Tech Certified

IT Credentials for CPAs

As companies implement new technology solutions, automate business processes and contemplate the appropriate risk management strategy, CPAs can be the right professionals to help bridge the gap between business requirements and possible technology solutions.

As CPAs, our touchpoints with technology usually are as a user, where we become adept at using a suite of Microsoft products, our tax software and other audit and accounting applications. The challenge is that our clients and own organizations are exploring and using new technology (i.e., cloud computing, mobile apps, Blockchain) and completely changing their risk profile and operating model—yet trusting CPAs still will be able to advise them appropriately.

Early in my career, I had the opportunity to serve as the functional lead when my company implemented the SAP Fixed Asset Module. My role involved capturing the unique U.S. GAAP, U.S. tax and foreign reporting requirements and translating those accounting specifications for the development team to configure into SAP. Although our development team was business savvy, I found it challenging to guide them on certain concepts like assets under construction and impaired assets without fully understanding

the functionality in SAP. To add *real* value, I felt the need to be technical enough to discuss different SAP configuration options with the development team and to opine on whether the development recommendations made to management were appropriate.

There wasn't an expectation then that CPAs have strong IT skills. Today, CPAs who lack a fundamental understanding of major tech trends and how they affect their client's business could eventually face extinction.

Vlad Genin, former program chair for the University of Phoenix School of Business, says, "Rapid development of information technology fundamentally changes a CPA's job. As routine processes are automated, security concerns arise and the need for business intelligence increases, CPAs will serve as the business architects and be asked to take on advisory roles based on deeper investigations of business cases and problems."

Credential/Certification	Credentialing Organization	Website	*Primary Knowledge Base			
			IT Audit	Technology, Risk & Security	Cybersecurity	Privacy
Certified Information Technology Professional (CITP)	AICPA	www.aicpa.org/membership/join/credentials.html?tab-1=4		X		
Certified Information System Auditor (CISA)	ISACA	www.isaca.org/Certification/CISA-Certified-Information-Systems-Auditor/Pages/default.aspx	X			
Cybersecurity Advisory Service Certificate (CYASC)	AICPA	www.fastlaneus.com/course/aicpa-cyasc			X	
Certified Information Systems Manager (CISM)	ISACA	www.isaca.org/Certification/CISM-Certified-Information-Security-Manager/Pages/default.aspx		X		
Certified IDEA Data Analyst (CIDA)	CaseWare Analytics	www.casewareanalytics.com/certification	X			
Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)	(ISC)²	www.isc2.org/Certifications/CISSP		X		
Certified Information Privacy Manager (CIPM)	IAPP	www.iapp.org/certify/cipm/				X
CompTIA Security+	CompTIA	certification.comptia.org/certifications/security		X		
Certified Information Privacy Professional (CIPP)	IAPP	www.iapp.org/certify/cipp/				X
Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)	ISACA	www.isaca.org/Certification/CRISC-Certified-in-Risk-and-Information-Systems-Control/Pages/default.aspx		X		
ACL Certified Data Analyst (ACDA)	ACL	academy.acl.com/acda-certification	X			
Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)	EC-Council	www.eccouncil.org/programs/certified-ethical-hacker-ceh/			X	

* Note that some credentials and certifications may cover multiple knowledge bases.

Genin also believes the shortage in IT savvy CPAs demonstrates a strong demand for a new generation of CPAs who are educated and trained in both accounting and IT.

Fortunately, there is a plethora of IT learning opportunities for CPAs, ranging from the IT fundamentals to advanced topics like business continuity, cybersecurity and incident management. The IT fundamentals courses are a great place to start, but to properly advise your clients on the IT issues and risks, think about pursuing an IT credential or certification. I was pleased to see that CalCPA is pursuing offering tech related certificates, and the AICPA and ISACA were developing relevant and targeted IT certifications and designations for CPAs and IT auditors. There are several other organizations, such as CompTIA, SANS, (ISC)² and IAPP that offer a broader set of IT training topics, including access controls, backup and recovery, identity risk management, system architecture and privacy, to name a few.

Our roots as auditors give us a great foundation to pursue IT audit certifications, which can build credibility with our clients, especially when addressing potential technology impacts to their business (i.e., SSAE No. 18).

Ram Shenoy, principal business information security adviser with Robert Half International, believes, "IT auditing is an increasingly important field as more accounting functions are being done through information systems, and the CISA is the best certification to prove your technical expertise in IT auditing."

Shenoy also recommends that CPAs pursue security certifications and training, since many of their clients and organizations are seeking various certifications, such as ISO27K, HITRUST, SOC 2 Type 2 and PCI DSS, and their CPAs should be knowledgeable enough about the different assurance and compliance requirements.

Also consider earning professional certifications in data analytics software explicitly designed to help auditors leverage technology to enhance their audits (i.e., IDEA, ACL). These audit tools provide excellent functionality for fraud detection, transaction-level testing, sampling large data sets, financial analysis, and can help optimize the testing process for both IT and traditional audits.

Along with providing IT audits expertise, CPAs are now regularly asked to advise clients on a wide range of IT issues related to risk management, general controls and application controls. Brian Olson, director of IT operations/encounters/security with Envolve, states, "Cybersecurity is at the forefront of risk management for all businesses today and CPAs must be leaders and help their clients implement best practices for managing these significant risks. Passing the CISSP or CISM certifications will enable you to fully understand the myriad of risks your clients face and how they can manage these risks at acceptable levels."

As technology reshapes the role of CPAs, and as practitioners incorporate more technology in their practice to serve their clients and organizations better, pursuing formal IT training could prove beneficial. The credentials and certifications shown in the chart are a good start for CPAs exploring career paths or service offering related to IT. Be sure to check the requirements, since some credentialing organizations expect the candidate to have several years of IT experience on the job (usually two to five years), or may require the applicant to pass a comprehensive exam. One of the undervalued benefits of earning these credentials is gaining access to an exclusive network of IT and non-IT professionals for knowledge sharing, branding and business building opportunities. **CPA**

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