ASQ Section 0511 Quality Matters Opinion
on
ASQ Certifications

Round Table Discussion Report

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Summary

This Report contains the Digest of the Experience and Opinions of ASQ Section 0511 on the Topic of ASQ Certifications as reflected by the Participants of its Section Meeting through Discussion of a list of specific Questions on that Topic.

This Report is created and published by the Section volunteers for the benefit of the Quality Professional community.

No amount of gratitude will suffice to thank all who made the ASQ Section 0511 Quality Matters Round Table Discussions and this Report possible as well as those who generously shared their Experience and Opinions at the Round Table with others!

The Discussion

The participants of the Section Meeting where the subject Round Table Discussion took place consisted mostly of the Section Members, while the meeting was also open to Members of other Sections as well as to General Public.

The Discussion was conducted as follows:

- Topic: ASQ Certifications
- Moderator: Vladimir Nesterovich
- Date and Time: Wednesday, June 9, 2021, 7:20-8:30 pm
- Location: Virtual (via WebEx)

The following Meeting Participants shared their Experience and Opinions during the subject discussion:

- Arnold Pachtman
- Barbara McCullough
- Cyndi Reichardt
- Keith Ryan
- Ken Rapuano
- Mike Coleman
- Ndeye Traore
- Paul Sullivan

- Rachel Strother
- Sara McAlpine
- Vladimir Nesterovich
- William Eastham

All the Meeting Participants who shared their Experience and Opinions during the subject Discussion did so voluntarily and were not called upon unless they expressed their desire to speak up.

ASQ Section 0511 is deeply grateful to all Participants who shared their Experience and Opinions on this Quality Matters Topic for the benefit of the Quality Professional Community.

The Report

This Report was compiled by the following Section 0511 Members:

- Ken Rapuano, who also served as Recorder during the meeting and the Lead Author of this Report.
- Vladimir Nesterovich, who also served as the Meeting Moderator and Co-Author of this Report.

In compiling this Report, they used the following materials:

- Notes taken by the Recorder during the subject Meeting
- The list of questions for Discussion of the Round Table Topic
- The Section Meeting Announcement
- Video recording of the Meeting

This Report credits all contributors to the Discussion as listed above. However, this Report attributes none of their Experience or Opinions to any specific individuals. This Report is the Section's Opinion on the subject Quality Matter in the sense that all participants had a fair chance to join the Discussion and convey further information on any particular Question.

The Questions

The following questions on the topic of ASQ Certifications will be up for discussion at the June 2021 Section 0511 Round Table:

1. Why did you obtain your ASQ certifications?
2. Did you use your ASQ certifications in winning business such as in proposals?
3. Did your ASQ certifications help you in getting recognition or a promotion?
4. What role do the certification Bodies of Knowledge (BOKs) play in your work?
5. What training, if any, should quality professionals pursue as part of recertification?
6. How else do you use the fact that you have an ASQ professional certification?
7. Have you found your ASQ certifications worth attaining and maintaining?

8. Have you considered letting your certifications expire?
9. How many certifications do you have and how many should one have?
10. Do quality professionals in the United States need ASQ professional certifications?

The List of Discussion Questions was compiled by the Discussion's Moderator.

Leading up to the June 9, 2021 Round Table Discussion, the ASQ Section 0511 Chair for Voice of the Customer Connie Broadie ran the poll that, among other, requested for refinements to those questions. The poll respondents did not propose any further refinements to the above list.

The Rules

ASQ Section 0511 announced the detailed rules of the Discussion in the Section's Meeting Announcement ahead of the meeting.

As there were 10 questions, the time frame would allow for approximately 6-7 minutes per question. The Moderator asked the participants to do the following:

- Indicate one's desire to speak by typing the Question Number in the chat window and wait to be called on by the Moderator without having to interrupt other speakers.
- Focus on the discussion question when called on by the Moderator.
- Share the floor given the time constraints to allow those who wish to speak to a question to also have their turn.

The Polls

Section 0511 Chair for Voice of the Customer runs polls before and after the Quality Matters Round Table discussions.

- Quality Matters polls are directed at all Quality Professionals. They help prioritize Quality Matters topics for discussion as well as identify volunteers for the role of Moderator and Author.
- The poll before a Round Table meeting is also directed at all Quality Professionals. It helps gauge the level of interest in the upcoming topic and improve the list of questions up for discussion.
- The poll after a Round Table meeting is directed at the Discussion participants only. It helps receive feedback so that we could improve.

