



# CONNECTION

Published quarterly by Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc.

## Certification Agencies Show **RESILIENCE** in Economic Downturns

By William D. Hogan, ME, Senior Vice President,  
Marketing and Business Products

*H*

ow many times in recent news reports have we heard a story prefaced by the words, “in today’s economy”, followed by dismal intonations about companies on the verge of bankruptcy, mortgage foreclosures, job reductions and dire predictions of the future? No doubt, these are difficult times and there is good reason to be concerned. With widespread negativity dominating business news today, one might automatically think that voluntary certification agencies are in trouble too. However, a recent look at first quarter 2009 examination statistics and our personal experience through other economic crises indicate that this may not be the case.

In a recent online poll conducted by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), 72% of responding organizations reported that their 2009 candidate volumes were the same or better as in 2008 and 44% reported an increase in applicants. Building on this poll, we at AMP looked at 2009 candidate volumes compared to the same time in 2008 and found very similar results. Of 56 organizations reviewed, candidate volumes were the same or better for 43 of them (76.7%). Volume had actually increased compared to the same time last year for 29.

Why would there be more certification candidates in “bad times”? Experience in living through several economic downturns while working in the certification industry has shown us that when times are tough, *certification helps!* Professional certifications help people demonstrate their qualifications. This may mean increasing their ability to hold on to their jobs in difficult times or even differentiating their qualifications from others when competing for salary increases, promotions and other job opportunities. In short, being certified in one’s chosen occupation may *help a person stand out from the crowd* and possibly insulate them, at least somewhat, from adverse economic circumstances. This may be especially true in industries such as healthcare, where there are shortages in numerous occupations. While it has been reported in some industries that employers may be more reluctant to help staff members pay certification fees, many employers realize that a staff of certified professionals provides a boost for the employer.

Although the statistics provided in this article are good news for voluntary certification agencies in general, especially those in healthcare, it’s not true for all, so what can organizations do to help strengthen their candidate volumes in these uncertain times? Here are a few suggestions:

- (1) **Communicate!** One of the basic building blocks in marketing any certification program in good times or bad is to inform prospective certificants of the benefits of becoming certified. In addition, reminding those already credentialed of what they get by virtue of the certificate hanging on their walls may help keep recertification volumes up. Marketing to

■ ■ ■ *continued on page 3*

### In This ISSUE:

Job Analysis: The  
Foundation for Valid  
ASSESSMENT 2

Did You Know? 3

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT 4

AMP ON THE ROAD 4

Technology  
That Works  
People  
Who Care

# Job Analysis:

# The Foundation for

# Valid Assessment

By Patrick Gallagher, MBA  
Director of Marketing

Job analysis research and job-related test construction are essential to the legal defensibility of certification and licensure programs. Yet, many in the industry may be unfamiliar with these critical issues. Take the following “fun” quiz that intends to illustrate a few key points about job analysis research. Testing experts may notice some item flaws that were intentionally included to provide examples of item writing “pitfalls” that may trigger clues to the correct answers.

(Select the ONE BEST response to these items)

- How often should a job analysis be performed for an occupational certification or licensure examination?
  - annually
  - at least every five years
  - only when practice changes
  - only when the program begins
- A job analysis may answer which of the following questions?
  - Who is to be assessed?
  - How many are doing the job?
  - Who and what are to be assessed; at what complexity and by what method?
  - Why are they doing the job?
- Most job-related certification or licensure examinations are developed to show which type of validity evidence?
  - Construct
  - Predictive
  - Content
  - Criterion-related
- Which of the following resources provide the best information about validity and/or importance of job analysis research?
  - ABC Guidelines
  - APA/AERA/NCME Standards, the Uniform Guidelines, NCCA Standards
  - NIOSH Standards
  - CLEAR and NOCA Joint Standards

Now try your hand at a couple of true/false questions about job analysis research:

- (True or False?) A small group of content experts, usually department heads, supervisors or educators, is sufficient to serve as the sample for a job analysis survey.
- (True or False?) A job analysis survey instrument is only a sample of an occupational practice domain and need not include a complete listing of all job duties performed.

