



## Overview

**Country or Region:** Asia Pacific

**Industry:** IT Services

## Customer Profile

With offices in Australia, Malaysia and Singapore, ISA Technologies is a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner offering software engineering, consultancy and system integration services.

## Business Situation

In order to excel in the competitive marketplace, ISA Technologies planned to build up a certified and competent team to deliver reliable solutions and faster time-to-market.

## Solution

To differentiate itself, ISA Technologies embarked on a strategy to certify its technical staff with Microsoft® Certification. Besides demonstrating technical competence, certification ensures that its consultants stay current with the latest Microsoft technologies.

## Benefits

- Increased customer satisfaction
- Customers viewed certified consultants as trusted advisors
- Customers recognized higher value of certified consultants
- Captured new market opportunities through new Microsoft technologies



## Software Consultant Increases Competitive Advantage with Microsoft Certification

“I strongly believe that Microsoft Certified Professionals contribute significantly to overall team performance. We have observed that employees with certification generally have stronger foundations and good technical substance. This is valuable to the work we do. We reward and reflect the added contribution with better and higher salaries.”

– Lim Fun Jin, Chief Technology Officer, ISA Technologies Sdn. Bhd.

Survival in the competitive IT consulting marketplace takes more than astute business strategies. The ISA Technologies management recognized the critical need to differentiate itself with a technically strong and competent team. Translating this belief to business strategy, ISA Technologies built a corporate culture around innovation, passion for new technologies and skills endorsement through training and certification.

As a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, ISA Technologies is committed to continually increase its consultants' capabilities by certifying them in new technology areas, such as Microsoft® Office® SharePoint Server 2007 and Microsoft® Silverlight™. Combining this with exposure to real-life customer situations such as Microsoft Technical Adoption Program (TAP), ISA Technologies successfully enhanced its competitive advantage, resulting in increased customer satisfaction. Today ISA has more than 90 percent of its consulting staff certified.



**“We believe Microsoft Certification is relevant across all stages of an individual’s career. To groom “gurus” for specific technologies such as Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server, we consider the consultant’s technology passion and try to align the two in their career plans.”**

**Lim Fun Jin, Chief Technology Officer  
ISA Technologies Sdn. Bhd.**

## Situation

The founders of ISA Technologies have a clear vision to build the company’s competitive advantage around “Delivering Technologies for New World Realities”. As an IT consultancy offering software engineering and system integration services, ISA Technologies has presence in Australia, Malaysia and Singapore and serves customers across the Asia Pacific region, including Hong Kong, India, the Philippines and Taiwan.

The company currently employs over 80 staff, the majority of whom are technical consultants and engineers. According to Lim Fun Jin, one of the pioneers of its Malaysian operations and the Chief Technology Officer of ISA Technologies Sdn. Bhd., “We strongly believe in the advantage of having a highly competent technical team. This is reflected in our unique organizational structure and business development approach. We focus on capturing highly challenging projects that require a highly skilled technical team to support it. This propels us to hire the most qualified staff that demonstrates technical competence and passion for technology.”

Fun Jin’s belief that certification creates strong foundations to learn, stems from his early experience. He recalled, “When I took my first Microsoft certification examinations, I wanted the immediate industry recognition which comes with a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) certification. I felt that this would help in terms of credibility when I walk into customer sites as a consultant.”

While getting ready for his first Microsoft examination in 1997, Fun Jin realized that the preparation process for the certification was crucial to gaining strong technical foundations. By understanding how things actually work, it accelerates the learning of new concepts and technologies.

Recognizing the value of certification, ISA Technologies established Microsoft Certifications as a key pillar in its corporate strategy to boost competitiveness.

## Solution

ISA Technologies employed a three-pronged strategy to build a certified and competent team. This includes hiring highly qualified candidates, devising detailed career development plans and ensuring real-life exposure through programs such as Microsoft Technology Adoption Program (TAP).

During its hiring process, ISA Technologies keeps a lookout for candidates with the best “fit”. “We are always looking for candidates with a passion for technology and excellent academic qualifications. My attention perks up every time I come across resumes of Microsoft Certified Professionals.” Reinforcing this philosophy, ISA Technologies takes advantage of the job-matching services provided by Microsoft Certified Partners for Learning Solutions to hire ready-certified IT professionals. This helps to ensure a better “fit” and eliminates the need to sieve through hundreds of resumes for suitable candidates. For non-certified candidates, ISA places high priority on those who demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning and perceived rapid skill adoption potential.

In the area of career development, new hires are required to obtain their certifications within the first year of employment. This tangible Key Performance Indicator is monitored half-yearly to keep consultants on track for certification. Experienced new hires with certifications are measured by their abilities to apply their knowledge to resolve customer problems, adapt new technologies to increased roles and responsibilities, and the stability and soundness of solutions deployed.

Addressing how ISA Technologies motivates its more experienced staff who had been with the company, Fun Jin said, “We believe Microsoft Certification is relevant across all stages of an



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individual's career. To groom “gurus” for specific technologies such as Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server, we consider the consultant's technology passion and try to align the two in their career plans.” He added, “The Microsoft New Generation of Certification framework which maps to job roles further supports the hiring and development of IT Professionals based on their career path aspirations.”

