

LPQ, LPC Designees Share The Benefits Of Certification

Loss prevention (LP) professionals are lining up to attain LPQ (Loss Prevention Qualification) and LPC (Loss Prevention Certification) designation from the Loss Prevention Foundation. Recently qualified professionals share their experiences here.

by Matt Pillar

We're big fans of the Loss Prevention Foundation because of the investment it makes in LP people and the LP profession. The Foundation's biggest accomplishment to date has been the creation of two rigorous professional development programs for LP professionals: LPQ and LPC. LPQ was developed for entry-level LP staff, while LPC is geared toward the aspiring LP executive. We interviewed Steven Palumbo, CFI, LPQ, and director of corporate protection services for Tiffany & Co. in NYC; Angie Hardison, VP of operations and human resources for loss prevention solutions provider iVerify; and Liz Benson, LPQ, coordinator of retail operations at RILA (the Retail Industry Leaders Association), for their takes on the program. Palumbo and Benson are recent LPQ designees, and both are currently engaged in the pursuit of their LPC. Hardison is currently pursuing LPQ as part of a corporate mandate she initiated. The mandate stipulates that every iVerify employee pursue LPQ or LPC designation.

Why did you seek LPQ and LPC designation?

BENSON: I was originally compelled to take the LPQ by the sheer impressiveness of the Loss Prevention Foundation Board and those who created the certification. I knew that any product created by such seasoned loss prevention executives would undoubtedly provide great information. When actually studying the LPQ course material, I was pleasantly surprised, and challenged, with the content. I knew that loss prevention was a business partner in the retail world, but I was unaware how much of a role loss prevention played. The LPQ was truly an eye-opening challenge and a great opportunity for me to not only grow my loss prevention knowledge but also develop a well-rounded understanding of retail operations in general.



Liz Benson, LPQ and coordinator, retail operations, Retail Industry Leaders Association



Steven Palumbo, CFI, LPQ, and director of corporate protection services, Tiffany & Co.

PALUMBO: I've been in this business for 20 years, and during that time the LP profession has evolved considerably. This certification is the latest chapter of that evolution, whereby the discipline is being recognized as its own field of study within the retail environment. It is the only certification that's strictly for retail loss prevention professionals, as opposed to general law enforcement.

Because the LP community has gotten smarter, more tech-savvy, and more integrated with the retail IT and operations departments, those entering the field can no longer consider it a secondary career like it used to be. It requires specialty, and LPQ and LPC provide that foundation.

HARDISON: Requiring our employees to participate demonstrates our commitment to professional development. Our product is our people. We must have well-trained, competent people representing our clients. We believe in professional development of our staff, and we know that programs like this one result in performance improvements. But beyond improving our service, participation also increases job satisfaction among our staff. And we're proud to partner with the Loss Prevention Foundation, a great and well-recognized organization.

What was the most valuable thing you took away from the course?

BENSON: The LPQ provided me with so much knowledge about retail that I had not previously known existed. From the basics, such as calculating required sales to offset losses, to the more advanced, such as requirements for making LP cases prosecutable, I truly gained a holistic view of LP from the ground up. I cannot pinpoint one particular thing that I would claim as my biggest takeaway. That is the beauty of the LPQ: It provides one with useful information in all areas of daily retail operations. As one who is new to the industry, I really gained as much information in the LPQ course as I would

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Steven Palumbo, CFI, LPQ, director of corporate protection services, Tiffany

have working in a store for a year.

The LPQ taught me how loss prevention interests apply across all functions of retail, from operational audit to merchandising. This certification makes one aware of the relevance of loss prevention for multiple retail functions and how to best apply the loss prevention principles for maximum effectiveness. Furthermore, it taught me how to apply these principles to any segment of retail, from specialty to big box to grocery.

PALUMBO: I liked the emphasis on decision making and critical thinking in the LPQ course materials. It wasn't just about systems. As you went through the coursework, it emphasized critical thinking, and you were challenged to use what you had learned. The course isn't full of terms and principles to memorize or steps to follow. It was situation-based. It illustrated hundreds of scenarios and the proper ways to proceed. The industry needs people who can think on their own and make the right choices. The LPQ does a great job encouraging this kind of thinking.

I helped develop a lot of the questions for the LPC, which focuses on the critical thinking part at the management level (managing people, situations, partnerships, and working with other departments). You learn in the LPC that you can't exist as an LP island. The greatest LP department in the world will fail if it doesn't understand sales, merchandising, operations, human resources, etc. The course reinforces the importance of having those partnerships. In particular, the course helps LP professionals understand inventory control measures, HR philosophies, and business models in relation to disciplinary action and other LP policies.

What advice do you have for other LP pros who are considering pursuit of LPC or LPQ?

BENSON: Don't wait any longer! Whether you're a “newbie” to the industry or you're a seasoned LP veteran, I truly believe that the LPQ and LPC offers invaluable edu-

cation to everyone. The course content is so valuable and well-recognized by the industry already that I would not want to not have the designation by my name. In the short time that I have had my LPQ, I have had people comment and appreciate my initiative to learn about the LP area and continue my growth. I have much room to grow and am looking forward to tackling the LPC.

PALUMBO: LPQ is great for kids coming right out of college, who don't yet understand the space. For entry-level people who want to make a career out of it, it's fantastic. They get the full scope, the understanding that this is not just about standing post and catching shoplifters. A better understanding of the industry means a better opportunity for career advancement. A good store detective is a good candidate, and they will learn about audit, inventory, shrink reduction, and other LP-related retail operations. LP makes a good store detective great and turns them into a potential manager.

LPC is for the district manager or the director. Earning the designation is good for your career. I'm a CFI (Certified Forensic Investigator), and I was proud to get it. Soon, I will be proud to be LPC. It increases your stature. I'd like to see companies start offering the opportunity to achieve these designations as a benefit or reward. It could become a strong recruiting tool.

HARDISON: There are certainly personal and professional reasons for professional development. It's a great resumé builder, and it creates opportunities for advancement. From the business' perspective, anytime you focus on training, performance development, and quality of service, it brings value to the business. Employee development helps us operate more efficiently and leads to greater client satisfaction.

We've set up study groups, which I recommend. As they go through the course, our employees get together with peers and work together on materials and study prior to the exam. This type of interaction with peers helps the process immensely. ■