

## Certification of Vibration Analysts in a Dynamic Job Market

*Nelson L. Baxter, Contributing Editor*

A few years ago the subject on the certification of vibration analysts came to the forefront. At that time it was uncertain as to whether or not certification would be accepted by either the analysts or the companies for which they worked. Since that time, quite a significant number of individuals has elected to go through the certification process. In addition, many companies have encouraged their personnel to take training and certification exams. In my case, as a private consultant, the subject of certification has appeared on several occasions. Based upon the above, it is apparent that the certification of vibration analysts has been accepted and is here to stay. There is still some controversy regarding the various certification levels, test questions and test procedures. These problems will hopefully be worked out in the future. However, despite these issues, certification is probably the glue that will be required to bind and network this group of analysts together in today's dynamic job market.

When certification first appeared, I was personally neutral on the subject. After teaching a few courses, I even turned a little negative before finally accepting the positive points of certification. The courses that had been fun to teach suddenly became very serious. No longer did part of the class leave early to play some golf, but instead, I found myself working with students well into the night. My comfortable world had indeed been shaken up. While teaching may have lost some of its lighter aspects, I do, however, have no doubt that the students are learning more. The main reason for this can be summed up in one word "MOTIVATION." Course participants now eagerly work on problems involving isolation, amplification factors and forced response, whereas in the past they would have left class early to go shopping. The bar has been raised and people have responded with in-

creased effort and performance.

In some previous editorials, I have raised concerns regarding the vibration analysis field. One of my main issues has been the number of good analysts that have been forced out of the business by either a lack of understanding of what they do, by dismissal or early retirement as a result of a takeover of their company. Just about the time ABC Company develops some competent analysts, XYZ Company buys them out and the technically proficient are inevitably lost in the reorganization.

For these individuals, being certified is helpful under two potential scenarios. In the first case, whenever the inevitable reorganization committee asks that individual what they do and how they justify their present position, they can explain that they have been trained and are certified in the early detection of problems that can be used to prevent consequential damages and downtime. This may or may not help, but the odds of presenting a convincing argument are increased by showing that an outside organization has recognized their proficiency through a certification process. The second scenario where being certified is advantageous is if the individual does change jobs. Imagine if the following appears on a resumé: "Five years experience working in predictive maintenance." Now compare that to: "Five years experience in predictive maintenance including three training courses in analysis techniques followed by testing resulting in achieving Level III certification." Even though both individuals may be equally competent, the advantage of being recognized by an outside organization is obvious. What it boils down to is that being certified may allow an individual to remain in the field he or she has chosen, rather than being forced to work in another area.

Vibration analysts remaining in their field of choice brings up another con-

cern expressed in a past editorial. That editorial expressed apprehension about the depth of knowledge in the vibration analysis field. To anyone working in vibration analysis, it is obvious that in the next few years, a significant amount of advanced level experience is going to be lost due to the retirement of some of the pioneers in the field. Many of the very best analysts are now over 70 years old or are approaching the age at which they will retire. Who will take their place? Prior to going out on their own, many of these individuals were able to work for several years in a job where they learned vital knowledge with regard to both the science and the art of this business. For people to become really good at something, they need an incubation period where they can receive training and obtain hands on experience and learn the tricks of the trade, so to speak. In the past, when employment was more stable, an individual might have spent fifteen to twenty years at a company gaining this experience. Nowadays, with buy outs, cost cutting and quarterly reorganizations, such a period of professional stability is almost nonexistent. The future analysts, if there are going to be any, need a way of staying in their chosen career as they change jobs so they can develop their skills and become the future experts.

There are no doubt problems with the certification process. However, there are also problems with doing nothing to help the individuals who want to remain in this field in a dynamic job market. Certification is not mandatory. If someone chooses not to do it, then that is up to him or her. However, for those who wish to do everything possible to remain in the field that interests them most, it is an option that they might want to consider, if they have not done so already. **SV**

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