



by Gene Smith

Smith is president of The Loss Prevention Foundation, the not-for-profit organization charged with the responsibility of building a certification and membership program. He was formerly president of the industry's largest executive search and consulting firm specializing in providing human resource solutions for the retail loss prevention, safety, and audit industries. During the past fifteen-plus years, Smith has provided career counseling for thousands of industry professionals nationwide. He can be reached at 704-837-2521 or via email at [gene.smith@losspreventionfoundation.org](mailto:gene.smith@losspreventionfoundation.org).



## Education vs. Training vs. Certification

I recently attended the 2008 user conference sponsored by Aspect Loss Prevention in a remote setting in Minnesota. One early morning, while I drank my coffee on a deck overlooking a beautiful lake, I found time for reflection.

I had spent two days observing the training and education process, witnessing the passion and enthusiasm of the attendees and presenters. Impressed with the intellect of the attendees, I asked myself, "What motivated them to be here? What knowledge were they gaining? Why is it important to attend these sessions?" This, in turn, led me to consider what the dozens of professionals have been doing over the last year and a half at the Foundation, developing certification and educational resources.

I found myself pontificating over the grueling process of developing the LP industry's first comprehensive certification program—the progress that we had made and the progress yet to come. Certainly, there are other certification programs addressing specific skill sets, such as the Certified Forensic Interviewer (CFI) and other non-retail certifications, but never before in our industry has anyone developed one specific to the retail loss prevention industry.

After many months in the making, launching the Loss Prevention Qualified (LPQ) certification last fall was historic. So will be the Loss Prevention Certified (LPC) available soon.

Also important was obtaining the 501-c6 (not-for-profit) status for the Foundation, which clearly governs the actions of the Foundation staff and board of directors. A yearly outside independent audit must be conducted, accounting for all expenditures, detailed minutes of all board meetings, and a constant reporting by the Foundation staff on the progress of all initiatives. Unlike advisory councils and steering committees who suggest to organizations what should be done, the Foundation staff must seek approval from the board and is accountable to the board for everything.

This morning of reflection in Minnesota led me to ask the question...

### What Is the Difference between Education and Training?

Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld, a prolific author on education topics, has written on the subject of education vs. training. He writes,

*"Education is concerned with the development of the mind, of the intellect, while training deals with learning specific skills. Education is a more personal activity, in that its main*

*purpose is the enhancement of an individual's ability to use his mind for his own personal pleasure or gain. Training means developing skills that will be used more for social and economic reasons than for the self. Which means that education should come first, training later."*

### What Is Certification?

Northeastern Illinois University defines certification as a "program and process where a learner completes prescribed training and passes an assessment with a minimum acceptable score. To increase validity and assure authentication, the certification process should be proctored by an independent agent."

The Loss Prevention Foundation has developed its certification under the direction of Knapp & Associates, International, a leading consulting firm that specializes in developing certification programs, with past experience in developing retail certifications. They ensure that the knowledge is carefully developed and written along with questions administered through a proctored exam that meets certification guidelines.

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### Why Is Certification Important?

Certification defines competency and helps industry professionals demonstrate their commitment to professionalism. We are perceived by many to be stuck in the age-old practices of security versus loss prevention and asset protection, perceived as not adding adequate value to the retail business.

The LP industry needs to show the rest of retail that we are serious about what we do and that we have certain skills and knowledge that help to promote a professional image. Certain aspects will evolve, as this industry is constantly changing. Isn't that precisely why many of us go to user conferences and trade show conferences—to learn?

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