



## Building an Industry-Wide Certification Program is Easy...With a Little Help from Your Friends!

By Bill Rose

"You are trying to boil the ocean." That is what one SSPA member said to me after I told him that we were going to build a new industry certification program in five months. Then I heard, "if you do pull it off, it won't be a very comprehensive program and will only cover the basics of tech support." Well, I'm happy to report that on both counts, they were wrong and we were right! The new J.D. Power & Associates Certified Technology Service & Support (JDPC) program is in the final phase of development, but it has not

been easy.

We first started with a typical "call for industry advisors" that resulted in over 130 companies jumping in to help us sketch out the overall program boundaries and structure. Next, we held a series of face-to-face meetings with a smaller group of folks that had been chosen for our "Industry Standards Board" where we brainstormed and created the overall content channels, the detailed program structure and basically got down to the business of creating a very "future looking" technology service & support certification program. These meetings turned into heated discussions as people who are very passionate about their industry voiced strong opinions about what the program should contain and what it should not.

Next, we broke up into virtual teams and assigned team leaders so that we could "divide and conquer" each major section of the program. What came back from the team leaders and their teams was nothing short of amazing. They delivered page after page of detailed data points that need to be measured, evaluated and graded for effectiveness in order to make the JDPC program the best certification ever built. The teams did all of the work and in a very, very short time frame, but the results are beautiful. Talk about "created by our industry for our industry", this came straight from folks who do the job everyday. The results are real, credible and measurable, and that is what a certification program needs to be successful.

So, with all that said, let me give you a little sneak preview of the new JDPC program that will be released on September 1, 2005. The program is unique because we have agreed that one size does not fit all when it comes to certifying tech support operations. In fact, it seems like most operations are unique and different and therefore require a unique set of standards to fully measure their performance. We have taken a modular approach that includes components that must match the type of service you deliver. Everything starts with the Core Module which is the heart & soul of this program and contains all of the elements that every service operation needs to deliver exceptional service. The Core is the starting point where we measure your support business, support operations and metrics used to move you forward. There are hundreds of individual elements within the Core, and it will be a true test of any service & support operation.

Our modular approach to certification will allow companies to participate in components that match the way they deliver service. For example, if you deliver Field Services, then the Field & Depot components will be used as your measuring stick. But, if you deliver mostly E-support, then the Non-assisted component will be used to grade the level of service delivered through web self-service and beyond. With the addition of the Assisted Support, Outsourcer's Support and the Channel/Partner Support components, the JDPC fits virtually everyone's unique needs

Watching this program come together from my angle was a thing of beauty. The industry jumped in and took charge of this program that will end up reaching thousands of companies in the future. Technology service & support will never be the same as this program measures and rewards the best of the best and lets customers know who stands at the top. Building the program was easy – with a little help from my friends.

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