

# WILD About Testing



Volume 1, Issue 10  
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**A newsletter aimed at certification professionals interested in continuously improving the certification experience for their certificants and other stakeholders (employers or government agencies that might use the certificate).**

## From the Editor

Welcome to the tenth issue of **WILD About Testing**. I am delighted to report that during the ten months of producing this e-zine I've learned three things. First, people really like and want information on improving quality in testing. Second, my colleagues are generously contributing ideas and content through interviews and online (right on my web site at [www.wildandassociates.com](http://www.wildandassociates.com)). Please let me know what is on your mind and what you want me to write about next. The third thing I've learned is that many more people would like to receive this information than are currently receiving it.

When I attend meetings or workshops, participants are excited to learn about my e-zine and wish they had heard about it sooner. You can help about this – with the new campaign – **Share the Wealth of Information**.

### Why do I spend the time writing and distributing this newsletter?

I truly believe that certification and educational testing are critical parts of everyone's lives. In school, tests are used for grades, for placement, and for helping you understand what you know (and what you don't know). As consumers, we depend on certifications and licenses as a way of indicating that the doctors, lawyers, accountants and many others we employ have the basic knowledge and training needed to provide those services. And we use certifications as ways of bolstering our credentials and improving our work prospects.

Because testing is so much part of our lives **everyone** believes they can develop a test – after all, we have all taken tests for years in school and anyone can ask a question!

In the certification field, many certifications are begun by zealots in the field – people who know the subject matter of the certification and believe strongly in the need for certification, but may have no psychometric or process management expertise. That is fine, if the founders understand what they don't know and obtain the expertise elsewhere. **Although tests can do good they can also do harm.** Not everyone in the certification field understands the need for sound psychometric development of tests and the application process management to assure fair, valid and reliable test results.

I write **WILD About Testing** because I want every certification professional to have the opportunity to learn techniques for producing certification programs that provide excellent benefits to their certificants and other stakeholders and to help avoid risks inherent in developing and delivering tests. Please help me share the wealth of information with others in the certification field.

### How can you help Share the Wealth of Information?

I am working hard to make this e-zine relevant and useful. But this information is only useful if others receive and read it. You can help in two ways. Please click the "Forward to a Friend"

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Dr. Cheryl Wild, President  
Wild & Associates, Inc.

## In This Issue

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button on the bottom of the e-mail that brings each issue to you, or just spread the word and ask them to go to my web site and subscribe. Second, please continue to help shape the e-zine by reader feedback. (Anyone who would like to provide additional feedback may go to [www.wildandassociates.com](http://www.wildandassociates.com) to help with the design of future issues.)

### What is in this month's issue?

In prior issues we've talked about using certification task forces to obtain recommendations for improving your certification program. Sometimes, implementing these recommendations can be hard, and this month's issue reviews three common mistakes in implementing recommendations – so you can avoid them. **(Of course, one way to avoid these problems is to hire me to facilitate the Certification Task Force and the implementation planning.)**

This issue also describes *Improving the Quality of Your Certification Program: A Learning and Planning Retreat* I will be holding in Longboat Key, Florida in January, February, and March. This is a quick way to learn about quality tools and plan how to apply them to your organization.

Finally, **In the News** includes some interesting articles and information.

Enjoy the newsletter and share it with your colleagues. Please use the "Forward to a Friend" link and help me reach out and find everyone who can benefit from years of great experience, which I am delighted to share.

## Three Common Mistakes in Implementing Task Force Recommendations

In the June issue of *WILD About Testing*, I reported on facilitating a task force meeting for a certifying body in the financial arena.

Nine high-level measurement professionals from best practice certifying organizations and related organizations – individuals with expertise in psychometrics, score reporting, certification operations, certification management, and vendor management – convened for a one-and-a-half-day intensive meeting. The potential benefit of the task force review to the convening organization is tremendous – once the recommendations are implemented.

The next step is to develop an implementation plan based on the recommendations. When I help facilitate Certification Task Forces, I always build in developing an implementation plan as part of the work package.

Why? This isn't just a way of building business – rather it is because the **really** hard work begins after the meeting. I want my clients to succeed – and I

define success as having a successful Certification Task Force meeting **AND** developing a reasonable implementation plan.

### Why is it sometimes difficult to go from recommendations to implementation?

Here are a few of the mistakes that organizations have made in the past.

#### (1) Trying to implement everything.

Generally, your task force is full of experts with great ideas. They have agreed to share with you and they do.

Most of their ideas will be great and you would like to do everything. However, this is like going into the grocery store when you are hungry to buy food for dinner. It all looks good, but you can only eat so much.

You may have budget constraints and you know how many people will be at dinner. In

## Three Common Mistakes *(Continued from Page 2)*

the grocery store you set limits – you need to do the same thing with expert recommendations.

The lesson: **Choose the recommendations that meet your organizational needs and budget.**

### (2) Assuming that one person can act on all the recommendations.

Once the task force meeting is over, the director of certification may be asked to implement the recommendations. Well, he or she will bask in the glow of the CEO's confidence for about one minute, and then realize that they do not have the authority or budget to implement the recommendations.

For example, one recommendation may be related to computer security – which is probably the responsibility of the IT department. Another recommendation may have to do with test administration, requiring interface the test administration vendor and with the legal department (for the contract).

The lesson: **The work on certification often crosses many organizational boundaries and it will take a team effort to implement recommendations. Different individuals may need to be responsible for different parts.**

### (3) Setting too short a timeline for implementing recommendations.

Some recommendations are easy to implement and can be done fairly quickly, e.g., calculating reliability in a different way, putting locks on the files, or

storing test material in a locked room. Other activities just take time.

