

Is There Accredited Certification in Knowledge Management? (14 in a series)



To answer this question, it is important to have some context around what constitutes Professional Certification for a subject matter area or professional area of practice. The International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) provides a solid definition and explanation of “professional certification.” Integrating this understanding with other organizations who define professional certification results in the following summary.

What is Professional Certification?

- Professional certification is a designation earned by an individual identifying that they have demonstrated a standard level of skills, experience, and expertise within their field.
- Certifications are generally earned from a professional society with a certifying body, and are granted based on a combination of education, experience, and knowledge, rather than solely by passing an exam or just completing training.
- The ongoing process of developing, administering, and maintaining the certification is done to international standards and very often requires ongoing continuing education.
- There is an established Body of Knowledge for the subject matter area that is nationally and/or internationally recognized.
- Sitting for the certification examination does not require that you take training from the certifying organization.

Is There Accredited KM Certification?

The Knowledge Management profession does not yet have a standardized, accredited, and recognized certification designation or certification provider that meets the above requirements. Compare this to the Program Management profession (PMP) or the Accounting profession (CPA) and I believe you will understand the distinction.

While there are several KM training organizations that will "certify" an individual, none providing KM "certification" will allow you to only take the "certification" test. This leads one to consider if it is more about the revenue from training than the certification. It is necessary one understand this in order to consider the financial and time investment one wishes to make in KM "certification" and then to assess the value that “certification” can provide.

No Quick Path to Competence in KM

There is no quick path to competence in Knowledge Management, certainly not from only taking a training course and being given a "certification" where there are no education or experience requirements. Also, recognize that there are many different variations in KM curriculum and content all developed to deliver skills training, but they cannot deliver competence borne from training and experience. The risk in taking generic training provided to "certify" one as a Knowledge Manager or Knowledge Practitioner is that the provider's perspective on KM may or may not be relevant to your organization's business and operational environment, KM context, or need.

Bottom line #1: If you are new to the field, training can be helpful and you should take it if it is a fit for you. You will likely gain some insight and some value. But view the "certification" as recognition that you completed KM training as prescribed by the training provider and their view of Knowledge Management.

Bottom Line #2: The real path to competence if you really want to understand KM concepts, strategies, and implementing practices, is to work with experienced professionals in the KM field to gain competence and experience through the practical application of KM in solving real business or operational problems.

Next: The Value of KM Enabling Technology