Are IT certifications worth it in 2026? When they help, and when they do not

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Short answer: an IT certification is worth it when it is asked for by the employers or clients you want, when it fills a gap that experience cannot yet show, or when the studying itself teaches you something you will use. It is rarely worth it as a substitute for experience, or when you collect certificates the work you want never asks for.

TL;DR The short version

- A certification is worth it when employers you want ask for it, when it fills a gap experience cannot yet show, or when studying teaches you something useful.
- It helps less where hiring is based on portfolio and interviews, or when you already have years of visible experience.
- Before paying, check five job adverts for the role you want; no certification replaces work you can show and explain.

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When a certification helps

- **Getting past a filter.** Some job adverts, client contracts and public tenders list specific certifications.
- **Changing direction.** Moving from support to cloud, or from development to security, without job history in the new area.
- **Early in a career.** A structured syllabus gives you a map of the field.
- **Consulting and services work.** Partner programmes and client requirements often count certified staff.
- **Proving breadth.** A credential that tests judgement across architecture, delivery and security says something a single tool certification does not.

When it helps less

- When the employer hires on portfolio, code and interview performance alone, as many product companies do.
- When you already have years of visible experience in the exact area.
- When the exam tests recall of product menus rather than decisions.
- When the cost of renewing outweighs the use you get from it.

What employers actually check

Employers increasingly verify rather than trust a CV line. A credential that can be checked in a public registry, with a clear statement of what the exam tested, is more useful than a PDF. See certification vs certificate and digital badges and verifiable credentials.

A simple test before you pay

1. Find five job adverts for the role you want next. Does the certification appear?
2. Read the exam outline. Would studying it make you better at that job?
3. Check renewal: how many hours and how often?
4. Ask someone who holds it whether it changed how they were seen.

Experience still comes first

No certification replaces work you can show and explain. The best use of one is to prove what you already do, or to learn something deliberately. IICTP's credentials require documented experience for the higher levels for this reason; check yours with the eligibility planner. For choosing among options, see the best IT certifications by role.

> Related credential: Certified Technical Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. IICTP. Exam facts, eligibility and blueprints. iictp.org/certifications/exam-facts.
2. IICTP. Eligibility planner. iictp.org/check-your-experience.

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