CLOUD CERTIFICATIONS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

The cloud has proven that it is a technology that will continue to grow in popularity and demand for years to come thanks to its numerous advantages. According to leading research and advisory company, Gartner, "The worldwide public cloud services market is forecast to grow 6.3% in 2020 to total $257.9 billion…" Continued growth of cloud services is expected moving forward with Gartner predicting a total public cloud service revenue of $364 billion by 2022.

It's plain to see that the cloud is destined for big things moving forward, but all that growth won't happen on its own. It's up to IT professionals to equip themselves with the knowledge and tools necessary for expanding cloud services while also maintaining their security and compliance. Accomplishing this task is no simple feat. Many organizations are constantly on the hunt for skilled IT professionals that can help catapult their enterprise into the future.

Acquiring IT certifications is one of the most vital steps to becoming one of these highly sought after IT professionals.

Why are Certifications Important?

In the dynamic and constantly-shifting world of IT, hiring managers have a difficult task when it comes to hiring skilled professionals capable of handling the difficult task of managing complex, modern systems. While an impressive background and strong resume will do a lot to increase the appeal of a candidate, certifications are often the litmus test used to judge whether a candidate is truly prepared for high-paying IT positions.

Certifications demonstrate competency in specific skill sets and fields of the IT world. They also indicate that a candidate has invested time and money in furthering their skills and knowledge, showing that they are willing to go the extra mile necessary to stay ahead of the constantly evolving IT world. Recruiters place a large emphasis on certifications when it comes to IT positions due to the complex nature of the work.

What Good is a Cloud Certification?

There are numerous cloud certifications, but they all seek to provide IT professionals with the skills needed to ensure they can hit the ground running when it comes to developing and maintaining cloud services. With the rapid growth of the cloud and its continued popularity throughout the world, IT professionals with cloud certifications are some of the most sought after recruits.

According to a [2019 Global Knowledge Report](#) that gathers IT skills and salary information from survey respondents in the IT field all around the world, "Globally, four of the five top-paying certifications are in cloud computing." This emphasizes the value of cloud-specific certifications above most, if not all, other IT certifications in terms of seeking higher-paying IT work.

What are the Best Cloud Certifications?

According to the Global Knowledge Report, cloud architects and cloud engineers are the most popular cloud roles. Cloud IT professionals in North America made an average salary of $138,320 in 2019. While this means cloud certifications provide a generous boost to the desirability of an IT professional, not all cloud certifications are created equal. Here are some of the most popular and highest salaried cloud certifications:

AWS Certified Solutions Architect - Associate

The [AWS Solutions Architect certification](#) was the most popular IT certification from the 2019 IT Skills and Salary Report. North American IT professionals who held this certification earned an average salary of $130,883. While this certification isn't associated with the highest salaries of the certifications out there, it is the most in-demand certification in terms of job availability as outlined by [this Business News Daily article](#).

Google Cloud Professional Cloud Architect

The [Google Cloud Professional Cloud Architect certification](#) was associated with the highest average salary for the IT skills and salary respondents. Boasting an average salary of $175,761, Google Cloud architects are some of the highest paid IT professionals in the cloud sector. The exam for this certificate requires a thorough understanding of cloud architecture and the Google Cloud Platform. Google is a massive player in the technology world and IT experts capable of working within the Google Cloud are sure to find lucrative work.

CompTIA Cloud+

As one of the more entry-level cloud certifications, the [CompTIA Cloud+ certification](#) is a "vendor-neutral, performance-based certification…" The focus of this certification is on ensuring that IT specialists have cloud computing skills that apply to multiple cloud vendors as opposed to specific

skills for a particular cloud service. The CompTIA Cloud+ certification is intended for IT professionals with at least 2-3 years of experience and owners of this certification tend to serve the role of Cloud Administrator with an average salary of $78,600.

Microsoft Certified Azure Administrator Associate

Designed for Azure cloud environments, the Microsoft Certified Azure Administrator Associate certification is for IT cloud specialists that "have subject matter expertise implementing, managing, and monitoring an organization's Microsoft Azure environment." Azure Administrator Associates typically work as part of a team for implementing, managing, and monitoring organizational cloud infrastructures built on Azure services. Candidates for this certification are expected to have a minimum of six months of direct experience administering Azure. Holders of the Azure Administrator Associate certification earn an average salary of $125,993.

Certified Cloud Security Professional (CCSP)

The Certified Cloud Security Professional certification is "ideal for IT and information security leaders responsible for applying best practices to cloud security architecture, design, operations and service orchestration…" With a focus on cybersecurity, this certification demonstrates that the IT professional is capable of designing, managing, and securing data, applications, and infrastructure in the cloud through the use of best practices, policies, and procedures. CCSP certification holders earn an average salary of $116,025.

The specific cloud certification that is most suitable for any given IT professional is primarily dependent upon their overall experience in the field and the cloud technology with which they are most likely to work. Microsoft Azure, AWS, and Google Cloud are the top three cloud providers and certifications in any of these cloud infrastructures are sure to aid IT professionals in their search for a lucrative career in the cloud computing sector of tech.