## How did you do?

### Question 1: Answer B – at least every five years.

Most experts consider the five year time frame a reasonable period within which job analysis data should be updated. If major practice changes occur sooner than that, consideration should be given to updating the job analysis at an earlier time. In no case should it be determined that “once a job analysis is completed, you never have to do another.” Even if you believe no practice changes have occurred, research should generally be done to confirm this at least every five years. “Testwise” readers may have noticed the use of the word “only” in options C and D, which often provides a clue that an option is incorrect.

### Question 2: Answer C – who and what are to be assessed, at what complexity and by what method.

Several issues can be addressed with job analysis research. Appropriately designed job analysis studies collect personal data about survey respondents to help determine homogeneity of the population to be examined. In addition, the complexity of various job duties can be determined, establishing the level at which the resulting examination will test. Finally, job analysis results can help determine the most appropriate testing format. While a job analysis identifies job duties performed, it also serves other purposes! The item flaw illustrated in this item is the inclusion of more information and a longer response for the correct answer.

### Question 3: Answer C – content.

Examinations having strong evidence of content validity are developed when each test item can be linked to a job duty shown to be important to practice through job analysis research. Two of the distracters for this question, Criterion-related and

Predictive are essentially the same thing, which could provide a clue that neither option is correct. To show evidence of predictive validity, a relationship must exist between test and job performance. Most organizations rely on collecting content validity evidence.

### Question 4: Answer B – APA/AERA/NCME Standards, the Uniform Guidelines, NCCA Standards.

The fundamental resource regarding validity is the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* developed by the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Council on Measurement in Education. In addition, the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*, adopted by several federal agencies, as well as the accreditation standards of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) address job analysis research and the requirement that examinations be job-related and have evidence of content validity. Again, the longest and most comprehensive response (with three parts instead of one) was likely a clue to this correct answer.

### Question 5: False - The key words that might have tipped you off are “small group” and “department heads, supervisors or educators”.

While it may be important to include others in a job analysis sample, it is far more important to make sure a large number of “job incumbents” are included. Significant numbers of those actually doing the work should be surveyed because they are in the best position to know what it currently takes to perform the job.

**Question 6: False - A job analysis survey instrument should attempt to completely cover the job duties that might be performed.**

It should be a comprehensive list of job duties and should not be considered only a sample. The resulting test that may be developed from the job analysis IS indeed a sample of the content domain described by the job analysis. If you recognized this possibly “trick” question, good for you! Again, the word “only” may have provided a clue. While not specifically an item flaw, true/false items are not typically used on certification or licensure examinations for some very good reasons.

Now that you have completed this “just for fun” job analysis exercise, there is one question left—where can certification and licensure agencies go for quality job analysis research? To that, we believe there is only **ONE BEST ANSWER—to AMP**, of course! AMP has a staff of doctorate-level psychometricians who have performed hundreds of successful job analysis studies over more than 25 years. We are experienced in survey design, sample determination, statistical analysis and proactive leadership of client expert committees. AMP job analyses support examinations that have strong evidence of content validity as defined by leading measurement standards. These examinations are in use today in the occupations represented by our more than 100 satisfied Business Partners. To find out how AMP can help your certification or licensure agency strengthen the quality of your assessment program, contact me or any member of the AMP Marketing Team. ■

