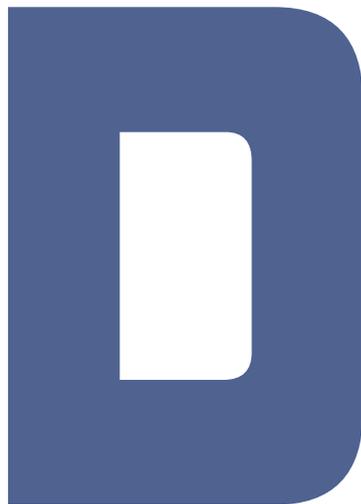
A man in a dark suit and white shirt is pointing his right index finger upwards. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a dark blue gradient with a grid of lighter blue squares. One square, which the man is pointing at, is glowing with a bright white light. The text 'career planning' is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font to the right of the glowing square. Below it, the text 'Certifications, Degrees, Soft Skills, Leadership Skills ...' is written in a white, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, the page number '16' and the text 'DISASTER RECOVERY JOURNAL SPRING 2009' are visible. In the bottom right corner, there is a small circular logo with the text 'DISASTER RECOVERY JOURNAL' around the perimeter and 'DRJ' in the center.

career planning

Certifications, Degrees, Soft Skills,
Leadership Skills ...



Despite the state of the economy, organizations are actively hiring continuity professionals. The challenge is that those who are actively engaged in a job search find themselves competing with many other equally experienced continuity professionals for fewer jobs. As a result, companies are increasingly selective in their hiring decisions. They can afford to take their time in selecting the best of the best. So how does one stand out in the crowd? What is the best way to ensure you get the next job you interview for? What are companies really seeking?

Credentials in Demand

Certifications

Hiring managers and human resource professionals want to ensure they hire top talent in the business continuity profession. Previously, certifications were a nice marketable credential. However, these days it is becoming more of a requirement. Companies are recognizing the benefit of hiring and retaining a certified business continuity professional. They understand that most certifications require professionals to maintain their certifications through continued education within the profession, thus the employer feels that they have hired a leader.

The most recognized certifications among our employers are through the DRI International and the Business Continuity Institute. These two certifying bodies are well established and reputable within business continuity. Our hiring managers also value the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification, which is offered through the Project Management Institute (PMI). It makes sense to obtain this type of training since program management is one of the core skill sets needed to be a successful business continuity professional. Some other very marketable certifications include the

Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) offered through the International Association for Emergency Managers (IAEM), and the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) offered through the International Information Systems Security Certification Consortium (ISC)².

These certifications focus on disciplines that are tangent to business continuity planning.

A Career Strategy in Business Continuity Management

By **CHEYENE HAASE**

Understanding the Current Market

- More than 43 percent of respondents have 4-10 years of business continuity experience.
- 74 percent were certified with 45 percent having obtained one certification.
- A bachelor's degree is the highest level of education obtained by 48 percent.
- A master's degree is the highest level of education obtained by 28 percent.
- More than 2 percent have a degree within business continuity or emergency management.
- More than 18 percent changed jobs in 2008.

Based on BC Management's Annual BCM Study – 2009. These statistics were taken from our USA report, which consisted of 1,034 respondents.

More and more business continuity professionals are elevating their marketability by obtaining multiple certifications. Hiring managers are also beginning to list multiple certifications as a hiring preference, if not a requirement. One word of caution before rushing out and obtaining multiple certifications – take the time to determine the direction of your career. It doesn't make a lot of sense to strive for a BC certification and CISSP if you have no interest in information security. A majority of companies will shy away from candidates who have more than four certifications. Reason being, they begin to wonder if these candidates are

too busy maintaining their certifications to be focused on their job responsibilities.

Degrees

The percentage of degreed (bachelor's, master's, and doctorate) business continuity professionals has been increasing steadily for four years, from 71 percent in 2005 to almost 78 percent in 2009. More and more companies are requiring new hires to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree regardless of the major, especially at management level positions. A majority of companies are giving preference to those professionals who have achieved a master's degree. A doctorate degree is not very prevalent within the continuity profession, with only about 1-2 percent of professionals having obtained one.

In the last three years, the continuity field has received increased visibility with colleges and universities launching degreed programs specifically in business continuity management. The percentage of professionals with a degree in business continuity has increased over the last four years from 1 percent to 2.3 percent. This is a slight increase, but we do expect this to be an increasing trend given all the new degreed program offerings. The question I hear often is, "What type of degree should I obtain?"

