

BY MEREDITH MOSELEY-BENNETT

ETCP goes digital

ETCP HAD BEEN IN EXISTENCE for about 18 months when I joined the team in early 2007. There were only 327 certified technicians. Little did I know that I would now play “Mom” to almost 2,500 talented people with various and multiple certifications, plus another 1,000 candidates in the hopper, ready to test. After a dozen years, I’m more than just a den mother: I’ve become an amateur psychologist, cheerleader, and guidance counselor—and also an actual Mom to a now 8-year old!

Three years before I started with ETCP, I moved to New York City to continue my costume design career and quickly learned that non-paying gigs were incompatible with rent, especially in NYC. It was time to look for



a job that promised regular paychecks. I found jobs, such as a wardrobe stylist and a personal assistant that didn’t work out, (often due to clashes in temperament). It was then that I decided to check out the non-profit sector, in an effort to safeguard my mental health. Though the jury’s still out about the protecting my mental health part ☺, I did find what I was looking for: coworkers who feel like family, predictable paydays, and the ability to work from home, so I can be there when my daughter gets home from school. Once a week, I get to go to the ESTA office in the Film Center Building and talk to real in-person adults who are not my husband.

Plug and Play Wireless DMX



Multiverse SHoW Baby Is Fully Compatible With All Previous SHoW Baby Models



FOLLOW US ON

www.citytheatrical.com

**CITY
THEATRICAL**
NEW YORK • LONDON

The Program has teeth

Growth was slow at first. My first year we added a whopping 25 certified technicians, and by the next, we increased by 40. I won't soon forget exactly how much of that time I spent building a marketing database and stuffing handbooks into envelopes, while I binge-watched old episodes of the *Dick Van Dyke Show* on Netflix.

The program was still relatively new, so it was important to get that information in the hands of hiring managers, union business representatives, and venue directors. I was told by the ETCP Council, "... for the program to get teeth, it will take employer buy-in."

By buy-in, the council was not referring to financial support—though that helps immensely! Here, buy-in means that employers must require certification and must insist on hiring certified technicians to fill lead positions. We are seeing a trend of employers either inserting a certification requirement into their job listings, or are requiring newly-hired personnel to pass the exam within six months of their hire date.

The early adopters of the program have known the value of certification from the get-go, but, in the last five years, we have seen a transformation in the number of employers who trust in the ETCP process to help them cultivate a safer workplace. What has gotten them to this point? I think a few

factors are at play here:

- **Accidents:** A significant number of accidents in the last decade have shed a spotlight on safe practices.
- **Insurance:** The insurance industry is embracing certification, thus employers and venues (and even freelancers) are seeing cuts in premiums.
- **Education:** Industry out-reach has proved successful with the help of Council organizations and the fact that our certified technicians are setting good examples in the field.

ETCP has offered those in charge the possibility of being more at ease, with assurance that their lead technicians know their job, and, are prepared to act should something go wrong.

Insisting on the best

The Rigger certification—both Arena and Theatre—and the Entertainment Electrician certification are targeted at technicians whose expertise ranks among the top third of the industry; the Portable Power Distribution Technician certification targets the top two-thirds of the industry. In most cases, the "top third" constitutes lead and supervisory positions. Though the intention of the program is to target those in lead and supervisory positions, there are a growing number of employers who insist on putting

ETCP certified technicians in each and every position they manage.

"I know my insisting that all my guys are certified is not exactly your mission," a Las Vegas production head (who wished to remain anonymous) confided. "But, what we do is extremely dangerous. There is absolutely no playing around. If there is someone on the job who doesn't know what they are doing, then I need to know. When I hire ETCP certified folks, I know I am getting the best. Even though every single person on my staff is not in a lead position, they better act like they are because lives are at stake."