The People

The following people have been instrumental in the Quality Matters Round Table Initiative in general and also specifically in the June 14, 2019 Round Table Discussion and in this Report:

- Arnold Pachtman reviewed and advised on creating the concept of the Quality Matters Round Table Series, its topics, and its discussion format. He is ASQ Certified Six Sigma Black Belt (CSSBB) and Arizona State University (ASU) Certified Six Sigma Master Black Belt.

- Barbara McCullough leads the selection of volunteers for opportunities associated with the Quality Matters Round Table. She is ASQ Certified Manager of Quality and Organizational Excellence (CMQ/OE) and Quality Auditor (CQA). She also served as the Section Nominating Chair and the Section Past Chair at the time of these Discussion and Report.
- Connie Broadie runs the Section polls associated with the Quality Matters Round Table Series. She is ASQ Certified Manager of Quality and Organizational Excellence (CMQ/OE) and Quality Auditor (CQA). She also served as the Chair for Voice of the Customer at the time of these Discussion and Report.
- Ken Rapuano, the Author and the Recorder of this Report is ASQ Certified Quality Auditor (CQA). He leads the volunteers for the Opinion Reports of the Quality Matters Round Table Series. He also served as the Section Secretary at the time of these Discussion and Report.
- Vladimir Nesterovich, the Moderator and the Co-Author of this Report, is ASQ Certified Six Sigma Green Belt and Black Belt (CSSGB, CSSBB) and Software Quality Engineer (CSQE). He created the concept and topics of the Quality Matters Round Table Series and presented them as "Quality Matters: Questions on Questions" at the May 9, 2021 ASQ Section 0511 meeting. He also served as the Section Chair at the time of these Discussion and Report.

The Opportunities

ASQ Section 0511 offers volunteer opportunities associated with the Quality Matters Round Table:

- Moderator. Responsibilities include compiling the list of questions for discussion and its materials; leading a 70-minute discussion during the Section meeting, with sharing of one's own experience on the subject as necessary; and, as the Co-Author, collaborating with the Report Author to produce the Report. The Moderator is advised by Vladimir Nesterovich, who leads this Discussion Series.
- Author. Responsibilities include taking notes during the discussion; producing the text of The Digest of this Report from notes and recording; applying one's own experience and judgment to assure the text's completeness and cohesion. The Author is advised by Ken Rapuano, who leads this Report Series.
- Co-Author. Responsibilities include updating The Preliminaries, editing and finalizing The Digest, resolving issues, and otherwise collaborating with the Author. Normally, the Moderator is expected to co-author; however, you may also volunteer for a Co-Author role separately.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Quality Matters Series, please make this known as follows:

- Notify Barbara McCullough at nominations21@asq0511.org, the Section Nominating Chair, who matches volunteers to volunteer opportunities.
- Indicate your interest via one of the polls conducted by Connie Broadie, the Section Chair for Voice of the Customer, also available at voc21@asq0511.org.

Note: In emails, replace "21" with current year, if applicable.

Part 2: The Digest

In the Opening of the Discussion, the Moderator briefly reminded the Rules of the Discussion, expressed his own interest in the Topic, and invited others to express their experience and opinions on the topic's questions. As the Discussion progressed, the Moderator also shared his own Experience and Opinions along with everyone else.

Question 1: Why did you obtain your ASQ certifications?

The Section 0511 members identified the following types of reasons that motivated them to obtain their ASQ Certifications:

- A Quality Professional (QP) who did not have any diploma or formal education in the quality area obtained ASQ Certifications as an easier credential path than getting a college degree in a quality area.

- A QP who received formal education outside the US and did not have any US educational credentials obtained ASQ Certifications to put them on the landscape of credentialed professionals. This is instead of time and monetary expense of obtaining yet another degree in the US as an adult.

- Two QPs indicated that they were required by their employers to obtain an ASQ Certification as the condition of employment.

- A QP's Organization pursued additional implementations such as CMMI High Maturity, including but not limited to requiring its QP team members to take Six Sigma courses. Obtaining ASQ Certifications was the QP's own follow-up on that path already taken.

- Obtaining ASQ Certifications was a Blue Ocean strategy differentiator for a QP whose colleagues in quality either had no certifications or had certifications in non-quality areas such as PMI PMP.

