

CompTIA's Strategy for the  
Changing IT Landscape



## A+ as a Training Industry Standard IT Offering

As corporations and governments adjusted to and matured with the use of personal computers in the workplace, the need for Information Technology (IT) professionals certified in hardware, operating systems, networking, and IT security (among other fundamental IT skills) increased exponentially. As a result, commercial training organizations involved in IT training have traditionally had large success promoting CompTIA A+ certification classes in their local markets.

**However, over recent years, IT departments have had to adjust to different, untraditional trends, including:**

1. Migration toward cloud-based services and infrastructure
2. “Big Data”, otherwise known as the trend of combining internal data with publicly accessible data for business intelligence
3. Utilization of mobile devices in the workplace

Increased attention on the trends listed above (as well as pressure to increase staff productivity) has left many wondering whether the CompTIA A+ certification (and traditional “help desk” knowledge) is as relevant as it once was. Will those responsible for IT hiring still believe an A+ certification is a key indicator of IT knowledge and capability, and will the certification itself keep up with the changing technology landscape?

CompTIA has taken several steps to, when applicable, keep the A+ certification relevant for today's changing IT landscape. The updates to the 220-801 and 220-802 exam objectives (and the exams themselves) show that the A+ certification can be counted on as a steady revenue stream for commercial training organizations long into the future.

## Trends Reflected in the New A+ Certification

### 1. Utilization of Mobile Devices in the Workplace

Data from a 2010 Computer World study indicates that helpdesk incidents are rising at 67% of organizations. One of the culprits for this increase is the emerging BYOD

(Bring Your Own Device) trend. White collar workers are bringing personal devices, such as tablet computers and mobile phones, into the workplace to perform their jobs at stunning rates. For the average employee, basic tasks like connecting these devices to corporate servers for email and chat or mapping shared drives and other internal resources require the assistance of a helpdesk technician, ensuring high demand for IT professionals with the technical support skills promoted through the A+ certification.

### According to various industry resources:

- The number of smartphones in use across the globe will reach 2 billion by the end of 2015 (CIO Magazine)
- Tablet sales will reach more than 500 million per year, and will outpace PC sales by 2015
- 95% of organizations in the United States allow employee-owned devices in some way, shape, or form in the workplace
- 78% of United States white-collar employees use a mobile device for work purposes

In response to the growing BYOD trend, CompTIA has included “Mobile Devices” as a subject area domain in the 220-802 exam (see “Chart 3” on page 6). Topic coverage includes just what a helpdesk technician would be expected to do in any modern corporation: establish network connectivity for mobile devices, configure email, and set-up security measures, among many others. As CompTIA is a vendor neutral certification body, mobile devices covered include Android as well as iOS. The coverage of this subject area is just one way CompTIA has adjusted the A+ certification to more accurately reflect today’s IT landscape.

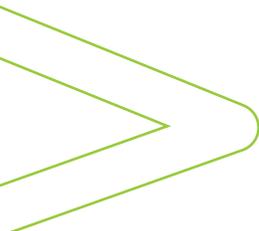
## 2. Increased Need for Practical Experience

A recently released study by the Help Desk Institute indicates that while the demand for technical support is increasing, the amount of human resources being provided to organizations is decreasing.

“In its survey of IT organizations, the IT research firm found that helpdesk employees now represent about 6% of the total IT staff, after accounting for about 6.9% of the average IT staff for the past several years.”

The “do more with less” trend has created a craving among IT managers for staff members with not only the knowledge measured by the traditional CompTIA A+ exams, but also proof of the ability to effectively utilize that knowledge while on the job. Recent CompTIA research on the factors used when evaluating IT job candidates illustrates this point (note “Chart 1” on page 5). According to CompTIA, 97% of hiring IT managers rate “Quality of Experience” as a factor when evaluating a job candidate (86% still consider the “IT certifications held”, and in a different study shown on “Chart 2”, at least 81% of HR executives believe IT certifications are growing at least “somewhat in importance”).

So how is CompTIA adjusting the A+ certification to this trend? CompTIA's move toward performance based exam questions (starting with A+ exams 220-801 and 220-802) is a direct result of their understanding that IT departments are frequently asked to be more productive with less human resources. Performance-based questions require students to “perform a task or solve a problem within a simulated IT environment”. Requiring A+ certification holders to demonstrate this capability before being granted certification ensures IT managers that an A+ certification correlates with a candidate that has the ability to apply their knowledge in a practical environment. This reassurance is yet another way CompTIA has adjusted the A+ certification to more accurately reflect today's IT industry demand for employees with quality experience.

