



## TRAINING FROM SERC BOOSTS BRITISH TELECOM (BT)

[summary]: Global communications giant British Telecom (BT) needed to bolster employee skills in order to remain competitive. Using the CCNT (Certified in Convergent Network Technologies) education program, Northern Ireland's South Eastern Regional College (SERC) created a relevant, cost-effective education solution. SERC's CCNT training gave BT managers and technicians the boost BT needed to continue dominating the communications field with knowledge and skills in convergence network technologies.

### CHALLENGE

British Telecom (BT) is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services, with operations in more than 170 countries. In the United Kingdom alone, BT serves more than 18 million business and residential customers. Like other communications providers, BT already shifted its focus from traditional telecommunications services to convergence and unified communications years ago in its continuing effort to remain competitive globally. As a result of these sweeping changes, BT's growth in the market increased, as evidenced by its BT Vision (television on demand) and Home Information Technology services.

However, BT needed to take the next step to help set the company apart from its competitors: providing appropriate training programs in order to ensure that employees had relevant skills. Recognizing the need for an advanced understanding of digital technologies, BT began a training program in Northern Ireland.

"With the demand for 'New Wave' business and customer knowledge on the increase, our managers required an understanding of both voice and data technologies. Having the knowledge to talk confidently to both customers and engineers is an essential part of their role," explained Larry Shields, Senior Operations Manager, British Telecom, Belfast.

But BT faced specific challenges to training. For example, BT's typical employee profile in the region included professionals over 50 years of age who were trained in traditional telecommunications with little knowledge of the digital age. Many also were quite resistant to being retrained.

BT realized that it needed to work with the right partners in order to bring employee skill levels in line with the technologies BT uses every day. Northern Ireland's South Eastern Regional College (SERC) Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC) was one such partner. SERC had experience with workforce retention, as well as success with alternative teaching methods such as blended learning. SERC had also earned a reputation for recommending quality educational solutions over the years.

To help meet BT's needs, the TIC identified the CCNT certification program as the most effective solution for training the BT employees. The CCNT certificate program is a broad, knowledge-based introduction to core terms, concepts and skills in convergence technologies and unified communications. The program was developed by the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) for entry-level convergence professionals to prove their proficiency in integrated data, voice and video technologies. In order to complete the CCNT certificate program, each candidate must pass six competency exams in the following disciplines:

### British Telecom (BT)

- The largest communications service provider in the United Kingdom
- Operates in more than 170 countries

### HEADQUARTERS

London, England, UK

### PROGRAM

CCNT certificate program

*"CCNT has given us a greater awareness of transmission types, LANs, WANs and convergence technologies. We understand broadband from a wider perspective now, and managers are in a stronger position to coach their team members in converged technology delivery."*  
- Larry Shields, Senior Operations Manager, British Telecom, Belfast

- Basic Telecommunications
- Basic Data Communications
- Computer-Telephone Integration (CTI) Essentials
- Local Area Networks (LANs)
- Broadband Technologies
- Voice over IP (VoIP) Essentials

*“CCNT has taken the fear from conversations on many topics that spanned the modules. Experiencing the practical elements of learning helped confidence grow.”*

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

In October 2006, TIC initiated a learning program that began with a series of assessments for a pilot group of BT regional managers. Initially, only 5 percent of this group met the required competency level for broadband technologies, with 20 percent meeting the required competency level for networking fundamentals. The goal of the training was for the managers to improve their knowledge in these key areas. BT understood early on that in the age of downsizing and drastic budget reductions, managers need to be more efficient as they conduct appraisals, lead team meetings and drive the overall performance of the business.

TIC realized that traditional classroom delivery would not be effective given the employee profile. An innovative blended learning approach was presented to BT, which included:

- 12 three-hour instructor-led sessions on BT premises
- 30 hours of self-directed study
- Access to e-learning resources
- Study packs that included workbooks and handouts
- Online access to a lead tutor

The first CCNT training group began in February 2007, and additional pilot training followed until November 2007. Two TIC lecturers delivered the CCNT training, and close contact was maintained with BT to ensure the approach fully met the identified needs.

## **RESULTS**

Implementation of the program was quite successful by all of BT's measurements. Managers found that they could lead more efficiently. Employees had demonstrably more technical knowledge, worked better with customers and felt more comfortable about future training opportunities. Following is an overview of each of these results.

### **Improved Management Efficiency**

The training has increased business performance for BT managers, who are better positioned to solve problems, perform staff appraisals, lead effective team meetings and mentor engineers.

"Having put in many hours of study, we are currently enjoying the benefits," Larry Shields said. "CCNT has taken the fear from conversations on many topics that spanned the modules. Experiencing the practical elements of learning helped confidence grow."

### **Higher Technological Competence**

The pass rate for BT employees taking the CCNT certificate exams through TIC's training program has been 100 percent. Post-training skills assessments found BT staff had a 24.85 percent average increase in competency levels for broadband technologies and a 26.5 percent increase for networking concepts.

"I now have a better understanding of the technologies that my team encounters on a daily basis, and I am better positioned to deal with technical clients and direct their specific faults to an appropriate engineer," said Henry Gowdy, ICT Solutions Delivery Manager, British Telecom.

### **More Effective Customer Interaction**

BT training participants are finding they can apply the CCNT knowledge and skills in their everyday work roles.

"From a customer-facing role, CCNT has given me the ability to understand the terminology used by clients and resolve issues much more effectively," stated Paul McChesney, Business Customer Service Manager, British Telecom.

## Increased Interest in Future Training Opportunities

A more positive attitude toward training was created with a universal satisfaction reported for course delivery.

Shields stated, "CCNT was the first form of study that many of the students had undertaken in years. Overcoming the barrier that had developed through time has given confidence to the students, and I have no doubt that a hunger for additional learning is developing."

## CONCLUSION

The success of TIC's CCNT certificate training program with BT has secured TIC as BT's preferred training partner, and BT has scheduled additional training, including:

- Development of an apprenticeship program.
- Further CCNT certificate training for BT engineers.
- CTP (Convergence Technologies Professional) certification training in 2009.
- Rollout pilot training to BT Ireland with TIC coordinating the setup.
- Placement program for SERC Higher National Diploma students with BT.

Overall, BT staff was effectively re-educated to meet the convergence technology demands of the 21st century by becoming CCNT certified, and market growth was secured for BT because their employees now have the proper knowledge foundation that allows them to remain current with emerging technologies.

"CCNT has given us a greater awareness of transmission types, LANs, WANs and convergence technologies. We understand broadband from a wider perspective now, and managers are in a stronger position to coach their team members in converged technology delivery," Shields concluded.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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## CCNT (Certified in Convergent Network Technologies)

Developed by the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) for entry-level convergence professionals to prove their proficiency in integrated data, voice and video technologies.

### CCNT topics include:

- Basic telecommunications
- Basic data communications
- Computer-telephone integration (CTI)
- Local area networks (LANs)
- Broadband technologies
- Voice over IP (VoIP)

### Certification Partners offers:

- Official CCNT Curriculum
- 6 competency-based certification exams
- E-learning, instructor-led, self-study
- Online assessment and instruction tools

*Information and quotations were gathered from a National Training Award application submitted by Gary Ritchie, Technology & Innovation Centre Manager, South Eastern Regional College, UK, and are used with permission.*