



## The Question of SOX Certification

By Lisa Holton  
KnowledgeLeader Contributing Writer

As business processes grow more complex, executives are faced with dozens of choices for training and certifications for their employees. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX), now in its third year in the daily life at U.S. public companies, is spawning its own array of independent training and certification programs for professionals in IT, audit and other corporate specialties.

One question for executives is whether these programs – which range in price from \$2,000 to over \$5,000 based on timetable and travel – are worth the investment now or if it makes sense to wait until SOX practices mature.

Sponsors of training and certification programs believe that SOX training and certification can make an executive more valuable in the marketplace.

“The key trend today is the desire to demonstrate specialization in an organization, and that not only adds more value to the organization, but it creates opportunities for the certified individual over time,” says Sanjay Anand, chairman of the SOX Institute, a New York-based global training and certification organization for workers in finance, accounting, ethics, law, human resources, procurement, operations and technology.

“In the simplest terms, a heart surgeon makes more money than a general practitioner. Likewise, adding CSOX/P to one's existing background (experience and/or education, for example a CA, CIA, CISA, CISSP) makes one more valuable in a highly competitive marketplace. Plus, the bar around SOX knowledge is now established,” Anand adds.

Why should a company consider training and certification? Anand says that a common certification makes it easier for employers to assess skills during the hiring process and make better choices. For employees, “It builds self-confidence in their ability to deliver on SOX. We had a student who went from two to three interview calls a month to two to three calls per week, and another saw her salary shoot up around 30 percent.”

### **An intensive regimen**

Sharon Lee, an executive with Training Camp of Philadelphia, PA., says her organization focuses on intensive SOX training for IT and audit professionals. “We specialize in accelerated learning, four-day courses with a lecture, lab review, and boot-camp review.”

Training Camp works in partnership with the SOX Institute to develop coursework leading toward certification. At Training Camp, students study accounting, ethics and business methods in compliance with SOX.

Typically, SOX study and certification includes self-study based, open-book, online, multiple-choice exams or a combination of exams and classroom education for people with professional-level backgrounds in finance, accounting, audit, IT, law or ethics.

SOX is not the only game under consideration for this training. Around the globe, governments are adopting similar laws to govern their own organizations. In Canada, there is Bill 198; in Australia, ANZ 4360; in India, Clause 49, and in Japan, J-SOX. Training and certification professionals believe their business will grow as more nations develop similar transparency standards for their companies.

## Early stage of the curve

But has SOX reached the point of maturity where individual professionals and their companies should jump on the bandwagon for training and certification? Not quite, some believe.

“SOX is still relatively young. It is not like it has been around for 10 years or more. It is still relatively high-cost in terms of executing the process. As SOX becomes a more mature process within organizations, that is when the use of certifications should become more useful – when there is more of a track record in how SOX is executed through a cost-effective, sustainable and value-added process. We are simply not there yet,” says Protiviti Managing Director James DeLoach.

“Eighty-five percent of CFOs have said the costs of SOX outweigh the benefits. I am not sure that represents a process you want to certify,” says DeLoach.

“The primary reason SOX compliance is high cost is because the internal control structure of most companies is high cost. If you wrap the compliance process around a high cost internal control structure, you end up institutionalizing that structure. For example, companies are relying more on detective controls than on preventive controls; they are also relying more on manual controls than on automated controls. What I would want to see in any SOX certification or training program is a focus on best practices that build quality into the upstream business processes. When you start certifying people around a high-cost process, then you are institutionalizing a high-cost process, and over the long-term companies are not interested in that answer,” DeLoach adds.

*Article from Protiviti KnowledgeLeader – [www.knowledgleader.com](http://www.knowledgleader.com).*

*KnowledgeLeader is a subscription-based website that provides audit programs, checklists, tools, resources and best practices to help internal auditors and risk management professionals save time, manage risk, and add value. Free 30-day trials available.*

Protiviti is a leading provider of truly independent internal audit and business and technology risk consulting services. We help clients identify, measure and manage operational and technology-related risks they face within their industries and throughout their systems and processes. And we offer a full spectrum of audit services, technologies and skills for business risk management and the continual transformation of internal audit functions.

*Protiviti is not licensed or registered as a public accounting firm and does not issue opinions on financial statements or offer attestation services.*

