



SAP AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

DEMONSTRATING EXPERTISE TO CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYERS THROUGH CERTIFICATION

Conny Dahlgren, a consultant based in Melbourne, Australia, with the SAP® Consulting organization, who specializes in customer relationship management (CRM), proved that even highly experienced consultants have much to gain by obtaining SAP Certified Application Professional status. Dahlgren took the examinations required to attain this status for CRM in the three areas offered – sales, marketing, and service – and passed them all by handsome margins. Now he has proven his proficiency to management, to customers, and, perhaps most importantly, to himself.

A native of Sweden, Dahlgren is now permanently stationed in Melbourne where he performs consulting projects of many kinds for SAP Australia Pty Ltd and its customers. He has served in this capacity for the last seven years, and he spent the previous four years as a consultant for Electronic Data Systems (EDS) Corporation and for Sweden-based Capito Consulting. Dahlgren's early experience for SAP covered the areas of sales and distribution and materials management, and since the year 2000, he has specialized in customer relationship management. His roles include fulfillment of customer consulting contracts, presales technical support, and helping with ramp-up of new versions of SAP software and services. Dahlgren has successfully completed many dozens of projects for SAP and its customers.

Can an Exam Truly Test Real-World Experience?

Several months ago Dahlgren's manager approached him about taking the professional level examination for SAP's recently launched certification program for customer relationship management consulting. Passing the test would signify his competence to customers, the manager explained. And since the program was still in the beta stage at the time, his comments would provide the extra benefit of helping the program's developers improve the test as the program matured into general availability.

"I was initially skeptical about whether a certification exam could truly assess on-the-job experience," says Dahlgren. "I had participated in such certification programs before, and I often found that some of the questions were ambiguous, and that the expected answers sometimes deviated from the best answers based on my own experience." As an example, he cited the fact that experienced consultants frequently find better ways to accomplish goals than by using the best-known practices, but that by relying on this experience, they might fail certification exams that test only for knowledge of established procedures. But management was keen to have all its consultants become certified, and so he agreed to participate.

Highlighting Areas in Need of Improvement

The day before the exam, Dahlgren studied the program's course materials, which he found to be readily available online as a downloadable PDF. "The course materials were helpful," he comments. "Despite my years of experience in CRM consulting, I found areas described in which I had not developed enough expertise – rebates, for example. By highlighting these areas, the materials helped me develop a more complete understanding of CRM issues."

The examination was held at a third-party location conveniently located in Melbourne. "It was very professionally administered," reports Dahlgren. "All the participants had to check their laptops and other materials at the door, and we took the test in a well-monitored classroom."

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Conny Dahlgren
SAP Certified Application Professional
SAP Australia Pty Ltd

Dahlgren took the exam for all three specialty areas offered – sales, marketing, and service – a set of multiple-choice questions that required between one and two hours to answer. As he

reviewed the questions, he made notes on how they might be improved to better reflect his real-world experience and later delivered this feedback to the program's developers.

Accurate Demonstration of Consulting Service Quality

Soon Dahlgren received the results: he passed in all three areas by substantial margins. Just as important, the developers considered his feedback and in many cases used it to improve the test. "I was pleasantly surprised that, even before my feedback, the questions did such a good job of assessing actual consulting experience. No one is going to pass that test by book learning alone," says Dahlgren. "And I'm proud that I was able to help make it even better in that regard. The SAP-certified application professional exam is a better test of real-world experience than I've ever seen from SAP or any other company."

Dahlgren and others from SAP Consulting who passed the exam made sure to add that fact to their curricula vitae as a way to reinforce their expertise to customers. "It was certainly worth the time it took out of my schedule to prepare for the test and take it," says Dahlgren. "It was a great

way to show my manager and the whole company that my expertise is real, and it was also a great way to prove myself in my own mind."

The Difference in a Close Decision Between Contractors

Neither Dahlgren nor his manager is necessarily satisfied with achievement of SAP Certified Application Professional status. They are now considering pursuing the ultimate level, SAP Certified Application Master status, by taking this very demanding examination in the future to demonstrate the utmost in CRM proficiency.

"How much did passing the test contribute to our likelihood of getting a contract or commanding a better price?" asks Dahlgren. "Well, frankly, SAP employees like me are already expected to be experts, and so I'm not sure how big a difference it really makes. But for consultants in partner organizations where the client doesn't necessarily have that confidence going in, I believe it matters quite a bit. SAP Certified Application Professional status is proof of quality, and that's what matters most to customers. It's the kind of thing that could make the whole difference in a close decision between contractors."

Quick Facts

Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Name: SAP Australia Pty Ltd▪ Location: Melbourne, Australia▪ Industry: High tech▪ Products and services: Business software▪ Revenue: €4.1 billion (for SAP AG)▪ Employees: More than 42,000 (for SAP AG)▪ Web site: www.sap.com
Challenges and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrate depth of consulting proficiency with SAP® Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM) application▪ Reinforce self-assurance▪ Secure competitive advantage▪ Comply with management desires
Objective	Obtain SAP Certified Application Professional status for consulting in CRM sales, marketing, and service
SAP Solution and Services	SAP Certified Application Professional status
Highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Passed SAP-certified application professional CRM sales test▪ Passed SAP-certified application professional CRM marketing test▪ Passed SAP-certified application
Why SAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recognized authority on CRM consulting▪ Author of SAP CRM▪ Extensive experience providing certification programs
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrated SAP CRM consulting proficiency to management▪ Attained extra measure of confidence in ability to provide quality consulting▪ Displayed mark of achievement to customers

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