



Microsoft Solutions Provider Grows Business, Revenue with Certifications

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: IT services

Customer Profile

Gig Werks LLC, based in New York, currently employs more than 20 full-time and contract workers. The company draws on their expertise to provide clients with secure, connected business solutions.

Benefits

- Boosted credibility
- Enhanced creativity and performance
- Increased revenue and rapid ROI
- Bolstered employee satisfaction
- Anticipated success with Visual Studio 2008

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Joseph Giegerich, President, Gig Werks

To increase revenue and expand its business, Gig Werks LLC, a solutions provider with specializations in collaboration, business intelligence, and custom application development decided to align its solution offerings with Microsoft products and technologies. The company credits its Microsoft® certifications and its subsequent status as a Microsoft Gold Certified Field Managed Partner as key achievements that have helped it gain valuable experience, boost credibility, increase revenue, and achieve an annual growth rate of 50 percent.

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Situation

Gig Werks LLC, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Field Managed Partner since 2004, is based in New York and consists of more than 20 full-time employees and contractors. The company draws on its professional expertise to provide clients with secure, connected solutions that streamline business processes and yield maximum return on investment (ROI). Upon beginning the business, Joseph Giegerich, President of Gig Werks, and his partner found that by aligning their company’s offerings with advancements in Microsoft products and technologies they could deliver positive bottom-line results for both the company and its clients.

Underpinning the company’s continued success is its ability to quickly demonstrate expertise when pursuing new business. Giegerich says, “Gig Werks needs to verify to potential clients that we are qualified and serious about our craft.”

Although Gig Werks can easily identify which established skills and existing technologies it must master to address most customers’ needs, the company determined that early-adopter training and certification would enable it to master a technology before others in the field could. As a result, Gig Werks would be able to offer truly cutting-edge solutions.

Training and certification on emerging technology are imperative to Gig Werks, and last year, the company recognized that the then-upcoming release of the Microsoft Visual Studio® 2008 development system underlined an immediate training need. The company’s history of developing Microsoft .NET, Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007, and Visual Studio 2005 solutions has been a cornerstone of its business. And to continue to effectively meet its clients’ business goals, Gig Werks knew that it would need to become a Visual Studio 2008 expert

to take full advantage of the software’s capabilities. Gig Werks sought a training solution that would provide not only critical knowledge but also validation of its employees’ expertise.

Solution

Designed to be directly relevant to the latest technologies, Microsoft certifications offer Gig Werks a clear and defined path to the knowledge it wants its employees to have. Once the company has chosen a product or technical skill it would like its staff to master, one of three certification paths can be chosen:

- With Technology Series certifications, professionals can target specific technologies and gain in-depth knowledge and expertise in a broad range of specialized technologies. There are about 20 Microsoft Certified Technical Specialist (MCTS) certifications currently available, including the Windows Server® 2008 certifications.
- Professional Series credentials validate a comprehensive set of skills required to be successful on the job. They provide a reliable indicator of on-the-job performance.
- Certification in the Architect Series identifies top industry experts in IT architecture. Candidates in the Microsoft Certified Architect (MCA) program must pass a rigorous review by a review board. They also need to have a minimum of 10 years of advanced IT industry experience, three or more years of experience as a practicing architect, and strong technical and managerial skills.

Certifications provide objective, independent validation of an individual’s ability to successfully develop mission-critical applications. Certifications address the needs of companies like Gig Werks; they are specific and targeted to reflect the detail of what IT

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Neil Barkhina, Senior Developer, Gig-Werks

professionals do, and they prove that these professionals have achieved expertise. For example, a company looking for a highly efficient and secure database would immediately recognize Gig Werks qualifications and expertise based on its Microsoft Certified Database Administrator certifications.

Gig Werks is committed to Microsoft training and certification, which addresses potential business needs around Microsoft products. Microsoft anticipates its partners' needs and identifies the skills required to support the various release cycles as new software emerges. Giegerich says, “Certification offers major benefits for both our firm and our clients. It allows us to increase our customers' ROI while revealing opportunities that we can pursue to drive our own bottom line.”

