

The Future Is Collaborative: Skills That Make You the Cornerstone of the Team



Getting up to speed with collaboration requires talent and training. You are that talent. And with training, you can shift into high gear.

An engineer implements a collaboration system with mobile support. This solution improves teamwork and productivity. Employees can work from anywhere. Plus, it boosts the company's competitive position.

An IT specialist selects a cloud-based contact center solution. Now the company can serve customers using the communications channel of their choice. It can deliver consistent and seamless service across channels. These capabilities help build customer loyalty and improve the enterprise's market standing and bottom line.

An architect prepares the network and the enterprise for rich media. That way, when new applications launch, they work as promised. Employees know what to do with them. The enterprise gets a strong return on its investment in technology.

These examples represent the kind of work IT experts are doing in the age of collaboration.

Collaboration enables customers to interact with businesses as they choose. Business teams can provide better service and solutions, and businesses can build stronger bonds with customers. Those customers stick around longer. They may even spend more.

Workers collaborate to share ideas and make decisions. That way, businesses can move faster.

But getting up to speed requires talent and training. You are that talent. And with training, you can shift into high gear.

Collaboration positions you for more exciting work and allows you to enjoy better pay and benefits.

This white paper will tackle the following:

- Define collaboration
- Discuss why businesses want certified professionals
- Detail the skills you need
- Describe the Collaboration certifications Cisco offers
- Explain why now is a great time for you to learn more

What we mean by collaboration

Collaboration means different things to different people.

Audio and video conferencing, team messaging, and contact center interactions are all forms of collaboration. Content and desktop sharing are collaboration too. The industry used to refer to it as unified communications. That's because you can combine collections of applications for ease of use.

Seventy percent of IT leaders say certification is an indicator of applicant job qualification.

The cloud, with its support for on-demand models, is also part of the picture. Businesses can pay for only what they use. And cloud-based collaboration provides for greater scale.

This model is a great match for what's happening in the business world. Businesses today no longer depend just on their own employees to get things done. Instead, they use a collection of employees, channel partners, systems integrators, vendor partners, and other supply chain partners. Collaboration lets all these people more easily share ideas, make decisions, and change business wherever they are.

Sometimes businesses support these interactions using standalone collaboration systems. Other times, they integrate collaboration into their existing business systems and processes. But businesses need people like you to help them with that. Training will prepare you so you're ready to help.

Why certification matters

Seventy percent of IT leaders say certification is an indicator of applicant job qualification. Seventy-one percent of hiring managers say it increases their confidence as well. Eighty-two percent of digital transformation executives believe it accelerates innovation and supports new business models.

Cisco certifications inspire a lot of confidence with employers. Many businesses look for Cisco skills; in fact, as part of a talent strategy survey, market research firm IDC found that Cisco skills are listed more often than 97 percent of all skills requested.¹

These skills are important whether you want to join a new company or intend to stick with your current one. Whatever the case, certification moves your career forward.

In conjunction with its talent strategy survey, IDC also found that most businesses prefer to develop talent, and use vendor training programs to do so.²

Getting certified is a winning strategy for people like you. It shows your desire to grow. Employers like to see that. And they reward it.

Once you obtain certification, you'll be positioned for bigger and better things wherever you work.

Why businesses need collaboration talent

Teamwork helps drive business success. In fact, some business leaders consider collaboration to be digital transformation's secret sauce. Collaboration technologies like VoIP let businesses move faster and be more productive

1. IDC InfoBrief, sponsored by Cisco, "[20 Most Significant IT Roles You Should Consider](#)," May 2018.

2. Ibid.

Companies promoting collaborative work are five times as likely to be high performers, Babson College reports.

by enabling seamless communication over any device. And using technology to enable new business models, efficiencies, and revenue is what digital transformation is all about.

Collaboration accelerates information-sharing and decision-making. That increases productivity, enables communication across distance, and drives business results. Collaboration tools like lightweight web conferencing, file sharing, workspaces, and wikis are helping teams collaborate more easily than ever before.³

We believe there's a strong link between sales team collaboration and sales results. Our study of four Cisco sales teams turned up this finding. Our research also suggests high achievers collaborate more often using WebEx.⁴

But don't take our word for it. Look at what these respected sources have to say.

Companies promoting collaborative work are five times as likely to be high performers, Babson College reports. Stanford research suggests that people work harder when they're part of a team.⁵

The Harvard Business Review recently surveyed business leaders about team collaboration. It found that 72 percent of those surveyed believe team communication has grown in importance. Fifty-four percent are investing in easier-to-use collaboration solutions. Additionally, 68 percent think collaboration with external parties has become more important in recent years.⁶

Collaboration is very valuable for people who work remotely. And lots of folks do that these days.

