

Citrix: Collaborating With Constituents for a New Cert Program

JULIEANN SCALISI

In early 2007, Citrix Education decided to revamp its certification program. Not only did changes to the program need to reflect and support the growth of the Citrix product portfolio — as well as evolving technologies and industry trends — but the new curriculum also had to address the needs of Citrix customers and partners.

For this reason, Citrix Education tapped into its constituents to collect in-depth feedback on the existing program and solicit ideas for improvements. The following findings emerged:

- Customers wanted more certification options that would address a broader range of job roles and multiple technology specializations, especially in the “red hot” virtualization market.
- Individuals who are already Citrix certified needed an easier way to advance and update their certifications.
- It was important to ensure that the value of Citrix certification was upheld and not compromised with any changes to the program.

Based on this feedback, the Citrix certification program was reorganized into three levels of certification, which are based on job roles:

- **Administrator Series**, which consists of the Citrix Certified Administrator (CCA), the new Platinum Edition CCA and the new Citrix Certified Advanced Administrator (CCAA).
- **Engineer Series**, which comprises the Citrix Certified Enterprise Engineer (CCEE).
- **Architect Series**, which comprises the Citrix Certified Integration Architect (CCIA).

The tracks under each certification align with four distinct solution paths, enabling IT professionals to achieve specific credentials for application virtualization, server virtualization, application networking and desktop virtualization. This allows customers and partners to fine-tune their Citrix credentials to more closely represent their current skill level and technology focus.

Overall, the new structure incorporates expanded offerings and options for deeper product specialization; more efficient paths to allow IT professionals to advance to the next certification level; update paths;

and alternative requirements for advanced certifications. The changes to the program and strategy were announced in October and are being executed throughout this year and into 2010.

Administrator Series: More Options for a Changing Landscape

Given the current state of the economy, customers and partners agree it is more important than ever for IT professionals to stay on top of changing technologies. Further, virtualization is proving to be more than a trend with its cost-saving potential, and it is expected to continue to create opportunities for IT professionals in the years to come.

For Citrix, all of this translated into a need for more certification options across a broad range of job

When Citrix Education decided to give its certification program an overhaul, the company solicited input from its customers and partners. The result is a new suite of options that takes real-world trends and economic and market factors into account.

roles to support specialized knowledge in key server, desktop and application virtualization technologies.

The Administrator Series includes certification tracks that support the entire range of Citrix virtualization products, from application virtualization with Citrix XenApp, to desktop virtualization with Citrix XenDesktop, as well as server virtualization with Citrix XenServer. In addition, application networking is supported through a Citrix NetScaler certification.

Previously, administrator-level certifications were limited to the entry-level CCA. The CCA tracks focus on validating basic implementation skills such as

Architect Series

- The **CCIA** focuses on real world skills and experiences around the broad range of technologies required to design dynamic approaches to application and workload delivery.
- Architects demonstrate the ability to analyze business and technical needs and propose extensive Citrix designs that solve those key challenges.

CITRIX professional

Certified
Integration Architect

Engineer Series

- The **CCEE** focuses on the skills to plan and integrate select elements of application delivery, from planning - the tactical design expertise needed for scaling and enhancing existing infrastructure, to integration - the know how to connect systems to create an optimized solution.

CITRIX professional

Certified
Enterprise Engineer

Administrator Series

- The **CCA** focuses on skills required to successfully install, configure and manage a single Citrix product while the **CCA Platinum** expands implementation expertise across our most feature packed product editions.
- The **CCAA** focuses on advanced and additional tasks such as monitoring, optimizing, and troubleshooting.

CITRIX professional

Certified
Advanced Administrator

CITRIX professional

Certified
Administrator

installing, configuring and managing Citrix products. Under the new certification structure, fresh options have been introduced to allow those with a CCA to take an intermediate step without necessarily pursuing Engineer or Architect-level certifications. Once an entry-level CCA is achieved, IT pros may choose to demonstrate breadth of knowledge across an end-to-end Citrix solution with a Platinum Edition CCA or validate in-depth knowledge and skills with a CCAA.

To achieve the Platinum Edition CCA designation, a core CCA exam, plus up to two additional CCA exams in related technologies, must be passed. Plat-

inum Edition CCAs are available now for each of the four solution paths: application virtualization (CCA for Citrix XenApp 5 Platinum); server virtualization (CCA for Citrix XenServer 5 Platinum); application networking (CCA for Citrix NetScaler 8 Platinum); and desktop virtualization (CCA for Citrix XenDesktop 2 Platinum).

A CCAA is unique in that an advanced technical training course is required in addition to passing an advanced exam. The decision to make technical training a requirement stemmed from customer and hiring-manager feedback that training experience was the most valuable part of attaining a cer-

Virtualization is proving to be more than a trend with its cost-saving potential, and it is expected to continue to create opportunities for IT professionals in the years to come.

tification. Currently, the CCA for Citrix XenApp 5, supporting application virtualization, is available. A CCA for application networking is in development.

Engineer and Architect Series: Streamlined Requirements and Higher Value

The changes made to the two advanced tiers of Citrix certification were more subtle than those made to the Administrator Series, but nonetheless very strategic. For example, both customers and partners expressed a need for streamlined update paths, and the ability for professionals to leverage their real-world experience in the pursuit of an advanced certification was noted as a desirable feature.

The engineer-level CCEE effectively replaces the Citrix Certified Enterprise Administrator (CCEA) certification and has been named to more accurately describe its association to the engineer-level job role. Those who earn a CCEE have successfully demonstrated their ability to plan, design, scale and enhance an existing infrastructure. Because CCEEs are expected to be generalists, as well as specialists, in at least one Citrix product, prerequisites for a CCEE include both a Platinum Edition CCA and a CCA.

The CCIA allows architect-level IT professionals to prove they have the real-world skills necessary to gather business and technical requirements to devise techniques, recommendations and detailed designs. In evaluating the CCIA program, customer feedback and trends indicated that hiring managers value the combination of certifications and experience. With the introduction of an experience requirement, truly qualified candidates with proven experience will be

able to obtain the credential while taking a reduced number of exams. Not only does this ensure the right candidates pursue the certification, but the experience requirement also helps maintain the value and integrity of the program.

The new certification structure was designed so that within each solution path, the three levels of certification build upon one another. The prerequisite for a CCEE is a Platinum Edition CCA and a CCA; the prerequisite for a CCIA is a CCEE.

For seasoned IT professionals who are already certified and want to update their advanced credentials, streamlined requirements are available in the form of update paths. These shortened paths reduce requirements significantly, allowing candidates to demonstrate skills relevant to the features and technologies that are most critical in order to keep their designations current.

More information on update opportunities and experience requirements for CCEE and CCIA will be available closer to their respective announcements, expected during the first half of this year.

Although the rollout of the new certification structure continues, many options are available today, so professionals can get started toward their Citrix certification goals. For the latest updates on Citrix certification information, please visit www.citrix-education.com.

Julieann Scalisi is managing director of education for Citrix Systems and has more than 20 years of experience in the training and certification industry. She can be reached at editor@certmag.com.