

ETCP POV: The power of individual certification

BY KENT JORGENSEN

ENTERTAINMENT HAS EVOLVED DRAMATICALLY, from staged performances using natural light and simple spaces to sophisticated productions featuring computer-controlled, motor-driven staging and lighting systems. Early performers likely found a sunny spot with enough room for an audience to gather. Today, tens of thousands of fans can watch as their favorite artists fly through the air. They see thousands of watts of computer-controlled light moving and changing color. All of this housed in a portable venue that had coyotes walking through it last week and will return to a desert the next.

Producing modern entertainment events requires qualified technicians whose skills are built through experience, knowledge, and training. One of the primary goals of the Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP) is to encourage professionals to develop and maintain the skills and standard practices necessary to safely and effectively provide rigging and power distribution for today's entertainment productions, whether theatre, live concerts, motion pictures, sporting events, and tradeshow.

What does this mean for individuals working in the industry? Why should someone invest the time, effort, and resources needed to earn one or more ETCP certifications? Simply put, certification proves of an individual's qualifications. It can open doors to employment opportunities, career advancement, and improved compensation.

An ETCP-certified technician can be reasonably expected to possess a verified level of qualification, as certification represents the accumulation of knowledge and experience demonstrated through a standardized certification process. The program establishes standards for education, work experience, and testing, creating confidence that certified individuals meet industry expectations.

To achieve certification, candidates must meet specific experience and educational requirements before being tested on a comprehensive body of knowledge related to entertainment industry theory, protocols, and systems. This includes how systems are applied, their safe operation, and proper inspection procedures.

ETCP certification gives individuals a clear way to demonstrate their expertise, skills, and experience to productions and clients. Productions benefit by being able to easily identify qualified candidates, particularly when compared to those without certification. In some regions, contracts or state laws require certified or qualified personnel to fill certain roles, and ETCP certification serves as accepted proof of those qualifications.

As with any profession, success in the entertainment industry depends on having the skills to perform work properly and safely. ETCP certification stands as evidence of a technician's knowledge, experience, and professionalism. Those who hold it gain a competitive advantage in the job market, often leading to career growth and higher compensation.

Beyond benefiting the industry as a whole, ETCP certification is a valuable asset on any resume. ■



Kent H. Jorgensen is a 40-year entertainment industry veteran mostly working as a grip in motion pictures. For the past 25 years he has specialized in occupational health and safety for the IATSE and for Local 80. He sits on oversight and standards writing committees and develops and teaches industry specific safety classes.



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