

Joel Henry

Certified Software Development Professional

Success Story



After 15 years in the software development industry, Joel Henry saw a notice in *Computer* magazine that the IEEE Computer Society was developing a certification program for mid-level software development professionals and was accepting applications for qualified candidates to participate in the beta test. He had no doubt that he wanted to apply.

"I strongly believe in certification and licensing for software engineers. Far too many individuals in software development have limited or shallow knowledge, which impedes both their organizations and the field as a whole," he says.

Preparing for the exam took some time. He studied an extensive amount of material, devoting hours to each of the topics in the suggested reading list, as well as working with the sample questions posted on the CSDP site (www.computer.org/certification).

Joel became one of the first to earn the CSDP credential. Yet for him, preparing for the exam wasn't just about passing. Even as he was studying, he found he could apply the lessons in several areas. "Grant proposals involving development of software products from research work carry more weight with my CSDP noted (as evidenced by his role in the 2007 National Science Foundation award to port and widely deploy the GLIMMER Ice Sheet Model). Research and development contracts with commercial organizations have become possible, in part, due to my CSDP." He notes that "these organizations have greater confidence that research will, in fact, become development given the CSDP. Further, I've utilized the CSDP in several important consulting contracts to establish credibility and justify advice and opinion. Lastly, the CSDP made my testimony as an expert witness much stronger because it showed the jury and the judge a credible certification from a very strong organization."

Having a Certified Software Development Professional on staff has also been a boost to Joel's employer. The University of Montana has used his credentials to promote high tech business and business opportunities within the state of Montana and the city of Missoula. It has included him in, and given him responsibility for, several presentations to private companies, consortiums, legislative committees, and representatives of the Governor's office. The University has also gained more than US\$1.6 million in research funding from proposals including his name and credentials since he became certified in 2001. Joel's involvement in software disaster recovery, IT restructuring, and litigation has significantly increased the University of Montana's stature within Montana and with both the legislative and executive branches of the Montana state government.

Joel believes his recent experiences demonstrate the CSDP credential's significant benefit and power. In August 2001, he accepted the role of consultant to the Montana Director of Revenue and the Governor, in which he had to assess and make recommendations on POINTS, the software product used to process and account for all Montana income tax dollars. At the time Joel came on board, the Montana Department of Revenue had been using POINTS for nearly 20 months -- and each month, the department had identified more new defects than the developers had corrected. In

Employer:
The University of Montana

Location:
Missoula, MT, USA

In His Own Words:
Achieving the CSDP has greatly enhanced my career. Including this highly regarded certification has bolstered my standing on grant proposals, development proposals, development projects, and teaching advertisements. Recognizing this value, the University of Montana has provided funds for me to complete the Certified Software Test Professional program to complement my CSDP certification. This will put me in a very select group of software professionals worldwide.

fact, many of the constantly growing backlog of more than 500 defects were serious enough to endanger the state of Montana's fiduciary responsibilities to its citizens. The development organization and the state were in a contentious relationship. Further complicating the situation, a second phase of development was under way to extend POINTS for use with tobacco, alcohol, real estate, and business taxes.

From August 2001 through April 2003, Joel provided high profile consulting services to the state, testifying before the legislature, participating in arbitration, providing plans, analyzing software defect and correction data, and contributing to major decisions. In the end, POINTS was stabilized, but phase 2 was never deployed, and the Department of Revenue replaced POINTS with another software system. Joel regularly pointed to the CSDP to demonstrate his high level of knowledge, substantiating legislative and legal testimony and assuring that his opinions and advice were solid and technically accurate. Joel believes that the presence of a CSDP on the side of the state, especially in the absence of a CSDP in the development organization, gave the state of Montana great advantage and the credibility to carry the project to conclusion.