To stay abreast of the latest technology developments, relevant training plans are then mapped to the career plans. Training investments are substantiated through certification to ascertain the consultant's grasp of latest technologies.

In addition, consultants also participate in internal “pet projects” to trial new frameworks and technologies. The research and development efforts culminate in tangible deliverables for the company's software development business, which has launched SAMLite, a software asset management suite and SparrowVUE, for visualizing user experience.

Similarly, ISA's consultants are encouraged to participate in Microsoft Technology Adoption Program (TAP) with customers. By exposing them to real-life customer issues, it puts their technical knowledge to the test and substantiates knowledge gained through certification.

Fun Jin said, “I strongly believe that Microsoft Certified Professionals contribute significantly to overall team performance. We have observed that employees with certification generally have stronger foundations and good technical substance. This is valuable to the work we do. We reward and reflect the added contribution with better and higher salaries.”

## Benefits

Placing a high priority on a certified and competent team has paid off for ISA Technologies, resulting in increased customer satisfaction. Customers view ISA Technologies' certified consultants as trusted advisors and recognize their higher value. By enhancing its team's competence in new Microsoft technologies via certification, ISA Technologies is ever ready to capture new market opportunities and sustain its growth.

### Increased Customer Satisfaction

For ISA Technologies, the key benefit of having a certified team is the increased customer satisfaction gained through its high-quality software development and consulting services.

Exemplifying the quality of ISA Technologies' software development skills, SAMLite is the winner of the Software Asset Management Advocate of the Year Award conferred during the Microsoft Worldwide Certified Partner Awards 2003. Now into its fifth version, SAMLite also received the Merit Award in the MSC Asia-Pacific ITC awards 2002 in the Best Software Application Category. In addition to its first-year free support, ISA Technologies provides reliable support and maintenance services for customers who purchase its software maintenance services. This has resulted in many repeat businesses and satisfied customers such as Maybank.

Fun Jin shared, “Knowing that customers value our highly competent team gives us great satisfaction and endorses our passion for technical excellence.”

### Customers View Certified Consultants as Trusted Advisors

By sponsoring certification and rewarding based on performance gains, ISA Technologies successfully built a highly motivated and qualified team, with more than 90 percent of its consulting staff certified.



**"One of the qualifying criteria as a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner is the number of Microsoft Certified Professionals in the organization. Our appointment as a Gold Partner places us in an advantageous position to capture these deals. This is a good example of how customers value the credibility of certified organization."**

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#### About Microsoft Learning

Microsoft Learning builds innovative learning products that enable both individuals and organizations to make the most of their investment in Microsoft technology. Offerings from Microsoft Learning—encompassing Microsoft training and certification, Microsoft Press® books, and Microsoft TechNet publications—include skills assessments, books, certification programs, classroom and lab-format curriculum, e-learning, and other online reference materials. Our goal? To make you a more efficient user of Microsoft technology. Learn more about Microsoft Learning: [www.microsoft.com/learning](http://www.microsoft.com/learning).

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According to Fun Jin, its pre-sales technical consultants now play a critical role in proposing sound solutions and being part of the team that closes business opportunities. This has successfully increased the credibility of both the consultants and the company, resulting in much repeat businesses from highly satisfied customers.

"With a certified team that offers in-depth knowledge and overall skills advantage against the competition, many of our customers regard ISA Technologies as their trusted advisors. The more our customers trust our consultants, the harder we will work to motivate our consultants to ensure that they stay with the company. This in turn encourages our customers to come back to us," said Fun Jin.

#### Customers Recognized Higher Value of Certified Consultants

ISA Technologies has seen more customers who recognize the higher value of certified consultants. For example, at its Australian operations, its customers are willing to pay a premium for its certified consultants, who are highly sought after in its largely outsourcing business.

An increased number of customers are setting Microsoft Certified Gold Partner as a minimum criterion for vendors to qualify for their projects. "One of the qualifying criteria as a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner is the number of Microsoft Certified Professionals in the organization. Our appointment as a Gold Partner places us in an advantageous position to capture these business opportunities. This is a good example of how customers value the credibility of certified organizations," said Fun Jin.

#### Captured New Market Opportunities Through New Microsoft Technologies

To further increase the company's competitiveness, ISA Technologies is constantly building up its team's expertise in new technology areas. "As a new technology area, Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 was not covered in the traditional academic curriculum, nor were large software developers from countries such as India adopting it. We saw a strategic window of opportunity to build up our SharePoint Server expertise, though it meant a fundamental shift from our traditional SQL Server and .NET development business," said Fun Jin.

With its concerted efforts to build Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 skills into its consultants' career development plans, more than 60 percent of its software engineering team are now Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) certified in Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007.

Thanks to its foresight, by early 2008, the company has seen a major shift in its pipeline, with Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 opportunities making up the majority of its leads.

#### Gaining a Competitive Advantage

With a high percentage of certified professionals in the company, exponential learning opportunities are generated between peers and within the team. This builds overall skills advantage at the company level and enables ISA Technologies to run ahead of the pack as a company.

Fun Jin said, "As certification is ingrained in our company culture, we are committed to embrace new technology areas by actively looking for new certification paths offered by Microsoft and getting our staff certified. This will enable ISA Technologies to sustain the growth of our services business, while growing our software development business."