Our certified technicians are seeing what kind of stake employers and labor providers are putting in the program. In the past two years, we have had at least a dozen certificants let their certification expire after the first five-year term, saying they didn't see value, because, "... no one has asked to see my ID card," they "... didn't have time to tackle the 10 points of education," or they simply, "... didn't have time to do the paperwork." I posit to people with this way of thinking: that more and more people are writing certification requirements into their specs, and, in turn, more and more employers will start to require it from you. Don't miss out on future job opportunities by letting your certification lapse.

Often times, we feature guest authors in

Nine Universe Wireless DMX



sACN or Art-Net Input, Simultaneous Dual Band Transmission, Wi-Fi or Bluetooth Control



www.citytheatrical.com

**CITY
THEATRICAL**
NEW YORK • LONDON

this ETCP News column, and, frequently, they are employers. The slew of articles available is a valuable resource when considering the merits of buying-in to ETCP, often centered around why they chose the ETCP certified technician path. For all of their advice on how ETCP makes the industry intrinsically a safer place to work, we have posted all of the articles in the “News” section of the ETCP website (<http://etcp.esta.org>).

The value of practice exams

In the early days of ETCP, there were no practice exams. You had the *Candidate Handbook* with the detailed content outline. Word on the street was that people were so afraid they might fail, that they just wouldn't test. After researching other certification programs, I noticed that many of them offered online practice tests. “Aha!” I thought.

At the next meeting, I went to the Council. “Look,” I said. “You already have all of the super-confident rock star riggers and electricians in that first batch. They were willing to be your guinea pigs, but now you have the technicians who have not taken a test in very long time. They are frightened. Practice exams would give candidates confidence because they would be able to prepare.”

So, we brought our Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) back together in 2009 to create 50-question practice exams for the areas of Rigging (Theatre and Arena) and Electrical. In 2014, we launched an additional set of 50 questions for those who do not pass the first time. Currently there are “A” and “B” forms for Arena, Theatre, and Electrical; the newly developed Portable Power examination has only the “A” form at this time.

Funny story: I had a certificant call me to complain that there was no practice exam when he tested. He continued, “Well, I

personally think that those who tested after a practice exam was implemented, should get a sticker after their certificate that says, ‘Lite.’” I laughed and told him that we would not do that, but that he could put a gold star on his if that would make him feel better. So, if you took the exam before 2009, I invite you to stick a gold star on your ID.

Speaking of confidence builders, the ETCP Group on Facebook is now 3.4K strong. I have encouraged those who already hold certifications to join, so they can be there to answer questions and offer advice. There is some very smart dialogue happening there, but I am really touched at the offerings of encouragement and congratulations that strangers are offering one another.

The growth that the program has seen in the last couple of years is exciting. In August, we issued certification number 3,000 to a Local One member in New York. While we're on the topic of certification numbers, and since I'm asked this question



The image is a promotional graphic for the NATEAC conference. It features a large, stylized logo for "NATEAC" in red, with "north american" in a smaller font above it and "theatre, engineering, architecture" below it. The text "conference 2020" is also visible. To the right, the dates "July 19 & 20, 2020" and the location "New York, New York" are listed. At the bottom right, the website "www.nateac.org" and the phone number "+1.267.278.4561" are provided. The background is a mix of blue and white with abstract shapes.

north american
NATEAC
theatre, engineering, architecture
conference 2020

July 19 & 20, 2020
New York, New York

www.nateac.org
+1.267.278.4561

more often than I ever could have imagined, I will provide the answer here: There is always a difference between the actual number of people who are certified and the certification ID numbers, because about 600 people hold more than one certification. If you have more than one rigging certification and did not do both tests on the same day, we can marry your numbers when you recertify. We can do that only with the rigging double certifications, as those hold the same requirements for recertification.