For example, to address the need to master the intricacies of Visual Studio 2008, Gig Werks encouraged its senior developer, Neil Barkhina, a Microsoft Certified Application Developer, to gain early knowledge of the Visual Studio 2008 by participating in training sessions as they became available.

Benefits

By consistently prioritizing and pursuing Microsoft certifications, Gig Werks has gained knowledge and expertise that has helped it increase the company's size by an average of 50 percent per year. With a heavy emphasis on employee certification, the company has easily qualified for Gold Certified Partner status for five out of the six years it's been in operation and has been a Gold Certified Field Managed Partner since 2004. Gig Werks credits certification for boosted creativity, improved performance and reliability, and an increase in annual sales of 20 to 30 percent.

Boosted Credibility

One of the benefits of being a Gold Certified Partner is the reassurance it gives to Gig Werks customers. Giegerich proudly informs potential clients that “our status as Gold Certified and Field Managed means that we get advanced training on all the new products—inside training that's only available to Gold and managed partners—and that we're heavily certified.” He adds, “Certification ensures that potential clients immediately know that Gig Werks engineers and developers are not only good, but the best of the best.”

Enhanced Creativity and Performance

The ability to constantly create and improve on innovative solutions is integral to the company's success. Barkhina says, “The MCAD certification that I received has definitely boosted my creativity. I've learned about features I didn't know of before, and as a result I now have a larger toolkit at my disposal. One of the great parts of Visual Studio 2008 training was the .NET extender classes. I am using these and the AJAX Control Toolkit that we learned about to do fading animation effects for an AJAX news reel that I am writing. It is definitely helping with the Web 2.0 feel of my applications.”

When it comes to performance there's no question that certification has amplified Barkhina's skills. He reports that, “After acquiring MCAD certification I can write code 20 to 30 percent faster, with 25 percent fewer bugs and three times more reliability.”

Increased Revenue and Rapid ROI

The effort and cost of training and certification have paid for themselves quickly. Giegerich reports, “The benefit from certification is immediate because our developers are more effective on projects and we're able to raise our billing rates to reflect our developers' considerable success.”

“The way I look at Microsoft certifications is that they’re not a substitute for experience, but they are a necessary component to make the distinction between an experienced journeyman and a true expert.”

Joseph Giegerich, President, Gig Werks

The company is well on track in 2008 to enjoying a 10-fold increase in revenue since its inception six years ago. This explosive growth in profit was achieved through targeted offerings and a commitment to innovation, but the company’s focus on Microsoft certifications helped solidify its alignment with Microsoft and has been a key factor in the increased success.

Bolstered Employee Satisfaction

Gig Werks is not shy about asking its employees to pursue Microsoft training and certification when a professional need arises. Conversely, the company recognizes the dedication, self-motivation, and effort it takes to achieve certification, and these factors are weighed when considering an end-of-year bonus, a pay increase, and assignments to larger projects. The company has even been known to create a fun, competitive environment by offering a cash reward to the first employee to complete a particular certification. Gig Werks employees know and appreciate that certifications not only improve their knowledge and skill but can directly affect their pay scale and ensure their assignment to desirable projects.

Anticipated Success with Visual Studio 2008

Gig Werks is looking forward to completing a certification in Visual Studio 2008 certification. It has no doubt that the value and benefit received from previous developer certifications will be duplicated. Barkhina says, “After receiving my Microsoft Certified Application Developer credential, the development time for projects I work on has been reduced from four months to three months, and I’ve gone from an average of one week to deploy to three days.”

Gig Werks is confident that, coupled with its considerable experience and targeted offerings, the addition of a Visual Studio 2008 certification will help it offer clients increasingly innovative and reliable solutions. After all, as Giegerich says, “The way I look at Microsoft certifications is that they’re not a substitute for experience, but they are a necessary component to make the distinction between an experienced journeyman and a true expert.”

For More Information

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