenticeship Programme participants get the skills that are relevant in Windows and networking, making the transition to MCTS easier. "We want to ensure our apprentices are certified in Microsoft, and MTA starts them off on that ladder," said Moss. "MTA is a stepping stone for MCTS or whatever path the individual chooses to take."

One participant, Martin Kemp, said MTA was a good introductory certification that helped him enter the IT field. "I was already interested in IT, but I wanted someone to certify my knowledge since I was just starting out and didn't have any qualifications. MTA gave me that first certification and the same principles taught on the exams fit into the certifications I took later." Martin went on to earn MCTS for Windows Server and the Microsoft IT Professional in Enterprise Administration at Zenos, and plans to earn additional certifications now at his job with Capgemini.

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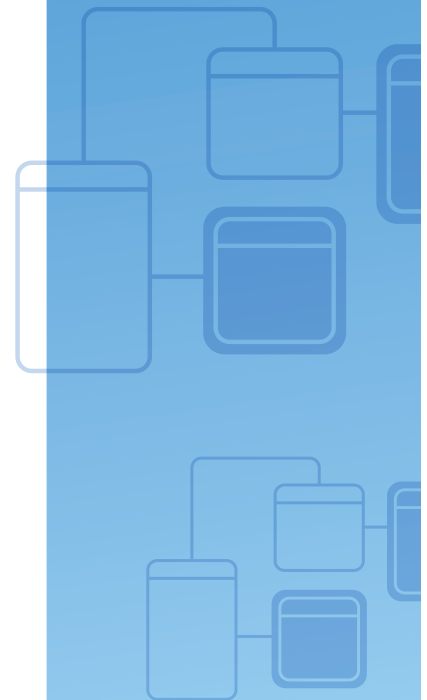
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Certiport is the leading provider of certification exam development, delivery and program management services which include practice tests via MeasureUp[®] delivered through an expansive network of over 12,000 Certiport Authorized Testing Centers worldwide. Certiport manages a sophisticated portfolio of leading certification programs including: the official Microsoft Office certification program, the Microsoft Technology Associate certification program, the Adobe[®] Certified Associate certification program, the HP Accredited Technical Associate, the CompTIA Strata[™] IT Fundamentals, the Autodesk Certified User certification program, the Intuit QuickBooks Certified User certification program and the Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³[®]). For more information, please visit www.certiport.com.

Opportunities to thrive in IT:

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– **Zeshan Sattar**,
Curriculum Manager,
Zenos



Microsoft