

CRM Certification: What's it Worth?

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Most CRMs identify the benefits of their credential as validation of knowledge; improved marketability; outstanding reputation and credibility; and increased confidence. But, what's CRM certification really worth?

The Certified Records Manager (CRM) credential refers to a records and information management (RIM) industry certification that demonstrates RIM knowledge and a minimum level of RIM experience. It is often used as a prerequisite to hiring and is based on industry assessments developed by the Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM).

The value of the CRM designation can be measured in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Qualitative value refers to how much quality (excellence) increases as a result of the CRM, while quantitative value indicates monetary worth. To determine the real worth of CRM certification, both values should be considered.

Many potential applicants take a narrow view of the CRM. Although they often associate the value of the CRM with benefits connected to the individual being certified, they rarely consider how the designation impacts other stakeholders. For example, CRM certification provides value for employers, the ICRM, and the public. Some of these qualitative values are as follows:

Certified Records Manager (CRM)

- Provides a sense of personal accomplishment
- Increases and/or validates RIM knowledge
- Increases career advancement and/or earnings
- Enhances professional reputation and credibility
- Demonstrates commitment to RIM practice
- Supports continued professional development
- Provides recognition by a third party

Employers

- Increases the organization's RIM competence
- Provides organizational, industry, and government compliance
- Demonstrates commitment to RIM quality and competence
- Improves employee and customer satisfaction through RIM services
- Increases security and privacy of information
- Provides employees with ongoing professional development
- Increases confidence in RIM employee's abilities
- Assists in employment decisions

Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM)

- Helps standardize RIM practice

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- Advances RIM as a discipline
- Provides means to establish and enforce an ethical code
- Provides self-regulation of RIM
- Increases cooperation between ARMA and ICRM

Public

- Helps identify qualified RIM individuals
- Increases RIM confidence in organizations employing CRMs
- Provides a means of filing ethical complaints through the ICRM

Although the qualitative factors listed above cannot always be measured easily, they nonetheless add value to the CRM certification.

Likewise, quantifying the monetary worth of the CRM designation is not easy either. For example, putting a dollar amount on career advancement, increase in responsibilities, and personal growth is difficult. According to a *2011 Salary Guide* from Robert Half International, individuals with certifications can earn a starting salary up to 10 percent above the market average. Generally, you can assume this increase holds true for entry level CRMs as well.

Furthermore, today's RIM job announcements increasingly specify "CRM required" or "CRM preferred". According to a recent ICRM survey, the demand for CRMs as compared to non-CRMs has increased 31%. In fact, the ICRM established a strategic initiative to ensure the number of CRMs keeps pace with the high demand for CRMs by employers. The economic principle of "supply and demand" helps determine the certification's worth too.

So, what's CRM certification worth? Minimally, ten percent to an entry level RIM professional, but if you add qualitative value—much, much more.

Finally, if you are not familiar with CRM certification and want to learn more, here is the link to the *ICRM Handbook*:

<http://www.icrm.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/ICRM-Handbook-01-12.pdf>