Telecommuting has increased 115 percent in the past 10 years. That represents 3.9 million workers, or nearly 3 percent of U.S. workers.⁷

Mortgage and real estate, HR and recruiting, and accounting and finance workers are most likely to telecommute. "Each industry saw remote job listings grow more than 20 percent [in 2016]," CNN says.

That's because telecommuting is good for business. Studies suggest people who telecommute are more engaged—and engaged employees are more productive. That helps businesses deliver great customer service and have better business outcomes.

Here's more good news on this front. Collaboration is now available throughout the enterprise.

3. ClickZ, "[Why Have Collaboration Tools Become So Popular?](#)" November 2017.

4. Cisco, "[Collaboration Analytics: Unlock the Value of Collaboration](#)," 2014.

5. Forbes, "[New Study Finds That Collaboration Drives Workplace Performance](#)," June 2017.

6. Harvard Business Review, "[Why Today's Digital Teams Need a New Class of Collaboration Tools and Solutions](#)," 2016.

7. CNN Money, "[Working from Home Is Really Having a Moment](#)," June 2017.

Network engineer, network architect, and network and systems admins all address collaboration. These are among the top 20 key IT roles today, IDC says.

Employees do it from their desks, in huddle rooms or boardrooms, or anywhere else.⁸ Premium room systems support high-end experiences. People also use their smartphones, tablets, and PCs.

This collaboration model allows businesses to do more with less. In addition, APIs help developers add collaboration to business apps.

IDC's Wayne Kurtzman says collaboration is the new manufacturing. Like assembly lines, collaboration enhances productivity, he notes.⁹ That's why so many companies say it's key to digital transformation.¹⁰

It's also why, as IDC reports, hiring managers consider collaboration one of the top two most important roles and technologies in IT. Network engineer, network architect, and network and systems admins all address collaboration. These are among the top 20 key IT roles today, IDC says.¹¹

IT pros with the latest training ensure that business collaboration efforts succeed. This success maps to personal success for IT team members.

What collaboration pros do

These IT experts select, install, manage, and fix collaboration solutions. That includes devices, network elements and instances, and networks.¹² They also need knowledge of specific collaboration protocols like Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP), and Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol (XMPP), just to name a few.

Technology powers collaboration. But people drive business results. That means IT pros need to train and support the people using these solutions.

That's important to ensure businesses enjoy a return on their investments. Seventy-two percent of IT executives say that user adoption is central to technology ROI.¹³

Collaboration titles and tasks vary by company. But titles include network video administrators, network video engineers, and voice, unified communications, collaboration, and communications engineers.¹⁴

These IT pros understand call control, which is the software within telephony switches for voice, video, and data traffic.

8. TMC Audio Conferencing, "[How Meeting Rooms are Undergoing Transformation](#)," February 2018.

9. IDC, "[Worldwide Collaborative Applications Forecast, 2017-2021: Creating Productivity Growth with Customer Experience](#)," July 2017.

10. Insurance Business America, "[Collaboration and Learning Are Keys to Digital Transformation, Say Experts](#)," March 2017.

11. IDC InfoBrief, sponsored by Cisco, "[20 Most Significant IT Roles You Should Consider](#)," May 2018.

12. Cisco, "[Cisco Collaboration Certifications](#)," 2015.

13. IDC InfoBrief, sponsored by Cisco, "[3 Ways IT Certification Helps Improve Your IT Operations](#)," May 2018.

14. Cisco, "[Cisco Collaboration Certifications](#)," 2015.

Virtualization makes collaboration technology more reliable and brings costs way down. So your organization will want to ensure that its collaboration pros have virtualization down solid.

They know how to use APIs to integrate collaboration functions into business apps. As a result, knowledge workers can access communications and collaboration without leaving their CRM or other commonly used work applications.

Collaboration experts will also know how to virtualize collaboration infrastructures. Virtualization makes collaboration technology more reliable and brings costs way down. So your organization will want to ensure that its collaboration pros have virtualization down solid.

These collaboration experts also have dependencies and scalability covered; they know how to get the best performance out of their apps and the best results for their users and employers.

What we provide

Cisco offers a range of training and titles in this space. They are part of the following certifications:

- CCNA Collaboration
- CCNP Collaboration
- CCIE Collaboration
- Three Collaboration Specialist designations

Network video engineers, IP telephony engineers, and IP network engineers will want to consider the [CCNA Collaboration certification](#), which advances skills in voice, video, data, and mobile convergence.