For example, changing your test from one with all multiple choice questions to one with a performance component may require a new job analysis, new item writing and trials of the performance items, lengthening the test administration time, new cut score studies, new procedures for scoring, and new ways of assuring that cut scores are comparable from form to form. Test takers will need advance notice of the changes in the examination.

Another reason that extends timelines is that some recommendations build on others. For example, changing the responsibilities of your vendor and bringing more work in house will have both organizational and staffing implications.

The lesson: **Develop separate timelines for each recommendation, consider the order of implementation of the various recommendations, and build the timeline in consideration of the current phase of your test development process.**

Organizations can avoid problems implementing task force recommendations through a careful review and planning process.

If you would like to learn more about the process I use with my clients, please e-mail me at [cheryl@wildandassociates.com](mailto:cheryl@wildandassociates.com) to schedule a time for us to talk.

## An Invitation

Are you proud of the work you are doing internationally in certification? Would you like to contribute ideas to a future article in WILD About Testing on this topic? If so, please contact me at [cheryl@wildandassociates.com](mailto:cheryl@wildandassociates.com).

# Improving the Quality of Your Certification Program

## A Learning and Planning Retreat



*Thaw out this winter and focus attention on your certification in lovely Longboat Key, Florida during selected dates in January, February, and March 2010*

As readers of this e-zine, I know you are all interested in continuously improving the certification experience for your certificants and other stakeholders. **Would you like to learn more about how to improve the quality of your certification? And once you have learned how, would you like to develop a *Quality Plan* for applying the tools in your organization?**

If you are interested in such a learning and planning experience, I invite you to join me in my favorite winter location – Longboat Key, Florida – for a one-and-a-half day retreat that kicks off three months of continued learning and follow-up, resulting in your development of a *Quality Plan* for your organization.

This program is designed specifically for those responsible for all or part of a certification and is tailored to meet participants' specific needs. Small groups (from 1 to 3 organizations) will participate and care will be taken to assure that competitors are not included in the same session.

### What are some of the benefits of participation?

Some of the benefits for participants will be increased:

- Knowledge of how to apply quality concepts;
- Understanding of how to set priorities for improving quality in an organization;
- Understanding of the difference between internal and external standards and how they might be used to improve quality in an organization;
- Appreciation of the importance of customer concerns in the planning and design of quality programs; and
- Understanding of how leaders can improve the likelihood of success of a quality initiative.

### Retreat Dates

January 7-8, 2010

January 14-15, 2010

January 28-29, 2010

February 4-5, 2010

February 11-12, 2010

March 11-12, 2010

March 18-19, 2010



Contact Cheryl Wild to obtain the program application and reserve your preferred date:

Phone: 732-774-5188

E-mail: [cheryl@wildandassociates.com](mailto:cheryl@wildandassociates.com)



*The Hilton Longboat Key Beachfront Resort is located on a beautiful barrier island on the west coast of Florida, just 12 miles from the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. The hotel is surrounded by nature in one of the most pristine island destinations in Florida.*

*Miles of powder-white sand border the aqua-blue waters of the Gulf and breathtaking sunsets stir the soul.*

## In The News

**Some of my readers have been asking where they can meet me.** I'll be at two important certification meetings in the next few months – the 2009 NOCA Annual Educational Conference in Phoenix, Arizona November 18 – 21 and the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual ATP Innovations in Testing Conference in Orlando, Florida February 7 – 10, 2010.

Please e-mail me ([cheryl@wildandassociates.com](mailto:cheryl@wildandassociates.com)) so we can schedule a time to talk face to face! I'd like your suggestions for important topics for the e-zine and to learn more about you and your organizations.



**Certification: A NOCA Handbook** (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), edited by Joan Knapp, Lynn Anderson, and Cheryl Wild, will be available at the NOCA meeting, November 18 – 21, 2009 in Phoenix, Arizona. **More than three years in the making, this is a must-have for any organization interested in a quality certification program.**

Google Alerts just sent me a link to **The New Psychology of Leadership**, an article by Stephen D. Reicher, Michael J. Platow and S. Alexander Haslam in the July 31, 2007 issue of *Scientific American*.

I really liked this article because it explains keys to effective leadership – keys that are just as important to leading efforts to improve certification as they are to leading Ford Motor Company.

Leadership, according to these authors, is **“the ability to shape what followers actually want to do, not the act of enforcing compliance using rewards and punishments.”**

The full version of this article is available for purchase at Scientific American Digital: [www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-new-psychology-of-leadership](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-new-psychology-of-leadership)

## ATP 2010 – Meet me in Florida in February and learn more about the Certification Task Force!

Our break-out session, **Fast Track Best Practice Assessment through Task Force Review**, has been accepted for the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual ATP Innovations in Testing Conference in Orlando and is tentatively slotted for Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 PM.

This will be a great opportunity to hear Steven Barkley, Director of Examinations for the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, discuss how a Certification Task Force contributed to CFP Board organizational planning. Casey Marks (Chief Operating Officer of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing) and Colleen Anderson (Head of Exam Administration and Security for the CFA Institute) will discuss their experiences as task force members.

This panel will discuss the use of a task force to provide external program review, build buy-in for change, and educate volunteers (including council members). Panel members will also discuss the benefits to task force members' organizations. Procedures for planning and conducting an effective task force meeting will also be discussed.