- A QP had another QP as a role model who already had ASQ Certifications while leading the QP's work.

- A QP was supporting programs that required reliability engineering. They had not heard of ASQ reliability certification until they were working on proposals. Once they found out about ASQ certifications, they felt that obtaining one would give more strength to do their job. Obtaining the certification improved their knowledge base.

- A QP with a CMMI background was interested in ASQ Certification to expand their knowledge. They saw certification as a great way to understand and apply quality in role of program manager. They now have four certifications and are looking to add another.

Although the reasons QPs gave for obtaining ASQ certification were diverse, they fell into broad categories of personal initiative and employer initiative. QPs found ASQ certification to be linked to career progression and roles they can fill in their organizations.

Question 2: Did you use your ASQ certifications in winning business such as in proposals?

The Section 0511 members discussed how their organizations use the ASQ certifications of their employees to pursue business:

- A QP employed by a large company said they are not not listed by name in proposals submitted by employer and their certification is irrelevant for winning business.

- A QP who works as a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt indicated that they needed to have the applicable certification as a demonstration of qualification included in their resume when included in proposals. They could not be included in these proposals without that certification.

- A QP assists other companies in writing the reliability sections of their proposals; the knowledge obtained in certification allowed them more strength to participate in these proposals.

- A QP had an opportunity to support ASQ as an organization partly on the strength of the understanding of ASQ achieved through having ASQ certifications. This QP is also able to demonstrate capability to support proposals for process improvement and Six Sigma.

- A QP who works in proposals said that the ASQ certification status was looked at by many customers in the same manner as a degree. It is a qualification the customers are looking for.

The experience of several QPs is that being an ASQ certificant is used by their organization to win more work, either as a prequalification or to strengthen proposals. This experience is not universal, however, and some organizations either do not take advantage of having certificants or do not need to when pursuing business.

Question 3: Did your ASQ certifications help you in getting recognition or a promotion?

The Section 0511 members discussed their personal experiences of how their ASQ certifications affected their status with their employer:

- A QP who got their certifications made it known to their employer they had them.

- During the CMMI Appraisals, the Appraisers request copies of the ASQ Certifications as the evidence of QP's credentials in quality.

- Recently, an employer started collecting the employees' certification information, so their ASQ certification information has been captured there.

All in all, those are small acknowledgments by the Employers, but no formal promotion or additional compensation. For some QPs, having such a certification was a prerequisite for the job.

Question 4: What role do the certification Bodies of Knowledge (BOKs) play in your work?

The Section 0511 members shared their applicability of the certification BOKs with the performance of their work duties:

- One QP described an ideal continuous improvement loop where the certificant would examine the BOK and seek to strengthen weaknesses and use the BOK methods in real-life work. In reality, they focus on the actual tasks of the job, but wish they could use the BOK more than they do.

- One QP found the primer and books addressing the BOK to be helpful professionally.

- One QP said they found the BOK to be essential to the certification because it standardizes what that certification stands for. It establishes a brand and allows for clients to know what a certification means.

- A QP indicated that they do not use the BOK every day; however, the BOK gives credibility to their professional opinion even for topics not in the BOK. The BOK provides the foundation to their professional standing.

- A QP said that achieving certification taught them a lot about what they needed to do their job and made them a quality leader in their organization.

- A QP said that the BOK needed to achieve certification was useful to professionals in performing their work.

Respondents used their certificate BOKs to varying degrees and found these BOKs to be generally useful, but often the certification BOK is superseded by the practical requirements to perform their specific job on a day-to-day basis.

Question 5: What training, if any, should quality professionals pursue as part of recertification?

The Section 0511 members discussed the training activities they used to support their recertification process:

- A QP indicated that work and attending the ASQ Section meetings is enough for them to be recertified. But the meeting programs are not really training as many topics are not applicable to their individual professional needs; they just give RUs.

- A QP said they attend the ASQ conferences and related their conference experiences. In addition to networking, there are training sessions that provide knowledge. What they learn in those sessions, they apply in work. The sessions are in tracks that you can preview and determine whether they are of interest and whether they are in your professional BOK. With online conferences, sessions were delivered on demand, so that if there were conflicts, they could listen later.

- A QP who regularly attends ASQ meetings and programs outside Section 0511 said that other Sections have technical presentations where they teach actual skill sets, such as statistical methods for variances. This is more common in sections where manufacturing is supported. You can find out where they are through ASQ and find the lists of topics. These presentations helped this QP to refresh some statistical knowledge that had been lost due to no longer using those techniques routinely.

