

Application Brief: Simulator for combating the Cisco test cheating

Cisco certifications:

Cisco certifications are one of the highly valued credentials available to the IT professionals today. They are currently very important in the extremely competitive technology industry. The tests for certifications are difficult to pass, but those who pass are rewarded with well-paying jobs.

In many professional fields, certification tests have taken on growing significance as a prerequisite for many well-paying jobs, as well as proof that employees are maintaining their skills up-to-date. Surveys have shown that technicians with enough certifications can add up to \$35,000 to their annual salary.

Specifically, the Cisco CCNA network associate certification ^[1] validates the ability to install, configure, operate, and troubleshoot medium-size routed and switched networks, including implementation and verification of connections to remote sites in a WAN.

Test fraud:

According to The Boston Globe ^[2], during the eight month span ended in June 2008, Cisco and Pearson VUE monitored hundreds of thousands of exams given in eight countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Cisco said it had confirmed that one in 200 of those exams was taken by a proxy, and not the actual enrollee.

Solution:

Cisco plans to combat this cheating in many different ways ^[3]. They include the use of digital photographs for candidate-identity verification, and forensic analysis of testing data. But there are already many unqualified candidates out there who already cheated and passed the certifications. What can an enterprise do to make sure that they are hiring the real certified candidates?

In addition to the series of interviews that prospective network engineers need to go through as part of the usual hiring process, they could be required to take a practical test to verify their knowledge for Cisco devices and networks. This would make sure that the candidate is ready to start from day one, and also that the Cisco certification mentioned in the resume is valid.

It is not easy to setup a hardware lab just for such a test. It is also not practical to have in-house engineers involved in setting it up the lab for every interview. The solution is to

use a simulator which doesn't need extensive setup. A simulator like MIMIC Virtual Lab makes it effortless to create a lab to test Cisco networking knowledge.

MIMIC Virtual Lab is designed specifically for Cisco certification and testing. It includes a ready-made lab with Cisco routers, switches and end systems connected via LAN, WAN, ISDN and serial links. It supports thousands of IOS commands and many protocols like IPv6, OSPF, RIP, BGP, EIGRP, eBGP and VLAN.

MIMIC Virtual Lab can be used to create a test with basic "What is" and advanced "How to" questions about the networking specific to Cisco devices. The candidate can be tested for questions about configuring a specific switch, router or a protocol, setting up network connectivity, etc...

Summary:

Cisco is starting to take measures to counter fraud in certification tests. In the meantime, enterprises can use a simulator like MIMIC Virtual lab as a part of the interview process to setup a practical Cisco networking test. It can include all basic to complex questions that a certified engineer needs to know to perform routine and emergency tasks.

Using MIMIC Virtual Lab for these tests will help prove that the candidate has taken and passed the certification test without cheating. It also gives confidence to the hiring managers that they are hiring candidates with the right skills for the job.

References:

[1] [CCNA Certification](#)

[2] [Study confirms widespread cheating on job exams](#)

[3] [Cisco and Pearson VUE Combat Exam Fraud with Global Test Delivery Enhancements](#)