This question can only be answered on an individual basis and it really comes down to the direction you want to take your career. If you are more focused in IT and you want to continue on the IT track, then it makes sense to obtain a degree that focuses on IT. If you want to expand into management then it makes sense to obtain a business degree. You may also want to consider a degree that exclusively focuses on business continuity management, given the emerging trend.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are what make the difference between an average professional and top talent. This includes presentation, program management, training and interpersonal skills; however, it's much more than just these skills. Those individuals who have the ability to strategically assess what will work best for the culture of the organization as well as the ability to truly implement and roll out an enterprise business continuity management program are constantly in demand. Hiring managers are seeking people who can champion the program. Professionals who can be strategic, think outside of the box, engage all professionals across the organization and maintain executive commitment are overwhelmingly in demand. These soft skills separate a standard program from a fully integrated enterprise program. A true passion for your role within an organization is also crucial. If you are not passionate about what you are trying to accomplish, why should you expect anyone else to be?

Leadership Skills

With the increased number of continuity professionals searching for new job opportunities, it is no surprise that companies are seeking true leaders in the continuity profession. Those professionals who are positioned as leaders are viewed as strong candidates who have the ability to push a program forward. They are considered the best of the best. So what makes you a perceived

leader in the profession? Leaders are in the forefront of exchanging ideas. They are the individuals contributing their knowledge. In essence they are writing continuity related articles for newsletters, journals, or magazines. They are presenting thought provoking ideas at industry conferences or association meetings. They are serving as board members within industry groups. They are at the forefront of trends and assisting in the advancement of our profession. These are the individuals that companies are scrambling for when hiring at the executive level.

Safeguarding Your Career

Develop a Career Strategy

What do you want to be when you grow up? Developing a career strategy is often overlooked, but it is necessary if you want to achieve your career objectives. Take note, though, in developing your career strategy that there is a work/life balance that is always needed. Being a chief continuity officer may require giving up some family time due to increased demands on the job.

Once you determine your career goals – three, five, and 10 years from now – then you will want to assess where you are currently with your career. What are your current credentials or skill sets? Conducting a SWOT exercise is incredibly helpful to better understand your current career state. SWOT

stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This is an incredible exercise to assess your current company/position and how it impacts your career as well as reviewing your current credentials.

After you understand the state of your current career, you can plan for your

future. Take note of where you are currently in your career and assess what credentials you will likely need in order to obtain your career goals three, five, and 10 years from now. Make sure to write it down and review it every six months to a year. Professionals plan so much at work for the future while they fail to plan for their own future.

Increase Your Marketability through Your Brand

Increasing your marketability encompasses everything from obtaining certifications and an advanced education to becoming a leader in the continuity profession, but it is also much more than that. Who are you as a person? How are you perceived among your peers and management? What is your brand? How do you protect your personal brand?

It is human nature to assess an individual's behavior one-on-one and within a group in order to try to predict how that individual will react in the future. Your personal brand is built brick by brick through your interaction with others. Who you are as an individ-

Tips for current job seekers

- Network with your peer group. Make sure that everyone is aware of your job search.
- Review jobs posted on the Internet, but be cautious of including all your contact information. It is best to be listed confidentially.
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- Engage a select number of executive search firms.
- Think outside of the box in your search methods. Use networking sites such as LinkedIn.
- Research topics on-line on how to write a resume, how to search for a new job, how to interview, how to negotiate an offer, etc.

ual has an incredible impact on your future career. Your personal brand also has more of an impact on an organization as you move up the chain of command. In many cases, executives are considering your personal brand when your career is up for promotion.

Networking is Key

You should always be networking. Those professionals who fail to properly network will be left in the dark when it comes time to conducting a job search. Fortunately we work within a well networked profession where there is an abundance of career networking opportunities. Consider joining a local industry association group, such as the Association of Contingency Planners (ACP), the NorthEast Disaster Recovery Information X-Change (NEDRIX), Business Recovery Managers Association (BRMA), Contingency Planning Exchange (CPE), Business Recovery Planners Association (BRPA) and many others. These groups not only network amongst each other in exchanging ideas and trends, but the education obtained from such groups can assist in elevating your own continuity program, not to mention your career. Networking in a conference setting is also beneficial as it gives you the opportunity to exchange ideas among your peers within your industry as well as expose yourself to a larger continuity community.

Final Tips

Protecting and elevating your career requires an assessment of what companies are seeking and what credentials you have to offer. Understanding what the job market holds and how your credentials align to this job market is only one piece of the puzzle. It is also crucial to plan ahead and strategize who you want to be in the continuity field. Those professionals who can properly assess where they are today, where they want to be in the future as well as strategize the best way to obtain their goals will be pleased with the results. It is also important to note that these are challenging times and it is important to stay optimistic.

(NOTE: All data cited in this article is gathered from studies conducted by BC Management.)



Cheyene Haase has been an executive recruiter for thirteen years with eleven of those years specializing in the business continuity field. Her career as an executive recruiter began in Madison, Wisc., shortly after graduating from the University of Wisconsin. She moved to Southern California in 1998, and joined Management Recruiters International where she immediately began recruiting in the business continuity field. In 2000 she founded BC Management, Inc., with the sole purpose of recruiting in the business continuity, disaster recovery, crisis management and risk management professions.