

# Delivering IT Certifications BSD Style

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# Outline

- ♦ Why should we bother?
- ♦ How IT Certifications Work
- ♦ Why change the Status Quo?
- ♦ Design Considerations
- ♦ How you can help

# Why should we bother?

Isn't Open Source about the code?

Doesn't the code speak for itself?

Aren't certifications about making a fast buck?

Who needs a piece of paper anyways?

# Why should we bother?

If that code is an operating system, how do end users, support staff, and administrators of those systems gain and prove their skills?

If Open Source users are primarily self-taught, how do we address knowledge gaps?

# How IT Certifications Work

They're actually getting better....

Less marketing focus

More psychometrics and SMEs

# How IT Certifications Work

But still leave much to be desired....

...especially at the training level

Post-secondary dilemma (context v.s. experience)

Boot camp mentality (become a sysadmin in 40 hours for \$4000)

# Why Change the Status Quo?

Cost:

To the organization creating the exam

High entry barrier

Annual fees could be spent elsewhere

# Why Change the Status Quo?

Cost:

To the testing center

No incentive to offer exam

No incentive for proctor honesty

Hardware requirements and skill to apply testing software and patches

# Why Change the Status Quo?

Cost:

To the exam candidate

Exams range from \$50 USD to \$750 USD

Average exam price is \$150 USD

# Why Change the Status Quo?

Availability:

Not bad if you live in North America or Europe

And speak English

Is that where the Open Source users are?

# Why Change the Status Quo?

## Availability:

Our own surveys show largest percentage in Brazil, Poland, Germany, India and China

Other testing organizations indicate similar geographic patterns

# Why Change the Status Quo?

## Software:

Proprietary, requires licensing

Closed system—can't audit security

No Open Source alternatives currently exist

# Why Change the Status Quo?

## Software:

No choice; limited functionality

Not available everywhere

Limited languages

# Design Considerations

## Testing Center:

Minimal hardware requirements

Zero dependence on software which requires separate licensing

Zero skill required by proctors to start testing program and download correct examination

Built-in audit trail

# Design Considerations

## Testing Software:

Multi-language support

Lockdown of testing software to prevent proctor or test taker cheating

Built-in auditing mechanisms

Extendable for different question types

# Design Considerations

## Overall Goals:

Use Open Source components and release the “glue” under an Open Source license

Don't reinvent the wheel

Build a community

# Design Considerations

## Overall Goals:

Resulting test delivery engine should be secure and easy to use

Test candidates should be able to take the exam in their own geographic region

Take advantage of existing proctor mechanisms (e.g. accredited post-secondary)

# How You Can Help

Join the `bsdcert-dev` mailing list

Participate in the wiki

Track the code in the subversion repository

# How You Can Help

But I can't write code!

Great, as much of the code already exists!

But, it's not documented

It's not thoroughly tested

And we need help to make it production ready

# Additional Publications

Available at [www.bsdcertification.org](http://www.bsdcertification.org):

Complete Paper (to be published)

Test Delivery Survey Report

Psychometrics Explained

Available at [blogs.ittoolbox.com/unix/bsd](http://blogs.ittoolbox.com/unix/bsd):

Why IT Certification Exams Suck Series

# Contact

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