- A QP related that as they are no longer a full-time employee, getting RUs for recertification has become difficult. They would prefer to have a recertification course through ASQ that provided RUs, as attending conferences would not be reimbursed if not working.

- A QP indicated that in addition to attending the Section meetings, they read a lot in the field, such as several monthly quality magazines. The magazines provide articles on a variety of topics although not always matched to their own BOK.

- A QP said that they would not be attending meetings except that they had a certification that required RUs. They are interested in quality; however, the learning opportunities and ease of their access have significantly increased outside the home Section meeting attendance over the past decades.

There are many more training options available than simply attending Section 0511 programs, and some Sections address training in a different manner than our Section. It is important to differentiate between actual training for BOK-related or professional skills and training that qualifies only for the purposes of obtaining RUs.

Question 6: How else do you use the fact that you have an ASQ professional certification?

The Section 0511 members described their experiences using their ASQ certifications (outside applying the BOK):

- A QP was contacted by a recruiter who had a requirement for the specific certification that this QP had. They were told that the search for someone with that certification was the determining factor in contacting that QP from among the many other resumes available to that recruiter.

- A QP said that having the only ASQ certification in the company allowed them to secure a niche that no one else in the company is competing with.

- A QP related that they had Six Sigma Green Belt (CSSGB) when they started a job; after working on that job for a few months, their employer added that certification to the job requirement.

- A QP indicated that they had used their Certified Quality Auditor (CQA) certification on a contract with a new customer. During a briefing, they had a client representative who was dismissive of the effectiveness of the project QA oversight, expressing a belief that it was a rubber stamp function. The QP was able to use their ASQ CQA as evidence of the ethics requirements and commitment to avoid conflict of interest.

Respondents have found ASQ certification is a clear way to differentiate oneself professionally from those who are not ASQ-certified. This includes supporting ways to serve both internal and external customers.

Question 7: Have you found your ASQ certifications worth attaining and maintaining?

The Section 0511 members discussed the training they activities they used to support their recertification process:

- One QP worked with non-ASQ Black Belts and observed that some were better than others. They had a desire to attain their own certification, as in many cases they were better in the field than some of those Black Belts.

- One QP found that local traffic often resulted in long travel times for attending meetings to obtain RUs, but felt it was worth it. It is known within their work group that they are a certificant.

- One QP had obtained their ASQ certifications in lieu of a degree. In their experience, a certification is worth having and maintaining because the certifications promoted their skills within their organization and allowed for career progression.

- A QP said they found having a certification very useful but they had allowed their certifications to lapse a few years ago and have not renewed, which they regret. Originally attaining certification was an opening for their career path.

    - Follow-up question from another QP: What certification, and why did they allow it to lapse?
    - Response: CQA – they were just too busy in personal life to achieve RUs. Now the cost barrier is preventing recertification.

All respondents found their certifications to be worth maintaining. The comments on this Question were similar to Question 6 in that ASQ certification is a career resource and investment that is worth maintaining for the professional stature it brings.

Question 8: Have you considered letting your certifications expire?

The Section 0511 members expressed several different perspectives whether to maintain certification:

- A QP said they do not want their certifications to expire; they are the only certified QP in their organization, which gives them standing there. However, if recertification barriers were higher, they might have second thoughts. Since they have maintained employment, employment RUs plus meeting attendance has been sufficient to maintain certifications.

- A QP said that if ASQ let the certification brand degrade, this might cause them to reconsider whether to recertify, but they would probably still maintain their certifications.

- A QP who was unable to maintain employment over a recertification period said that they found it impossible to accumulate sufficient RUs to make up that RU gap and could not afford to go to the conferences. They expressed the opinion that the award of 0.1 RU for a 1-hour seminar was ridiculous. They will lose 3 certifications soon; they cannot prevent from expiring and will have to take exams again in the future to get them back.

- In response, several QPs offered suggestions:

  - ASQ does allow for some accommodation for people who are retired.
  - A QP could put certifications on hold.
  - A QP pointed out that attending meetings now awards 0.5 RU instead of the old 0.3 RU, and this helps even more.

- A retired QP with two certifications that they want to keep has been able to accumulate RUs.

  - They suggested that one can attend meetings of other sections or divisions for additional meeting RUs.
  - Training is also available.
  - For example, this QP plans out for each month what they want to attend but conceded that it takes some legwork.

