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EBOOK SERIES

Certification & Digital Skills: Benefits to Employers & Employees

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In today's fast paced world, finding employees with right skills is proving difficult for many organizations. The extent of the problem is such that 93% of HR executives¹ report matching the skillsets of candidates to the job openings in organizations as a growing and ongoing challenge.

For digital skills, the situation is grave as the pace of technologies and channels make it difficult to keep up. While the digital skills deficit may be well-known, for many businesses the path to digital enlightenment is not an easy one. Many organizations fail to see a skills gap when it begins to occur. Or when they do, they are unsure of the steps needed to introduce a scalable and effective digital skills learning and development program.

So what is the solution?

In traditional industries such as accounting, IT, teaching and management professional certification is renowned and even expected. In these sectors, a certification is known to help establish and enhance the career of a professional along with increasing their prospects and opening them up to a wealth of new opportunities.

Digital marketing and selling is no different. A discipline in a constantly evolving landscape, digital skills need to be upgraded and boosted on a continuous basis and require input from experts to ensure the latest trends, competencies and developments are known and shared across an organization.

For those in the business of talent, certification is becoming more and more important as a way to gauge digital knowledge and skills in order to make the right hires. For future and current employees, it's a way to keep up with technologies and trends in order to stay relevant and digitally aware. In this ebook, we explore the benefits of certification and examine the importance of professional qualifications for organizational success and employee retention.

Certification for Organizations

As global organizations continue to hunt for digital professionals with particular skills, certification provides a clear cut way to ensure employees - current and future - have the knowledge and talent needed to help progress their digital transformation.

Despite spending \$164 billion dollars on learning and development programs, many executives still grapple with how to improve and enhance their effectiveness

- Industry Training Report

Given digital's incredible rate of progression and the current expansion of workforces, incorporating certification into a workplace means introducing consistent, measurable and industry-recognized standards. Employees know what to expect and how they measure against their peers while employers gain a workforce that feels invested in resulting in increased sales and repeat business. As work environments continue to evolve -e.g. flexibility, mobility, leadership development and performance management - learning is one of the biggest factors to the culture of an organization.

According to **Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends 2016** more than 8 in 10 executives view learning as an important or very important issue. Employees at all levels now expect dynamic, self-directed and continuous learning opportunities.

Despite this many learning and development organizations are struggling with internally focused and outdated platforms and static learning approaches.