Portal to paradise: ETCP (finally) goes digital

For several years, I have had an ETCP assistant to help me with ID cards and reminders. Nearly three years ago, one quit unexpectedly, and I did a shout-out to the ETCP Group. A certificant recommended an interview with his girlfriend. In walks Jane, with pink hair to match my purple (kismet). She seemed a little over-qualified for the job, but she wanted it. Her first day of work started when we finished the interview. Jane and I have worked hard to come up with a system built for two; however, as the ETCP Community grows, we find ourselves snowed under.

To help, we have implemented new systems that allow certifiants to update their information, submit an ID photo, or order ETCP swag through a Web portal. If you have moved, changed jobs, or need to shoot us a photo for your ID card, this is how you do it. Just make this link one of your favorites, you can give us your new info, or order a new ETCP beanie for winter! <http://etcpesta.org/portal>

A form is already in use to serve the Recognized Trainers and Providers. We provide them with a link where they can enter the course name, location, and number of renewal credits each certificant should receive from attending their course. This way, we will receive the information in one place, and no one will have to deal with those pesky PDFs ever again. I hope

BARBIZON

LIGHTING COMPANY

Theatre ▾ Television ▾ Film ▾ Themed ▾ Architecture

▽ Experience

▽ Ideas

▽ Solutions



▽ Products

▽ Resources

▽ Possibilities








Whether it's a sheet of gel or a building-wide lighting network. One thing remains constant: Barbizon Lighting's dedication to understanding our customer's needs.

more@barbizon.com
#BetterWithBarbizon
866-502-2724

Atlanta ▾ Boston ▾ Charlotte ▾ Chicago ▾ Dallas ▾ Denver ▾ Miami ▾ New York
Orlando ▾ Phoenix ▾ Washington D.C. ▾ Australia ▾ United Kingdom



A RELIABLE PARTNER TO THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

RIGGING HARDWARE | WIRE ROPE | TOOLS



FEHR BROS. INDUSTRIES, INC.

895 KINGS HWY, SAUGERTIES, NY 12477

CALL 800.431.3095

FAX 888.352.1790

www.fehr.com

SAVE THE DATE

March 31 - April 1, 2020

Houston, TX



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE



esta.org/nwrs

to no longer receive “attendance sheets” on cocktail napkins, crumpled up boarding passes, cryptic text messages, or scanned PDFs with scribbled signatures. I can assure you this task sometimes rivals the difficulty of cracking the Rosetta Stone, due to the handwriting of entertainment technicians. **Note to Trainers:** If you don’t submit renewal credits for your attendees, you’re denying them of valuable renewal credits. Please, remember to use the portal to submit your credits, and bookmark the following link: <http://etcp.esta.org/portal/>.

Once we implement the Recertification Portal, which will probably be in place by the time the Fall *Protocol* goes to print, certificants who need to renew can simply go to the portal, submit credits, and then provide payment. November of 2020 will be here before we know it, and we have almost 200 riggers from the Class of 2005 due to recertify. Further down the line, it is our hope that certificants will be able to access

the database to see how many credits have been accumulated during their five-year period.

I think this is the best of all. With our new toys, candidates will be able to apply to take the examinations online. Yesterday, I received an inquiry via telephone—the candidate was in a hurry to get certified. He sighed, “Is this process really as analog as it seems?”

“Not for long, Malcolm,” I said, “not for long.” ■



Meredith Moseley-Bennett has been the ETCP Certification Manager for the last 12 years. When she is not busy herding these particular cats, she is trying hard to raise her kid right and works on her side-hustle

www.ohmybalm.com until the wee hours of the morning. Meredith can be reached at ETCP@esta.org.

ESTA's HAPPY HOUR for BEHIND THE SCENES

January 16, 6pm – 8pm at the Anaheim Marriott
Advanced tickets are \$65 and go on sale in October
www.esta.org/btshh

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

EXECUTIVE	DIAMOND	PLATINUM
GOLD		
SILVER	BRONZE	
Official Media Sponsors: <i>Protocol</i> and <i>Lighting&Sound America</i>		

Sponsorship opportunities are still available. Contact BTShh@esta.org for more information!