- A QP with certifications said they were worth maintaining; they had to take one of the exams twice, so that provides extra motivation to acquire enough RUs rather than have to take the exam again.

- Another QP agreed that even if one is confident of passing the exam again, that is a lot of time and effort to prepare.

- A QP who has been retired since 2018 has had to renew several certifications. They found that there are many ways to get the RUs without going to all the conferences.

  - You can pick a single conference, or volunteer at a conference for partial credit.
  - You can find section meetings through myASQ and also earn points by being a volunteer in a Section or holding a Position. (Two points per year are awarded for an elected position and one and a half points per year for an appointed position.)
  - This QP acknowledged they were originally worried, too.

Based on the current status of an ASQ certification, the respondents shared a belief that ASQ certification was worthwhile to maintain, especially when compared to the hurdles in time and expense to restore a lost certification through the exam. Several QPs found that biggest barrier to

achieving recertification was not being able to claim RUs for employment due either to retirement or not working full time during a recertification cycle.

The Moderator noted that Sections should investigate strategies to offer assistance by alerting people to possible solutions for situations when their RU-earning strategy will not provide them with sufficient RUs, including when the QP does not work and, thus, does not receive RUs for work.

Question 9: How many certifications do you have and how many should one have?

The Section 0511 members described their certifications and the optimal number:

- A QP got three certifications in a row; starting with a Green Belt first helped with passing the Black Belt soon after (but that situation only exists in Six Sigma); they also have a Software Quality Engineer certification. The three certifications cover multiple roles that this QP fills in their organization. However, they play other roles within the organization, too. For example, the CMQ/OE certification would fit very well the Process Lead role, and the CQA certification would fit the Auditor role. However, they never got around to it. So, they currently have three, but could have up to three more.

- A QP pointed out that ASQ offers RUs for additional ASQ certifications and that, in some ways, this caused them to postpone getting more certifications in case at some future time they would need RUs, and this would be an option to make up a shortfall.

- A QP with two certifications was thinking about getting a third – CQIA – which does not expire. However, it depends on your job; this is a highly personalized conclusion.

- A QP who has reviewed many resumes has found that sometimes a resume lists so many certifications that they would wonder how much time this person spent getting certified as opposed to performing the actual work.

- A QP asserted that if one is willing to put in the work it takes to get a certification, one should do it.

The consensus was that if a certification is applicable to one's professional life, it is worth attaining no matter how many other certifications one already has. However, one QP cautioned that certification status needs to be balanced with relevant work experience.

Question 10: Do quality professionals in the United States need ASQ professional certifications?

The Section 0511 members discussed the requirements to have ASQ certifications in their professional fields:

- A QP said they work with many who have certifications, but not ASQ; their certifications are through other organizations such as PMI. However, their organization's QA professionals are not ASQ certified, do not come from quality backgrounds, and are only partially aware of ASQ.

- A QP with a Master Black Belt attained it before it was offered by ASQ, so attaining it was almost like a master's degree. They got it through a university and had to write a 100-page thesis. So maybe it is not an ASQ certification, but it filled the same need.

- A QP with a CQA indicated that in their field (environmental chemistry), there is a great emphasis on analytical data quality, but there is no requirement for certification. The data validator position resembles the medieval apprentice/master model. Job qualification is still based on resume; your work experience is your credential. They are the only member of their group with an ASQ certification.

- A QP with a ASQ CMQ/OE related that when they talk with colleagues with PMI certifications, they indicate they chose the ASQ certification because it is the equivalent of a PMI but within the quality field. For what this QP does, it is much more helpful than a PMI certification.

- Another QP agreed and indicated that if they were to pursue another certification through ASQ, it would be the CMQ/OE and for the same reason.

- Another QP pointed out that sometimes the reverse applies – there are professionals with PMI certification but who have knowledge applicable to the quality field. They can still perform quality activities. So even if their certification is not through ASQ, the certification BOK can still be applicable to the quality field.

- A QP had the opinion that it was critical to get the certifications, as there are organizations looking for certifications in almost the same manner as they are looking for a degree.

The requirement for certification varies widely by field. For some QPs, an ASQ or equivalent certification is a prerequisite for employment in their professional field. For others, it is a way of standing out among colleagues but is not required. Some organizations use ASQ certification as an additional screening tool for candidates similar to a college degree.