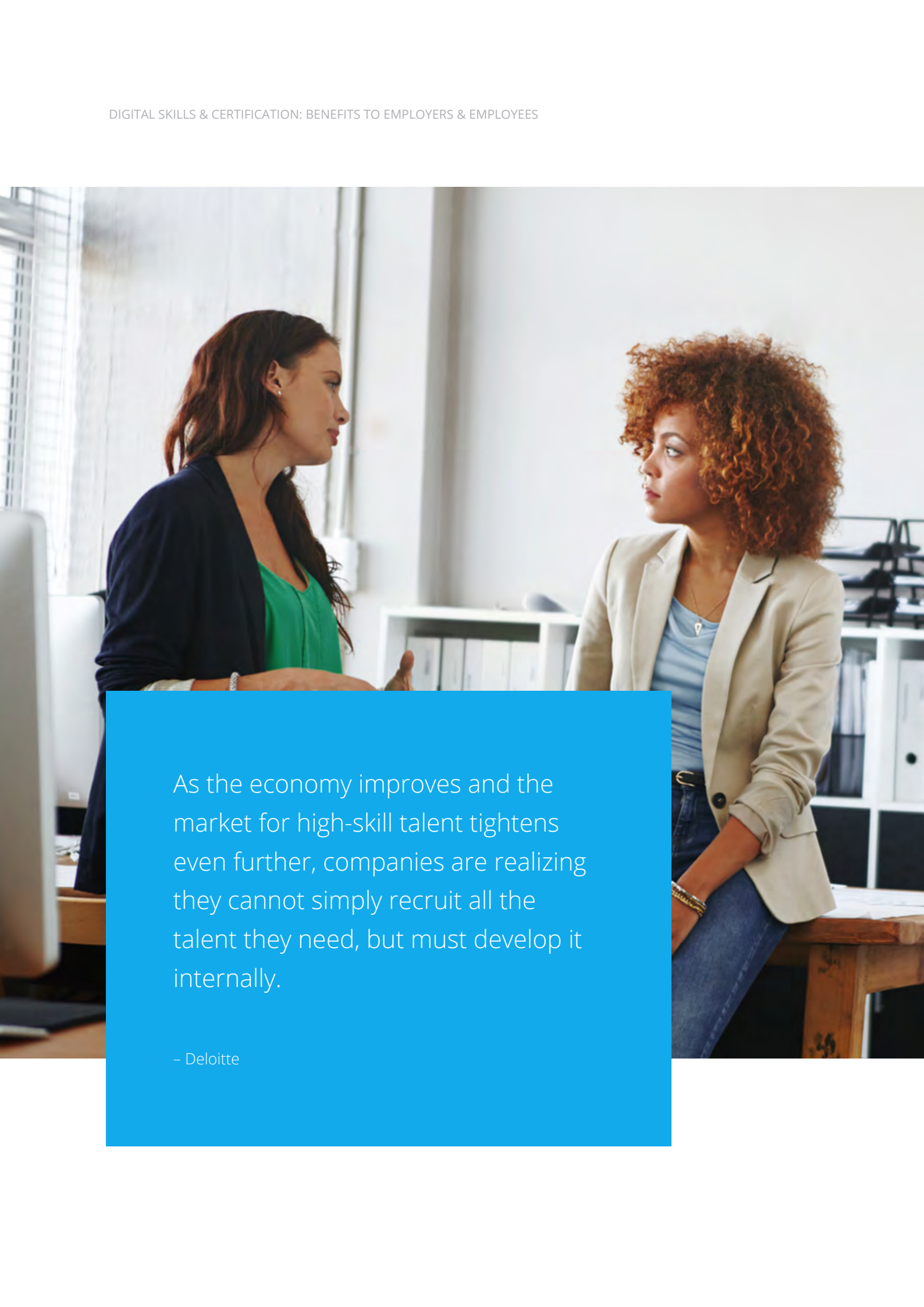
This is not only a problem of skills development, but also one of engagement. In today's highly competitive global economy and intensely competitive talent market, companies that do not constantly upgrade skills and rapidly build leaders will not be able to execute their business plans.

For high-performing organizations that are adapting to this new learning culture, their L&D teams are building internal knowledge sharing programs, developing easy-to-use portals and video sharing systems and promoting collaborative experiences. A big part of this is continuous learning and professional qualifications that can go some way to improving employee learning and provide long-term success through:

- **Improved staff efficiencies:** Certified staff are more conducive and perform better. A recent survey that explored the value of IT certification found that those with a certification were 90% more productive and 60% more efficient² compared to those without.
- **Improved productivity and reduced cost:** Employees with certifications tend to stay with organizations longer, reducing hiring costs and minimizing disruption to the business. With 41% of companies³ stating a bad hire can cost at least \$25,000 while a quarter claim that figure is more like \$50,000, a qualification can go a long way to mitigating those type of losses.
- **Invest in an employee's future:** Offering learning and development opportunities that add value to an employee's skillset and knowledge places value on their future.

Providing accreditation sends a message that you value staff and view them as skilled professionals with long-term goals. In return, your staff – current and future – will view you as a progressive and long-term career employer.

- **Enable employees to own their career development:** A continuous and flexible program that leads to certification can enable individuals to own, self-direct and control their learning. By supporting a self-directed program that caters to an individual's needs you will develop the talent of your business which will allow your organization to innovate.
- **Promote wellness & trust :** A study by the American Psychological Organization found that while the majority of workers were satisfied with their job overall, only half said they were satisfied with the growth and development opportunities (49%) and employee recognition practices (47%). This indicates that employees that feel valued by their employer are more likely to be engaged in their work and ultimately are more willing to stay.
- **Create brand advocates:** Employees that are valued and happy in their jobs can become valuable assets to an organization. Employee advocates that share news of the organization across social media networks and promote the working environment, learning programs and culture can not only help to retain existing employees, but also help to attract new and skilled talent.
- **Superior business agility:** Upskilling staff with professional certifications makes an organization more agile and serves to improve performance. With digital transformation now a priority for many companies rather than an add-on, staff that respond quickly, keep on top of trends and embrace shifts in technologies are key.



