

Microsoft Certified Master Business Article: MCM Research



Microsoft Certified Master Certification Transforms Careers and Helps Businesses Succeed

MCM PERSPECTIVES

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MICROSOFT CERTIFIED MASTER MARKET RESEARCH

Would definitely recommend the MCM program	80%
Very satisfied with the program	70%
Program seen to be very valuable (levels 9 and 8 on scale of 1 to 9)	76%
Program exceeding expectations (levels 9 and 8 on scale of 1 to 9)	75%
Average increase in annual revenue	81.47%
Project success rate	88.78%
Customer return rate	81.69%
Increase in billable rate	38.91%
Increase in annual salary	34.45%
Participants reporting:	
More market credibility	74%
More effective deployment services	69%
Higher customer satisfaction	53%
Better market differentiation	53%
Bigger project or deal sizes	23%
Higher quality of deals	23%

Research Proves the Value of Advanced Certification for Technology Professionals

Highly experienced technology professionals can obtain Microsoft Certified Master (MCM) certification after undergoing three weeks of intensive training and passing a set of rigorous examinations, including an in-depth lab exam. Program participation demands a powerful commitment from the MCM candidates and their employing organizations. Informal evidence from hearing from Microsoft partners and the MCMs [listed](#) on the [MCM website](#) shows that MCM certification adds value to individuals' careers and earnings potential. In addition, the certification lets companies demonstrate expertise and invite customer trust and translates into more accountable, effective client service and successful, dependable project delivery. Until recently, however, no metrics existed to prove the value of MCM certification.

In late 2010, Microsoft conducted a survey among MCMs across the globe. Almost all survey respondents worked in Microsoft partner organizations or at Microsoft, with a handful employed in customer businesses. As one might expect, more than 80 percent of the respondents had a track record of over 10 years in the technology industry. A subset of these professionals held more than one MCM qualification, and another, smaller group was qualified as Microsoft Certified Architects (MCAs). Attaining MCM qualification is a prerequisite for becoming an MCA.

Strong Perception of High Value

The tabulations of the responses to the survey's more general questions make a consistent statement about the extremely high-value perception of MCM certification. Eighty percent of the responding MCMs stated that they would definitely recommend the MCM program to another professional, and 70 percent asserted that they were "very satisfied" with the program. When the survey prompted for feedback regarding the value of MCM certification, the MCMs chose from a scale, where 1 was the lowest value and 9 was the highest value. Approximately 50 percent of respondents chose the highest value, and 26 percent selected 8, the next-highest level. In replying to a similar question about the MCM program's ability to exceed expectations, 30 percent of the respondents settled on 9 and 36 percent selected 8.

MCMs experience a wide range of benefits that directly relate to their advanced certification. The survey designers presented 14 possible benefits and asked respondents to select those they had noticed in their own work. The top three choices, which 60 percent or more of the respondents selected, were:

- More market credibility.
- More effective deployment services.
- Increased number of requests for advice or participation.

Among their colleagues in the workplace, MCMs enjoy vastly increased professional standing and influence. When respondents noted a higher amount of requests to provide advice or participate in initiatives or projects, the average increase was close to 86 percent.

Measurable Financial Results for Individuals and Companies

However, even outside of the top three benefits, MCMs realized significant advantages in their professional practices. Some of these changes reflected directly in the financial results that organizations and individuals achieve. Almost a quarter of the survey participants stated that they received a higher salary following their MCM accomplishment, with the average increase a little above 34 percent.

In addition, close to a quarter of the respondents disclosed that they could now win larger customer engagements, with a dramatic increase of nearly 82 percent in annual revenue. Also, for the almost 25 percent of survey respondents who recorded their ability to charge higher billing rates after MCM certification, the average increase in billable rates was close to 39 percent.

Direct, Positive Customer Impact

The impact of MCM certification on the customer experience was a prominent component in the mix of benefits that MCMs reported. Exactly 53 percent of the respondents asserted that they observed increased customer satisfaction. That may be because many MCMs feel they understand their customers' needs better than before, which close to half of them indicated. A significant part of the positive changes in the customer relationships may also be because, when going after new business, many MCMs now can pursue the right customers more effectively. In addition, the certified professionals can achieve a higher quality of deals, which close to a quarter of the respondents noted.

MCMs tend to be involved with complex and, at times, lengthy projects, and it can be challenging to accurately record results. However, little doubt remains when it comes to the MCM impact on project performance. Roughly 35 percent of the respondents reported a higher project success rate, with an average success rate of close to 89 percent, which is far above the approximately 63 percent typical for the industry. Also, 13 percent of the survey participants noted an increase in returning customers.

Professional Growth in a Community of Accomplished Peers

In an open-ended question, survey participants had an opportunity to state their main goals for obtaining MCM certification. As their comments show, for many of them, the MCM program represented a way to gain valuable technical insight, become more accomplished professionals, make a more valuable contribution to their clients and employers, and move forward on a sound career path. Both the responses to the structured survey questions and more free-form comments at the end of the survey confirm that they achieve these goals to a high degree. As one participant states, "The biggest benefit is my professional satisfaction in commanding higher rates and in being able to provide more sound technical solutions to my client."

Only a few MCMs noted that joining a professional community was a goal. However, a large number of comments regarding program benefits mentioned the community aspect of the certification. A typical response in commenting on the most important benefits is, "The community that you become a part of after achieving the certification." It is likely that new MCMs don't fully see the impact of their new qualification until after they have achieved it and actually join the group of highly qualified professionals that share MCM status. Not until then can they experience the vibrant, collegial, supportive community of new peers, who welcome the new MCMs and share ideas and opportunities. Observing their

interactions in popular social networks confirms that MCMs tend to build lively connections and engage in substantive exchanges.

Case Study Evidence Backs Up Research

Occasionally, the MCM team engages in case studies with technology providers to learn from their experience and share their insight with other companies. The statements from the people interviewed for these case studies confirm that MCM certification is extremely valuable for individuals and their organizations and are complementary to the market research results.

One of the companies featured, Unify², experienced a return-on-investment of more than 730 percent from the three MCMs on its team, generated in a single contract. The client told Unify² that MCM certification was the deciding factor, when comparing this technology provider to several other, larger competitors. Unify² continues to take advantage of MCM certification when engaging with specific accounts and does so strategically by pursuing more complex, challenging engagements with enterprises.

[Avanade](#), a large global business and technology consulting organization, uses MCM certification as one key element in demonstrating expertise and credibility to customers, who often request the inclusion of MCM achievements in requests for proposals. Avanade also communicates the opportunity of the MCM program when it recruits and hires professionals, and sponsors their effort to win the qualification. For Avanade, MCM certification is a tool to advance professional competence and create a more rewarding work environment for outstanding technologists.

Microsoft Certified Master Program Offerings

Each Microsoft Certified Master certification covers individual core server technologies:

- Microsoft Exchange Server 2010
- Microsoft Lync Server 2010
- Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010
- Microsoft SQL Server 2008
- Windows Server 2008 – Directory

Additional program details, schedule, prerequisite requirements, and registration information are available at: www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/certification/master.aspx