IT pros like you will learn how to install Cisco Unified Communications solutions. You'll be able to manage end-user interfaces, as well as telephony and mobility features. Plus, you'll gain skills in Cisco Unified Communications solutions maintenance.

CCNA prepares you to describe video solutions and make sure video efforts succeed. It informs you about Cisco video functions, and how to install and fix them. That includes training for Cisco Unified Communication and Collaboration, TelePresence, and Digital Media Player.

[CCNP Collaboration certification](#) teaches you how to configure and fix Cisco Collaboration and Unified Communications apps, devices, and networks. You can then configure Cisco Unified Communications Manager, gateways, and Cisco Unified Border Elements. You can build dial plans to place voice and video calls. And you'll understand the Cisco Video Communication Server Control and Cisco Expressway Series.

You will also know how to use Cisco Unified Communications Manager. You'll understand the integration options for Cisco Unified IM and Presence, and for Cisco Unity Express. In addition, you'll be able to provide integration for Cisco Unity Connection, Cisco Prime Collaboration, and Cisco TelePresence Management Suite solutions.

IDC says that certified pros make an average of 15 percent more than their uncertified peers. This higher pay reflects increased contributions and responsibilities.

We also offer the [CCIE Collaboration certification](#). Architects, as well as voice and video network managers, will want to consider this program. It teaches you how to design, install, and fix sophisticated solutions.

CCIE requires at least seven years on the job and deep network knowledge. You'll take an eight-hour lab exam and a written exam. But you'll be rewarded for your hard work with this Expert-level designation. So you'll stand out in the jobs marketplace.

We also offer three [Collaboration Specialist certifications](#).

Mid-career voice specialists and network engineers should consider our Cisco TelePresence Solutions Specialist training program. It teaches you to assess network paths for rich media and rate call control design options. It also shows you how to configure interoperability functions related to Cisco TelePresence Solutions.

The Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise Specialist certification creates highly skilled support engineers. You'll be able to design, deploy, configure, and fix systems.

These skills will enable your employer to enjoy top-notch contact center performance and availability. That's important because contact centers deliver customer service and can drive revenues.

Analog audio-visual pros should look into the Cisco Video Network Specialist certification. This certification shows you how to deploy video endpoints, set up new users, and operate video networks.

Do the math

Cisco Collaboration certifications provide big benefits.

They prove you're ready for collaboration jobs—and businesses are willing to pay extra for that added confidence.

Collaboration and unified communications jobs frequently pay in or near six figures, notes Business News Daily.¹⁵

IDC says that certified pros make an average of 15 percent more than their uncertified peers. This higher pay reflects increased contributions and responsibilities.

Certified pros influence their peers more strongly than others as well, says IDC. The research firm also observes that influence maps to competence and performance.¹⁶

15. Business News Daily, "[Best Unified Communications Certifications](#)," June 2018.

16. IDC InfoBrief, sponsored by Cisco, "[The Value of IT Certification: 6 Ways IT Certifications Help Your Organization Thrive](#)," May 2018.

With collaboration know-how, you'll have better job security. You'll also move on to a more exciting and enriching career path.

As mentioned earlier, employers often request Cisco skills. The fact that we're a leading collaboration and unified communications supplier is one reason why.

Aragon Research¹⁷ and Gartner¹⁸ call Cisco a unified communications and collaboration leader. They note our broad offerings and support for cloud, hybrid, and premises options.

Multimode interactions are becoming the norm, Aragon says. Voice, video, messaging, and collaboration are the future, it adds.

Another Gartner study points to our contact center leadership. The firm notes our proven solutions, strong financial position, and alliances with other industry leaders.¹⁹

Gartner says businesses seeking single-vendor solutions should consider our contact center offerings. It adds they provide advanced functions and the ability to scale.

What Collaboration certification means to you

Selecting suppliers and solutions is important to businesses. But finding the right talent for transformation is job No. 1.²⁰

That's why you need to get the skills businesses need now.

That may involve expanding collaboration functionality. Perhaps it involves contact centers or video. Then again, you may want to prepare networks for multimodal communications.

Whatever the case, these jobs require new knowledge. If you have it, you win.

With collaboration know-how, you'll have better job security. You'll also move on to a more exciting and enriching career path.

So jump on that path today. Visit the [Cisco Learning Network](#).

17. Aragon Research, "[The Aragon Research Globe for Unified Communications and Collaboration, 2017: The Race to the Integrated Experience](#)," March 2017.

18. Gartner, "[Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications](#)," July 2017.

19. Gartner, "[Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure, Worldwide](#)," May 2017.

20. IDC InfoBrief, sponsored by Cisco, "[3 Ways IT Certification Helps Improve Your IT Operations](#)," May 2018.