As the economy improves and the market for high-skill talent tightens even further, companies are realizing they cannot simply recruit all the talent they need, but must develop it internally.

– Deloitte

Certification for Employees - Current & Future

Employees now realize that ‘the learning curve is the earning curve’⁴ and want access to dynamic learning opportunities that can progress and enhance their careers. This is especially true for millennials who are becoming a core part of the workforce and rate learning and development as the number one factor in selecting a job, while all employees see culture and leadership as three times more important than salary.

When individuals pursue professional certification, they are validating skills and abilities that more often than not have been developed over time, through professional development and on-the-job experience. Professional certification doesn’t just benefit those running a business or an organization - accreditation offers valuable benefits to an employee:

- **Assurance of quality:** An external certification means that an individual is accredited by a certification body that is recognized and validated; therefore helping to improve career progression and salary expectations. In fact, 90% of employers surveyed by **CompTIA agree** that certified individuals are more likely to be promoted than those without, while 89% feel they perform better than non-certified staff in similar roles.
- **Employer recognition:** An external certification will enable an employer to recognize and understand that a potential employee’s skills adhere to a certain professional standard. This ensures that staff are being hired for the ‘right’ job that utilizes their skills, but also guarantees a level of enjoyment for the individual in that role.



In the US and UK only 18% and 20% of organizations offer digital marketing training support to their employees

Missing the Mark: The Digital Marketing Skills Gap in the USA, UK & Ireland ;The Digital Marketing Institute.

- **Transferable qualifications:** Having a certification that is recognized from industry to industry, as well as from country to country gives a worker a chance to move roles to progress their career. This is particularly important to millennials as job-hopping is common and 4 job changes by the age of 32⁵ is the norm for many.
- **Increased morale and job security:** With many professionals feeling the weight of having to learn new skills particularly in the digital age, a certification that enhances knowledge can increase job satisfaction and security.
- **Proof of abilities:** A qualification clearly demonstrates a high level of skill and gives an employer faith and assurance in an employee's abilities. It also differentiates one employee from another in a competitive environment.
- **Validation of a continuous learning ethic:** Certification demonstrates a staff member's proactivity and motivation to learn and gain new knowledge that will not only benefit them personally, but also reaps rewards for an organization.
- **Improved & increased knowledge:** A certification not only provides a qualification, but also ensures an improved level of knowledge in a specialist area - which in today's fast-paced digital world is priceless.

Earning a Certification

In the future, 70% of Americans⁶ believe it will be more important to have a degree or professional certificate to get a good job. For those working in and with digital, change is constant as technologies continue to evolve, platforms emerge and big data just gets bigger and more unwieldy.

Professionals with roles in large and growing organizations are drawn to certifications as they provide new skills and offer key insights. These new skills can be invaluable in industries that demand some level of continuous learning and are prone to constant change.

In conclusion, professional certification is not about gaining a certificate after the completion of a training course; it can more accurately be described as a form of standardization, as it federates recognition for practical and specialist knowledge.

As industry qualifications become a genuine alternative to degrees, companies realize that they need people who truly understand the industry. The world of digital marketing is constantly moving, and it doesn't wait for latecomers.

Essentially, for businesses and their staff the best way to close the skills gap, reduce staff turnover, improve efficiency and ensure skills and know-how remain relevant is through continuous learning and professional certification.

SOURCE

1. Comptia.org, 2. The Business Value of IT Certification; IDC, 3. Digitalist.com, 4. LinkedIn.com, 5. LinkedIn.com, 6. eab.com

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