

Interview with Cees Artz

Wednesday, 16 September 2009

The CSTB would like to acknowledge the very first individual to complete all four levels of the Canadian Software Testing Board Certification, Cees Artz.

We had an opportunity to interview Mr. Artz and discover a bit more about him, his experience with CSTB, and the field of software testing. Please meet our very first Advanced Level Certified Tester (FULL).

Tell us about yourself.

I grew up in the Netherlands and moved to Ottawa in 1997, after meeting a girl on the Internet. I married her in 2000, and we have two boys, six and eight years old.

When I arrived in Canada, the qualifications I had were not recognized by Canadian companies (even though my qualifications were likely the reason I received my landed immigrant visa in record time). I was told, "You do not have Canadian education or Canadian work experience." The only solution was to go back to school in Canada. I was part of a small group selected from hundreds of candidates for a special program to become a Year 2000 enterprise programmer. My placement was in software testing instead of programming, and that was where I realized how much I love finding bugs and care about the quality of software. Since then, I have worked mostly in software testing and QA positions in Canada (in the private sector and in government).

How long have you been in IT?

I started in IT in the late 1980s when I was still living in the Netherlands. I was the application manager for a GIS-like map-making system at city hall in a small town, and, besides being involved in map-making and parametric programming in the system, I reviewed and tested data exchange software.

Where did you find out about CSTB? I looked on the Internet for software testing certification. Even though I had over ten years' experience in testing software, I did not have formal education in testing, except for product-specific training. And although I always received excellent feedback on my work, I wanted to prove that I had testing knowledge. I found the ISTQB website quickly, and the link to the Canadian chapter—CSTB. Other testing sites, like SQE and StickyMinds, had information on the ISTQB as well. The set-up was ideal for me: open international exams with standardized content leading to globally accepted certificates, managed by national boards independent of any training institute.

What benefit was there in achieving all levels of certification?

I wanted to show that I'm a well-rounded professional in the functional, technical, and managerial areas of software testing, to support my work experience.

How long did it take you to complete all four levels?

I took my exams as soon as I could, one after the other. I wanted to go straight to the advanced-level exams, but the foundation-level exam was a prerequisite. Since I didn't go through a training institute (all through self-study of the topics listed in the ISTQB syllabuses), I wasn't dependent on any training schedule. In the end, I was able to complete all four exams in about five months.

What are your aspirations?

My goal is to guide an organization from set-up of testing to full implementation of structured functional and technical testing for a project. I hope to get hands-on testing on the way to satisfy my urge to find those nasty bugs.

What benefits are there professionally for attaining all levels of certification?

Studying for all four exams refreshed my knowledge and exposed me to new and different terminology, and to other techniques. In my consulting position I'm involved in setting up structured testing for a government agency, from establishing test policy and creating a handbook to testing priorities and automation for regression tests. Being able to show my testing experience and certification in all areas of testing will be a benefit to my employer as an IT consultant in

software testing.

What thoughts do you have for others who are looking into certification?

Getting certified does not have to be expensive. The ISTQB exams are open and independent of any product, producer, or training provider. So if you have testing experience and you easily learn by yourself, you may be able to get certified at a reasonable cost. Taking exams after self-study saved me thousands of dollars in training and travel expenses, and time off work.

What is next for you?

Next was accreditation as a Quality Assurance Management Professional (QAMP—<http://www.qamp.org>) with the International Software Quality Institute. I recently completed the exam for Certified Professional Requirements Engineering (foundation level). With the ISTQB certification and work experience, I could to apply for registration as a QAMP.