

CBIP—Running Toward a Goal

By John Myers



ONE OF THE HALLMARKS of a successful professional, whether you are a full-time employee or a professional services consultant, is the skill of continuous learning. Former University of Michigan football coach Bo Schembechler used to tell incoming freshmen:

“Either you are getting better, or you are getting worse.”

To Coach Schembechler, this statement was about competition both in athletics and in life: You can either move forward or be passed by. That may sound a little ominous, but it doesn't apply only to the world of college football: it's also true in the business intelligence and data warehousing industry. Either you can keep abreast of new technologies and methodologies to add value to your organization, or... you can fall behind.

I embraced these words of wisdom long ago, but they are much easier to say than they are to implement. A few professionals out there may find this an easy process; they survey their particular industry publications and Web sites, set out a personal syllabus/timeline for learning and progress, and set their knowledge goals. But most of those who can do this so easily are either particularly driven people who spend way too much time in the technology and business section of the local Barnes & Noble, or time management freaks who can quote *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* chapter and verse. Unfortunately, not all of us are like that—I'm certainly not. Most of us need both direction and some motivation to move us toward the improvement that we know we need.

If a doctor were to tell me that I should get in shape, I might put “go running” on my to-do list. Over time, I would probably keep thinking about getting in shape, but I would probably also keep putting it off. However, if one of my friends tells me that competing in a 10K race and achieving a 55-minute finish time separates the wheat from the chaff in my running skill level, that could be a different story. I would locate

a recommended place to get the proper shoes, good running information, and so on. I would find a good training program. I would start putting in the mileage necessary to compete successfully in a specific race—say, the Bolder Boulder 10K held this spring. I would set a goal to finish the race within 55 minutes (or maybe less!).

There are two concepts here: constant improvement and a goal for that improvement. The Certified Business Intelligence Professional credential encompasses both. First, CBIP represents a standard of the industry, much like becoming a CPA for accountants or passing the bar exam for the legal profession. It demonstrates a level of dedication and breadth of knowledge. Holders of CBIP certifications show clearly that they are dedicated to improvement and ongoing education. Second, the CBIP certification process sets clear goals for those who want to obtain it. The certification levels serve as performance targets; the key specialties help you focus your learning requirements according to your interests.

Completing the CBIP in February 2007 with a Business Analytics specialty will help me to stand out from the crowd in the business intelligence industry. And TDWI provides the resources and tools for continued success: their publications, both in print and online, keep me up to date on where the industry is headed. TDWI World Conferences provide opportunities to ask questions about technologies and methodologies that I may not get in my everyday life.

Finally, the CBIP exams provide the best motivation of all. They are race day! I plan on taking the core exams in August and completing the CBIP in February 2007 with the Business Analytics exam. ■

John Myers is a longstanding TDWI Member, a business intelligence consultant, and a TDWI night school instructor. He is currently preparing for CBIP testing. You can reach him at johnmyers@msn.com to discuss his CBIP experience or to talk about running.

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