CBAP Certification, Why
By Alan Cavin

I received my CBAP Certification in July of 2015 after over a year of study. It was a somewhat painful experience because of the time involved. I gave up my casual reading in favor of reading the BABOK and the Watermark study guide. I spent numerous hours at Starbucks to get away from distractions at home. I was in a virtual study group through the Denver Chapter and participated in a regular group at work. And I failed the exam the first time!

So, why did I continue?

The newsletter editor asked me this question a while back and suggested I might write a short article for the newsletter. So I thought about that question for a couple of months and tried to formulate my reasons.

I had a lot of reasons not to take the exam. I asked around at work to see what the advantage would be for me. There was basically none. It would not result in any promotion or pay raise. My company was not requiring the certification for new business analysts joining the company. I don't think of myself as "old" but the reality is that I might be retiring in a few years, so "advancing my career" was not something that I was considering. My "second job" as a part-time instructor at a local university is not even in the BA space, so the certification has no relevance there. I visited with several of my co-workers and they all agreed that our company had no incentive for taking the exam.

If you look at the IIBA website, they tout 4 reasons to obtain the certification. I thought about each one and how it might apply to me in my particular organization:
1. Personal Recognition
This is a possibility. We had a few BAs in my company who had passed the exam so there was definitely a motivation to join that group and gain some recognition. But not much.
2. Increased Income
Negative. There was (and still is) no incentive financially at my company to get certified. This has potential to change. And if I were considering changing employers it might be more incentive.
3. Professional Development Opportunities
The certification process itself is a bit of professional development. And as more BAs seek certification at a particular organization, the more the organization will address the need for opportunities to engage in different types of professional development.
4. Effective Business Analysis Execution
This reason is directed to the advantages an employer may gain with a staff of BAs who are certified.
1) independent assessment of the employee's knowledge
2) knowing that professionally certified BAs can work on largest most complex projects, and
3) knowing that BAs are using industry standard techniques.

So with all these apparent "negatives" in my situation, you may ask "Why did you choose to pursue the certification?" Two reasons:
1. Peer pressure
2. Things change

A BA co-worker mentioned to me that the BABOK 3.0 was under development and when it was published the exam would no longer be over the BABOK version 2. Version 2 had been around long enough that there were numerous study helps - guides, flash cards, sample tests, and anecdotal stories concerning the exam - that would all have to be revised and updated for version 3. There would likely be a time delay before I could avail myself of the newer study materials for the new version. [In fact, as I look at Version 3 BABOK now, it has changed a lot!] We both agreed that there was little incentive at our company to pursue the certification, but because it might get harder, it might be a good thing to do.

And things changed. Our "Employee Resource Organization" was formed with a pool of developers, testers, and analysts who could be assigned to any project in the company. The manager of the group of

BAs looked for ways to improve and somewhat standardize the skills of the analysts, and so the CBAP certification took on more importance. And a lot of people began to study and get certified. (see #1)

We had a small group of analysts locally who were motivated to get the certification and started a study group. The pressure was on for me to participate and once I started, there was no getting out!

In hindsight, I'm glad I pursued the certification and took the exam. Being a part of the somewhat exclusive club of "IIBA Certified" analysts brings a modicum of influence and perceived importance! Some additional personal benefits I see from the certification process are additional self-confidence in my analyst skills, better understanding of process improvements in my job, and the addition of a number of useful tools to use on the various projects that come my way.

You will have to decide yourself if the reward is worth the effort. Assess your current situation and determine if certification will enhance your position now or in the future.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have about any phase of the process, from application, to study, to taking the exam.