

This month's expert discusses the importance of certifications

With the rising integration of IT with physical security, certifications have become increasingly necessary for security integrators. There are a variety of certifications avail-

able—from both professional organizations and manufacturers—that should help an end user select an integrator. **ISSUE: What role do certifications play in the security industry?**

SOLUTION: Certifications may require a major investment in time and money on the part of the integrator, but they are a highly worthwhile investment that is now becoming a requirement throughout the industry.

Years ago, it seemed like almost anyone could become a dealer/integrator—all that was needed was a basic understanding of a few products and how to run cable to connect them in a simple installation. But with all the new computer-based technology today, things are not so simple. Installations now often require the use of a company's network, such as when using IP cameras or with Web-based access control. It is important to understand how networks operate to allay any concerns the IT department may have. This is where certifications come into play.

ISSUE: What are some of the certification types available? How does one go about obtaining and maintaining certification?

SOLUTION: Many IT networks employ products or systems from Cisco. Four levels of Cisco certification are offered: entry-level (CCENT), associate (CCNA), professional (CCNP) and expert (CCIE). The examination process to receive the CCIE designation consists of a two-hour written exam and an eight-hour, hands-on laboratory exam. Specialized certifications also are offered, such as the Cisco Certified Security Professional (CCSP). If a new or upgraded security system requires the use of network bandwidth, look for integrators with certifications such as these to help ensure a smooth installation.

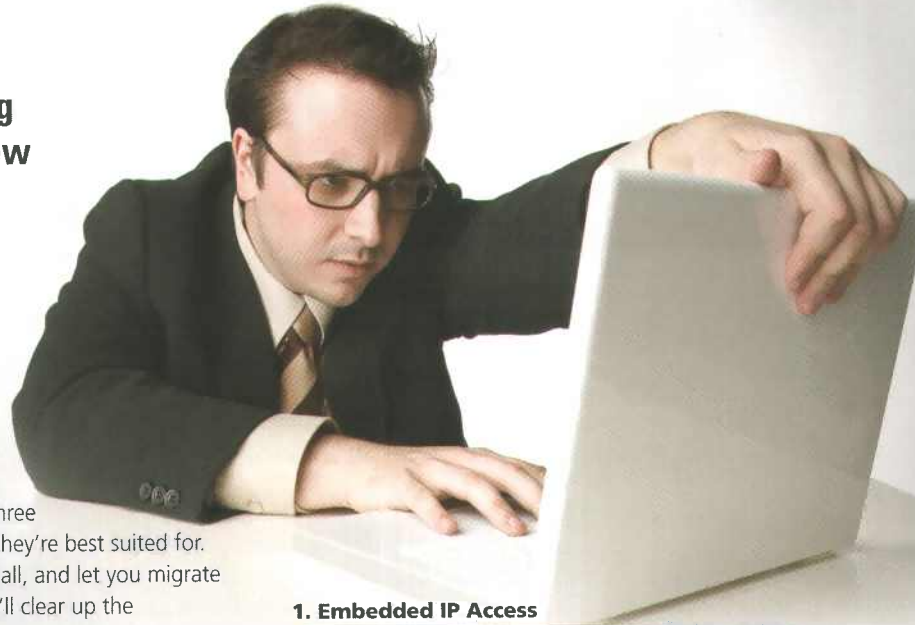
Most certifications are valid only for a couple of years, so maintaining a designation requires continuing education. High-tech equipment also is more complicated to use than ever before, and the abundance of newer technologies requires time to understand how they work and how to install and integrate them. GE, Honeywell, Pelco and Lenel are among the many manufacturers who offer certifications. These manufacturers offer classes to ensure that integrators are using their products properly and reducing installation and maintenance problems. Some companies require integrators to complete a certification process before they can purchase equipment.

Industry certifications offered by ASIS International include the C.P.P. (certified protection professional) and P.S.P. (physical security professional). The C.P.P. designation requires several years of experience in the industry while a P.S.P. certification is more commonly required of industry salespeople or sales engineers. This exam requires about five years of experience and covers topics such as risk

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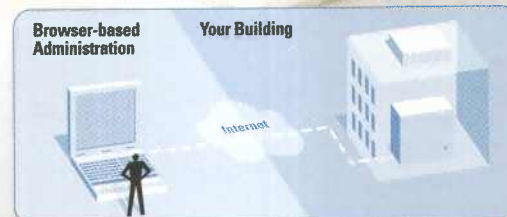
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assessment, applying security measures, and system design and performance.

The National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies is another examining body that has recently gained traction and popularity. The NICET qualification demonstrates an expertise and an advanced understanding of technical knowledge in the engineering field. There are several certification tracks available, including fire alarm systems, video security systems design and video security systems technicians. An experienced integrator with a staff possessing a variety of certifications can be entrusted to set up a professional security system.

READER QUESTION: Our company is a large organization with a variety of people, some of whom have disabilities. When creating a safety plan, we ran into some concerns on how to quickly alert our hearing-impaired employees to a fire alarm. Another issue was how to safely evacuate wheelchair-bound employees and others with mobility disabilities. How can we ensure the safety of all our employees during an emergency?

SOLUTION: The special needs of hearing-impaired employees in a fire alarm situation are addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. It reads in part, "at a minimum, visual signal appliances shall be provided in buildings and facilities in each of the following areas: restrooms and any other general usage areas (e.g., meeting rooms), hallways, lobbies and any other area for common use." The act is very specific in regard to

fire alarm signaling appliances and their specific use for the hearing-impaired.

Employees with mobility disabilities also are addressed by the International Building Code. The IBC covers the need for fire evacuation plans and fire safety plans specific to the group or occupancy code assigned to your facility. Those with mobility disabilities must be provided

with areas of refuge, where they can remain temporarily to await instructions or assistance during emergency evacuation. Areas of refuge shall be provided with a two-way communication system between the area of refuge and a central control point.

The local authority having jurisdiction (normally the fire marshal, inspector

or chief) in your municipality is always willing to help in code interpretation and in designing fire safety plans.

Skip Sampson is vice president of Koorsen Fire & Security.



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