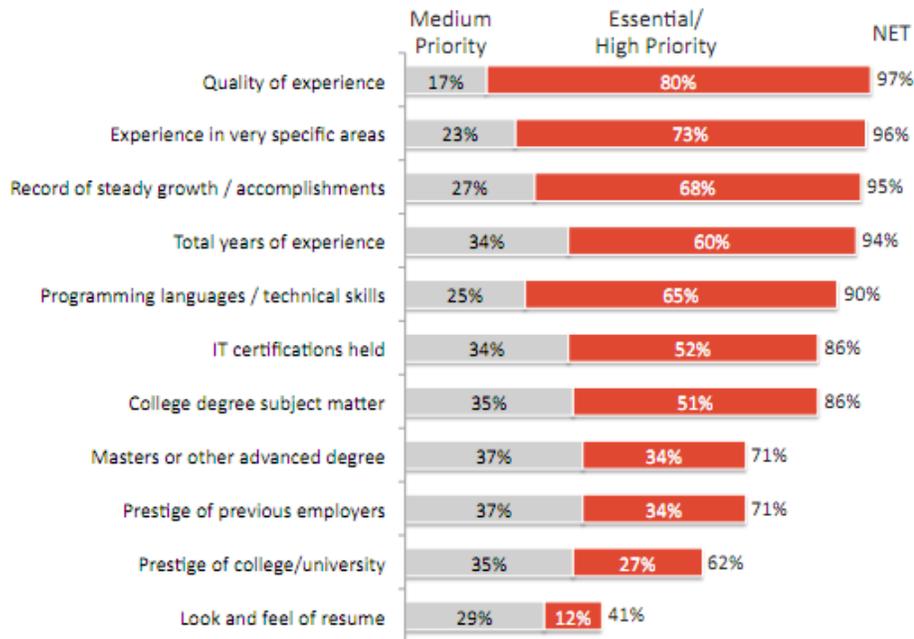


## Continuously Growing Candidate Pool

CompTIA's steps to ensure the A+ certifications conforms to key trends in the IT industry give us in the training industry the ability to trust in the relevance of the A+ certification for years to come. Not only have their updates strengthened the A+ certification, but they have paved the way for the long-term success of other CompTIA certifications as well. As candidates earn their CompTIA certifications (and show their worth to their employers), they will increase demand for IT certification well into the future, ensuring training organizations have the candidate pool they need for success in their local markets.

Chart 1

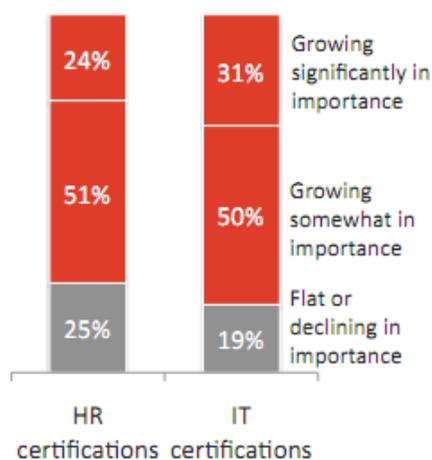
## Factors Used when Evaluating IT Job Candidates



Source: CompTIA Employer Perceptions of IT Training and Certifications | Base = 801 US hiring IT managers | Q10

Chart 2

## HR Professionals Expect Certifications to Grow in Importance



### Top Cited Reasons for Growth in Certifications (US)

- #1 Desire for employees to continuously upgrade their skills in a competitive market
- #2 Need to confirm specific skills and expertise
- #3 Desire to reduce the risk of a "bad" hire by having another quantifiable factor to weigh in the hiring process

Source: CompTIA Employer Perceptions of IT Training and Certifications | Base = 300 US HR executives | Q14

## Chart 3

## Exam 220-801 (A+ Essentials)

Domain	% of Examination
PC Hardware	40%
Networking	27%
Laptops	11%
Printers	11%
Operational Procedures	11%
Total	100%

## Exam 220-802 (A+ Practical Application)

Domain	% of Examination
Operating Systems	33%
Security	22%
Mobile Devices	9%
Troubleshooting	36%
Total	100%

## Exam 220-701 (A+ Essentials)

Hardware	27%
Troubleshooting, Repair and Maintenance	20%
Operating System and Software	20%
Networking	15%
Security	8%
Operational Procedures	10%
Total	100%

## Exam 220-702 (A+ Practical Application)

Hardware	38%
Operating Systems	34%
Networking	15%
Security	13%
Total	100%

## Reference Sources

**Help Desk Calls on the Rise, Computerworld, January 2011**

[http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9203218/Help\\_desk\\_calls\\_on\\_the\\_rise](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9203218/Help_desk_calls_on_the_rise)

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**Cisco IBSG Horizons Study, Cisco, May 2012**

<http://newsroom.cisco.com/release/854754/Cisco-Study-IT-Saying-Yes-To-BYOD>

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