

BSD Certification: A Case Study in Open Source Community

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Outline

Certification 101

BSD Certification Group (BSDCG)

BSDA (BSD Associate)

BSDP (BSD Professional)

Works in Progress

How You Can Help

Certification 101

Popularized in mid-90s by Novell, Microsoft, Cisco

Associated with braindumps, paper MCSEs

Very expensive to launch—domain of large, established companies with alternate revenue streams who can afford to wait ~2 yrs before certification program starts making money

Certification 101

Traditional exam delivery costs: \$75,000 USD annually to participate, extra fees for changing exam

Monopoly on exam delivery (VUE/Prometric) --this is just starting to change

Exam delivery software is proprietary, currently no open source solutions exist

Certification 101

LPI started out as commercial/community based, current focus is commercial

Zend for PHP, EnterpriseDB for PostgreSQL certification, Canonical for Ubuntu

Other open source communities (Apache, Gnome) have expressed interest

Cost, time, and expertise are huge barriers

BSDCG

Non-profit incorporated in the state of New Jersey
in 2005

Mission is to create and maintain certifications to
assess skills of BSD system administrators

Community based with a legal governance
infrastructure

Relies on open source methodologies and
volunteer contributions of time and money

BSDCG

Internal Structure:

5 Board of Directors (voted in for a term)

21 BSDCG members with voting rights (volunteer to join)

5 Advisory Board members (invited)

9 SMEs (subject matter experts)

1 (paid) psychometrician

Network of trusted exam proctors

BSDCG

Community Structure:

~700 subscribers to 2 mailing lists

125 members of 2 LinkedIn groups

~90 translators for 22 languages

Donated hardware, bandwidth, system administration, and web development

Maintains ongoing relationships with other certification bodies and educational institutions

BSDCG

Community Based:

Remains separate from, but supports the other BSD projects and Foundations

Works closely with employers and sysadmins to keep exam current and “real”

Advocates integrating exam objectives into existing diploma programs (rather than bootcamp style learning)

BSDCG

Psychometrically Valid:

Ensures exam is fair, unbiased, and understandable, even if English is not your first language

SMEs who are working sysadmins keep the exam practical

Use of ongoing metrics keeps questions current and spots anomalies

BSDCG

Exam goals:

Globally affordable (\$75 USD)



Available in local community

Encourage trainers and training materials

BSDA

Process:

Job Task Analysis (JTA): April - July 2005

Exam Requirements published: October 2005

Beta Period: May - August 2007

Angoff Session: January 2008

Available Since: February 2008

BSDA

Exam:

Target audience is junior sysadmin with 6 months experience

Covers 7 knowledge domains

Scored for 100 questions

Passing score is 500 of scale between 200 and 700

BSDA

Venue:

Community based: exam events hosted by conferences, user groups, employers, and schools

Slowly building a network of trusted testing centers who promote BSD (FreeBSD Brasil, Systemics Poland)

BSDA

BSDA Candidates:

~1200 BSDCG IDs issued (residing in 104 countries)

101 have taken exam (residing in 16 countries)

76 have passed exam

average score: 68%

BSDP

Process:

JTA to be launched August 2009

Expected time frame between Exam Requirements through Beta Period to Angoff Session is 9-12 months

Exam delivery expected to be virtualized lab-based environment

Works in Progress

Improved Availability:

Building network of trusted testing centers

Working towards an online solution in a proctored environment (preferably open source)

Works in Progress

Study Materials:

Wiki is available for user generated content

Exam objectives translated to more languages
(currently English, Russian, Spanish)

Creation of study labs

Formation of study groups

Works in Progress

Sponsorship Suggestions:

Fund to assist proctors' travel expenses

Purchase of DVD helps to fund creation of BSDP
(\$9,400 in psychometric costs)

Fund to assist exam candidates who can't afford
exam or travel costs to exam

Startup costs for an online test delivery solution

How You Can Help

Spread the word—tell your school, employer, user group, write an article, blog, twitter, etc.

Read our publications

Take the exam

Donate time (assist with study materials, marketing, etc.)

Donate \$ (e.g. purchase study DVD)

How You Can Help

Host or proctor an exam event

Become an SME

Help us develop an open source exam delivery solution

Additional Information

<http://www.bsdcertification.org>

<https://register.bsdcertification.org/register/events>

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