CERTIFIED & CREDIBLE

The Power of Professional Certification
INTRODUCTION

Professional certification is an investment. For business owners, professional certification is an investment in your people. For water treatment professionals, certification is an opportunity to invest in your future, build your earning capacity, progress in your career, and grow in your capability to improve people’s lives by improving their water quality.

As you weigh the cost of the program materials and exam, the cost of offering company time for your employees to work through the activities and the mentor's involvement, the cost of the investment might seem too high. But is it?

When you provide your employees the right support and encouragement the training and professional certification process can take as little as 6 months. Weigh that against the hidden costs of a single mistake in the field.
THE CASE FOR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

The World of Water Quality and Treatment Has Changed

Where customers were previously concerned about the aesthetic quality of their water, the increased ability to identify contaminants in their drinking and bathing water now has them worried about the impact on their and their family’s health. Water treatment dealers have reported that they and their staff are frequently faced with questions on drinking water quality.

The International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) recently reported that 37% of Americans consume only/mostly bottled water at home, and an additional 37% consume bottled water in equal amount to tap/filtered water*, reflecting the concerns consumers have over the quality of the water in their taps.

*2018 survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of IBWA

Gaining the confidence of the customer

The value of certification lies in the opportunity water treatment professionals have to gain the confidence of the customer. The WQA Professional Certification program helps consumers and employers identify individuals in the point-of-use/point-of-entry water quality improvement industry who have demonstrated a
certified level of professional expertise and are dedicated to high professional standards.

The training for professional certification instills procedures for critical thinking needed to correctly diagnose the water quality problem; select and configure the appropriate solution; safely and professionally install the equipment; and correctly maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

WQA’s professional certification and training programs were developed by recognized industry subject matter experts. You can be sure that the training is comprehensive and continuously updated. The built-in apprenticeship aspect of the online Modular Education Program (MEP) provides structured mentoring that lets managers see how their people tackle issues in the field and helps the learners benefit from the mentor’s experience. The mentoring aspect helps prevent mistakes before they happen in front of a customer.

**Proof That You and Your Company Care**

Professional certification is proof that you and your company care about doing the job right and have made the extra effort to demonstrate your commitment.

All WQA Certifications emphasize evidence-based treatment
solutions, business ethics as related to selling practices and product performance claims, water testing and analysis, compliance with local plumbing codes and licenses, protection of customer property, drinking water regulations, on-the-job-safety, and more.

WQA's certified personnel and their employers can differentiate themselves in the marketplace by using the certification logos on business cards, websites, email signatures, and company ads. Certification also helps them stand out in WQA's listing of certified professionals on wqa.org.

Choose the Right Certification to Meet Your Needs

With six job role-focused certification designations to choose from, industry professionals can choose those that best fit their needs.

“[The training] empowers employees to answer customer questions on their own, saving me a lot of time. Plus it provides a much better customer experience. Customers feel like they are talking to the right person.”

“WORTH THE TIME AND MONEY THAT WE INVESTED!”

Troy Macumber, CWS, CI - Cleanwater Culligan
Aside from companies gaining a competitive advantage they will also receive an increased credibility with customers with professional certification. They will save their company money and time by reducing errors and call-backs. Business leaders will experience an increased employee engagement and reduce turnover, along with setting an example for their colleagues and employees. Companies will also increase their visibility once they become listed on WQA’s online directory of certified professionals.

In short, Professional Certification affords multiple benefits:

- Competitive advantage
- Increased knowledge
- Greater self-confidence
- Credibility with customers

"I DON’T HAVE TO GO BACK OUT AND CHANGE EQUIPMENT THAT WAS MISAPPLIED…"

Kent Morton, Owner
Mort’s Water, Iowa
WQP Magazine, February 2019

“As an employer, I’ve found that whether it’s water conditioning or any other thing that we’re associated with, it’s usually much more economical to have somebody schooled and trained and educated in whatever we pursue…”

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- Sets an example for employees and colleagues
- Increases professionalism of one’s company and the industry
- Saves time and money by reducing errors in the field and the resulting call-backs
- Allows managers and business owners to focus on strategic goals by empowering employees to make day-to-day decisions in the field

WHAT CONSUMERS HAVE TO SAY

The 2017 National Study of Consumers’ Opinions & Perceptions Regarding Water Quality conducted by Applied Research-West, Inc. for WQA found the following when asked:

“WHO IS THE WATER QUALITY EXPERT IN YOUR AREA?”

1. Water treatment dealers/technicians
2. Certified Water Specialists
3. The City
WQA certification titles are based on job-roles. To determine which certification is most appropriate, review the certification titles below.

All WQA certification credentials reflect:

- Knowledge of drinking water regulations
- A focus on properly identifying water contaminants
- The need for correctly sized equipment
- An emphasis on ethical business practices
- Documented practical experience

**Certified Water Treatment Representative, CWR**
Demonstrates understanding of aesthetic water problems such as hardness and taste and odor and appropriate treatment methods.

**Certified Water Specialist, CWS**
Demonstrates understanding of problem water contaminants and treatment for both aesthetic and health-related concerns.

**Master Water Specialist, MWS**
Demonstrates broad knowledge of water contaminants; water chemistry; treatment technology operation, pitfalls and sizing; and treatment train configuration. Requires 5 years field experience with problem water treatment.
Certified Installer (CI)
Demonstrates knowledge of installation parameters for POU/POE equipment, plumbing codes, installation best practices, peak demand sizing, and water quality concerns.

Certified Service Technician (CST)
Demonstrates knowledge of troubleshooting operation and performance of POU/POE treatment systems, plumbing codes, installation best practices, peak demand sizing, and water quality concerns.

Certified Cooler Technician (CCT)
Demonstrates knowledge of drinking water regulations and best practices for POU cooler installation and troubleshooting.