---

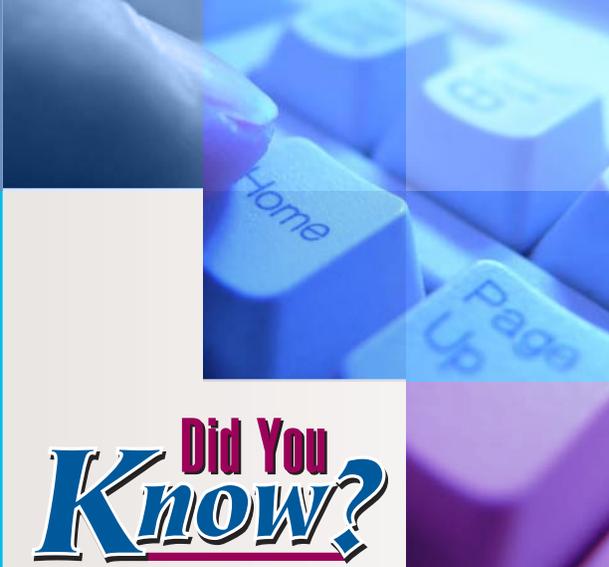
## Certification Agencies Show **RESILIENCE** in Economic Downturns...

■ ■ ■ *continued from page 1*

potential examinees is an ongoing effort and should be done periodically regardless of the economic climate. However, it may be even more important in a downturn.

- (2) **Provide Consistent, Quality Service!** When difficult economic decisions must be made, cuts in program services and key personnel may be among the first considerations. However, today’s certification candidates expect quality examinations delivered by experienced people. Staff reductions, program changes and elimination of desirable program features may prove to be short-sighted moves. One of the recommendations financial advisors are providing their customers is to make sure they are “**positioned well for the recovery**”. The downturn will not last forever and, when the economy recovers, rapid growth is likely to occur. Reducing key staff and services now, only to have to add them back later, may adversely affect an organization’s ability to serve its customers. We believe personnel changes and service cuts should be measures of the last resort.
- (3) **Provide Needed Products, Empathetic Services!** Even if your candidate volumes are holding steady or increasing, remember that these are hard times for many people. For certification agencies, empathetic customer service is the key. Organizations can encourage constituents by **providing products and services that help people achieve their goals**. These may include self-assessment examinations, free practice tests that can be easily accessed online and other helpful material designed to increase one’s opportunity to become certified. Professional associations can provide easy access to continuing education programs and assistance in meeting the requirements for recertification. In addition, certification agencies may consider discounted examination fees for early applicants or provide special “scholarship” assistance.

AMP President Gary A. Smith has a sign in his office that says, “**Tough times don’t last; Tough people do!**” It directly applies to the current economic climate. Cycles such as the current one have occurred numerous times in history. Conditions will improve and times will get better. Historically, our experience has been that certification agencies weather these economic storms very well. Certification agencies offer something that people want during downturns—a way to differentiate themselves from those less qualified. With downsizing in many other industries will come significant re-training opportunities and an influx of people into areas where shortages exist. This will create opportunities for certification agencies that are ready to meet the challenges of increased demand for their services. ■



**Did You Know?**

### Coming Next Issue... **eConnect!!**

We are delighted to announce that with its next issue the *AMP Connection* will have a new look and format, as well as even more relevant content! The *Connection* is expanding into **eConnect**, an electronic newsletter. **eConnect** will provide industry relevant information from a variety of professionals at AMP and will be produced every other quarter in 2009. The *Connection* will continue to be published in hard copy format twice annually. Both will provide our business partners and other industry representatives with ideas and discussion of current certification, licensure and association management issues, along with insight from seasoned certification professionals.

In addition to aiding the movement to “go green” at AMP, the new electronic *eConnect* newsletter will be easily accessible to everyone on our mailing list. Simply go to [www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com) and click on “Contact Us” to ensure you don’t miss an issue! The first online **eConnect** will be produced in summer 2009 and will include interactive features allowing readers to explore the content. Look for **eConnect** in your inbox soon!!

# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

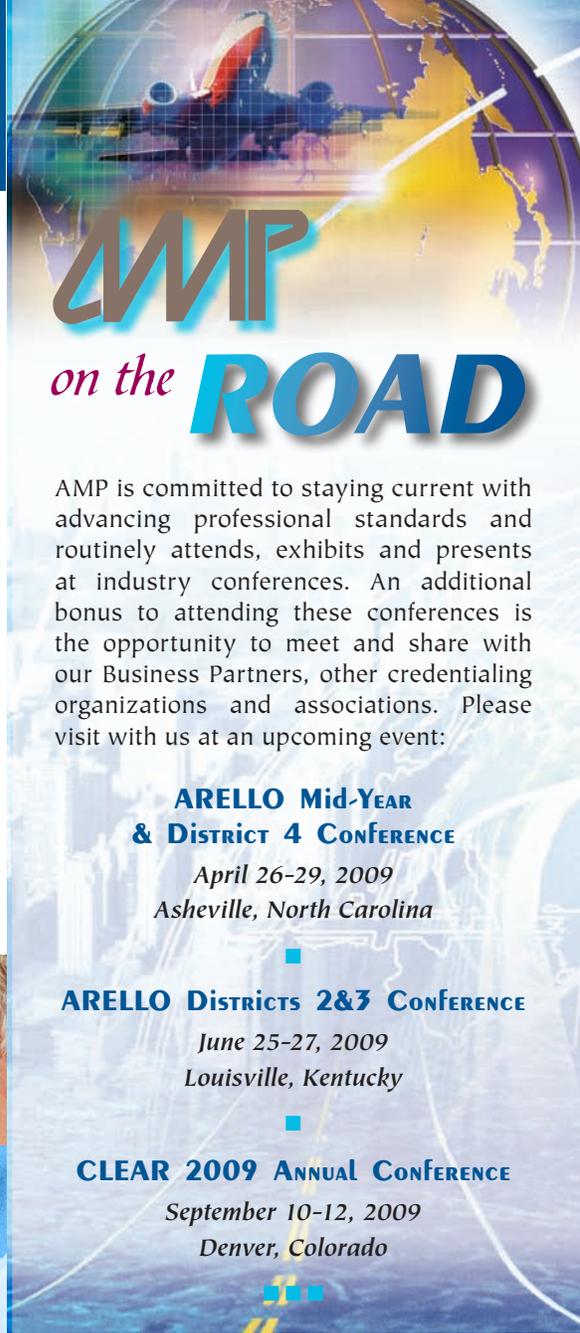


■ The *Association of College and University Auditors (ACUA)* is an international professional organization committed to increasing knowledge of auditing, regulatory compliance and risk management in higher education. ACUA has entered into a long term contract with AMP Management Services (AMP/MS). In January 2009, AMP/MS began providing full management services including executive leadership, administrative services, financial management, meeting planning and website maintenance.

■ The *National Enrichment Teachers Association (NETA)* enables prospective enrichment teachers to maintain a safe and effective classroom by providing them with the tools and knowledge in areas such as teacher's legal liabilities, effective teaching methods, ethics, and on-site conduct. NETA-certified enrichment teachers are among the most sought-after enrichment professionals in the country because of the training they receive through NETA certification programs and continuing education courses. This organization has recently selected AMP to administer the NETA certification examination in the AMP Assessment Center Network. AMP will also provide scoring and reporting services during the term of the contract.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT  
AMP'S MARKETING DEPARTMENT.  
913.895.4600 • FAX: 913.895.4650  
E-mail: sales@goAMP.com

[www.goAMP.com](http://www.goAMP.com)



## AMP on the ROAD

AMP is committed to staying current with advancing professional standards and routinely attends, exhibits and presents at industry conferences. An additional bonus to attending these conferences is the opportunity to meet and share with our Business Partners, other credentialing organizations and associations. Please visit with us at an upcoming event:

### ARELLO Mid-YEAR & DISTRICT 4 CONFERENCE

April 26-29, 2009  
Asheville, North Carolina

### ARELLO DISTRICTS 2&3 CONFERENCE

June 25-27, 2009  
Louisville, Kentucky

### CLEAR 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 10-12, 2009  
Denver, Colorado



PRSRST STANDARD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Shawnee Mission, KS  
Permit #248

APPLIED MEASUREMENT PROFESSIONALS, INC.  
18000 W. 105th St.  
Olathe, KS 66061-7543

