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Professional Bookkeeping Certification – 5 Reasons it Matters

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“To certify ... or not to certify?”

Why does certification matter? What is the motivation towards it? How do you justify the time and effort put into obtaining certification?

And does it really, *truly* matter?

Well, if you want to differentiate yourself as a bookkeeper, obtaining a professional certification is a move you should seriously consider.

IBPC was founded on the premise that bookkeeping is a profession, and the primary, key distinguisher is the development of a national, professional certification program. So let us share with you the five reasons why professional bookkeeping certification matters.

#1: INSTANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUR EXPERTISE

Certifications like ours which grant the designation ‘CPB’ behind your name give you the ability to prove your knowledge level immediately. This is important for customers – both existing and those on your horizon. It tells customers you have been tested – and it’s been verified – that you have a dependable level of knowledge and can care for their business books. This not only adds to their comfort level, it helps build trust quickly. None of us would go to a doctor or dentist we didn’t believe was qualified – why would customers be any different when seeking a professional bookkeeper?

This acknowledgement also extends to your peers. Many of us have encountered projects involving more than we expected in one form or another. We are cautious about whom we want to work with in challenging projects or those that require a collaborative effort. Don’t you want to be able to contact a peer you trust? A professional certification from a governing body will help this immensely. There is a respect among peers that comes naturally when a certification is in place.

#2: INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

Industry recognition is multi-level. It is more than recognition from your customers, or your peers – as recognition from both of those groups is definitely important! But you should also consider what it would mean to be recognized by the entire bookkeeping and accounting profession - from accountants we work with, to those working with the software companies – not to mention our communities.

Industry recognition isn’t just about being identifiable – it’s about being remembered and acknowledged for your ability, the level of service you provide, and who you are. It’s about endorsement in the community you live in, as well as in our bookkeeping and accounting community. A professional bookkeeping certification is definitely a component of recognition at this level.

#3: COMMITMENT TO THE PROFESSION

A professional certification like the IPBC's CPB designation means responsibility. To be an honorable representative of the profession means portraying a certain persona – a depiction of what someone with that certification should look like. Being able to demonstrate that means being responsible – for the work we do, the reason we do it, the way we do it, and our actions while we are doing it. Being a CPB means there is a Code of Conduct in place that we all need to follow. This adds consistency and standards, which are vital components of a certification.

It means being proud of the certification you worked to achieve. It illustrates to customers and your peers that you carry a level of established knowledge in bookkeeping. And it means being proud to belong to the group of accredited peers you are part of. A professional certification is much more than a piece of paper on your wall!

#4: FINANCIAL REWARD AND MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A professional certification can help you justify your true value, and achieve your desired compensation for the services you provide. In a survey done by IPBC in 2015, the results clearly showed that having a professional designation had a positive impact on customers. This included their willingness to pay a premium for those professionally accredited. The survey also showed a higher attraction of new customers when a professional certification was in place.

And let's not forget the benefits of certification. As a CPB, some of the benefits include ongoing professional development opportunities (through both webinars and an annual conference), support from a valid organization, a code of conduct, and business resources – never mind the ability to become a certified professional bookkeeper! Many software companies have their own certifications, with benefits including such things as a software license and training. Certifications like these are quite a complement to your bookkeeping certification, and definitely set you apart from non-certified individuals.

#5: VALIDITY AND REFERRALS

Bookkeepers are often the primary users of customers' accounting software – not to mention the ones implementing it. This frequently finds us recommending the product a customer should use. When you carry a professional certification, customers are far more likely to accept a recommendation from you, because your knowledge in this area is proven.

Having a professional bookkeeping certification can also increase referrals. You will often be remembered more quickly by those who may recommend you, i.e. accountants that you know, your customers, and even the software companies. And those recommendations are worth far more than any marketing dollars you spend!

In addition, aside from all of the reasons listed here, it will boost your self-worth - and self-worth and confidence are essential to professional growth and advancement in any industry.

Obtaining certification can take some time ... and effort ... and some energy, but – for the record - we haven't met anyone in our industry yet that regrets achieving a professional certification!