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION TIMELINES
Anything worthwhile takes time and effort. By pursuing professional certification and the training that comes with it, employers are making an investment in the future of their company and their customers, and individuals are making an investment in the future of their career and job satisfaction.

Eligibility for certification requires completion of the training in WQA’s Modular Education Program (MEP). All certification
pathways consist of three modules: Basics, Fundamentals, and one Core (Sales, Installation, Design, or Service). The Core module is based on the certification title being pursued.

The time required for completing the training will vary based on how much time is spent on the course work and hands-on activities on a weekly basis. A stepwise approach to the training - purchasing one of the three required modules at a time - is strongly recommended. Sample timelines for new hires working toward the CWR and CI certifications are listed below.

Certified Water Treatment Representative, CWR (New Hire):
- Month 1 - 2, Basics module
- Months 3 - 5, Fundamentals module
- Months 6 - 8, Sales module
- Month 9, CWR exam

Certified Installer, CI (New Hire):
- Year 1, Installation module
- Year 2, Basics & Fundamentals modules
- End of Year 2, CI exam
Accelerated pathways are available for experienced personnel. Pathways are available for those with 2+ years and 5+ years of experience. Testing out of the Basics module is required for use of the accelerated pathways. A sample timeline is listed below.

**Accelerated pathway, sample (Experienced Personnel, 1-2 hrs/week):**
- Months 1 of enrollment, Basics assessment
- Months 1-3 of enrollment, Fundamentals module
- Months 4-7 of enrollment, Core module
- Month 8 of enrollment, Certification exam

**WHAT IS THE MODULAR EDUCATION PROGRAM?**

The Modular Education Program is online-delivered education organized in small chunks of various activities that help the learner understand and retain water treatment-specific information. The program structure incorporates best practices for how adults learn by combining educational concepts with practical field application.

The program consists of pre-configured educational pathways corresponding to job roles and educational goals.

Learners receive a 1-year subscription and progress at their own pace. The program is fully functional on mobile devices, allowing the learner to work anywhere a data signal is available.
HOW TO BEGIN

For employers/managers:
1. Identify who will oversee progress (see progress tracking tools at wqa.org/mep/support)
2. Identify who will act as mentor to review hands-on activities (see mentor qualifications at wqa.org/mep)
3. Identify initial group of learners. Aim for no more than 2 learners per mentor
4. Determine certification title(s) of interest and experience level, one module or full path
5. Complete enrollment form at wqa.org/mep

For individuals:
1. Identify progress milestones and due dates (see progress tracking tools at wqa.org/mep/support)
2. Identify mentor for hands-on activities (see mentor qualifications at wqa.org/mep)
3. Determine certification title(s) of interest and experience level, one module or full path
4. Complete enrollment form at wqa.org/mep

ONE MORE OPTION: WQA CERTIFICATES OF TRAINING

WQA’s certification credentials require demonstration of field experience. As such, they are best suited for job roles that incorporate visits to treatment installation sites and interact with end-users. However, training is critical for all companies and their employees involved in the water treatment industry.
To ensure professionalism at all levels of the industry, WQA offers certificate programs that build knowledge of water treatment for sales engineers, technical support staff, and marketing staff.

The **Introduction to Water Contaminants and Treatment** certificate is an excellent onboarding tool for both technical and non-technical staff. It explains the need for water treatment and how water quality is regulated; it also provides an overview of treatment technologies, product certification standards, and the marketing guidelines in WQA’s Code of Ethics.

For more technical staff, the **Residential Water Treatment Design** certificate explains water chemistry, hydrodynamics and treatment equipment sizing; delves into the behavior and treatment of problem water contaminants; discusses configuration of treatment trains, mixed-bed systems, deionization options, and multiple-tank control schemes.

**A certificate demonstrates completion of a course of study. The education required to earn a certificate is a useful tool for gaining knowledge on a topic. A certificate is also a useful training alternative when a certification is not practical.**
PROMOTING YOUR CERTIFICATION

All certified personnel are listed on the WQA website and can be seen by customers looking for local water treatment providers.

Companies and individuals can also take advantage of WQA’s Professional Certification Promotion Toolkit to let their customers and their colleagues know they’ve furthered their knowledge and expertise by becoming certified.

The toolkit includes:

- Leave-behind card that explains to consumers why they can be confident in working with a WQA-certified professional
- Press releases and social media posts
- Lapel pins and uniform patches with certification logo
- Digital professional certification logos for business cards, email signatures, and company website and advertising

More information on using the professional certification logos is on the Promoting Your Certification page at wqa.org/promoting.

Lapel pins for CWS/MWS
BUSINESS EXCELLENCE
The Water Quality Association identifies and recognizes members who make a special commitment to business excellence, the values of WQA and to advancing the betterment of water quality. Our Business Excellence Program recognizes those members that demonstrate a commitment to quality at the highest level.

As a result of receiving this high honor, WQA members differentiate themselves from other companies in the marketplace. The WQA Business Excellence Program boosts credibility with customers, allowing members to showcase their expertise while reinforcing the performance-based standards for their employees and the products they sell.

GOLD SEAL PRODUCT CERTIFICATION
WQA’s Gold Seal Product Certification Program offers a scientific method to assure the safety and effectiveness of the water treatment and filtration devices consumers purchase.

WATER QUALITY ASSOCIATION
Water Quality Association is devoted to the betterment of water quality. It is the leading voice of the water treatment and purification industry.
Standing out as the credible, knowledgeable professional and company in a marketplace flooded with misinformation can be difficult. Developing in-house training programs for employees can be daunting.

WQA's Professional Certification & Training programs can help you accomplish both goals with industry-recognized credentials and certification promotion tools.

This booklet provides what you need to get started.