



## CONVERSATION WITH A CLP — DAN QUIRK, CLP, MICROSOFT

Dan Quirk, CLP, is a Director within Microsoft's Solutions organization, where he collaborates with enterprise-class customers to help them build first-movers advantage, shape their future, and digitally transform their businesses via pre-release access to emerging technologies.

Quirk's experience in his own work environment is that Microsoft prioritizes being customer obsessed, at the very highest levels of leadership, in order to provide insights and empathy to understand its customers' and partners' needs to expand and develop business opportunities. That guiding principle aligns with the multi-disciplinary approach of the CLP program, and Quirk sees firsthand the value for companies supporting their employees' pursuit of professional certification.

### Microsoft employees throughout the world have earned the CLP certification. How has Microsoft supported its employees in the CLP certification process, and what motivated those decisions?

Skilled customer-facing negotiators – personnel that have deep expertise across a spectrum of subject matter focal points – need to be able to meet customers where they are. We have an operating framework to understand and address customer needs within the context of their business and industry. Our contract management function participates in the International Association for Contract & Commercial Management (IACCM) certification as a foundation for consistent approach to customer engagement worldwide. Then, we leverage additional programs, including the CLP certification recognizing intellectual property (IP) expertise, to create sub-groups of personnel to provide support in the form of deep empowered subject-matter expertise. Doing so allows us to understand the motivations, strategies, and jargon of our customers, enabling us to more rapidly form mutually beneficial agreements – even when the underlying issues within the collaboration are highly complex.

As the complexity and volume of customer-facing negotiations has grown, we have distributed IP experts across the globe, de-centralizing the decision-making and guidance functions related to IP matters and enabling rapid response to customer and partner needs by providing real-time collaboration. In 2015, we selected CLP as the standard for demonstrating that expertise for several key reasons: the CLP certification program is rigorous in its testing for true depth of knowledge; the scope and availability of the certification is available worldwide; and, it brings a breadth of perspectives to the topic requiring us to look beyond a software company view of IP in commercial agreements to understand the myriad of ways that our customers and partners approach the topic. We now have CLP-certified personnel in Asia, Europe, and the Americas able to support transactions and teammates within their regions.

Microsoft supports its employees seeking certification first and foremost by valuing the result of the hard work required to obtain certification. Certification carries increased responsibilities and decision-making authority enabling employees to take on complex and high-impact work. Microsoft provides funding for training, exam preparation and certification fees, and preparation insights from teammates and management are available. The end result is that the company has a deeper and distributed talent pool, and employees receive opportunities to work on really interesting subject matter with the added bonus of a portable and objective demonstration of their skillset as they progress in their careers.

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### What value does the CLP program bring to a global software company?

The knowledge required to perform successfully on the certification exam represents a significant strength for anyone negotiating software creation deals because it requires understanding of the broad range of perspectives of industries and sectors in which our partners and customers operate. The value the CLP program brings to a software company ultimately comes down to customer centricity and simplicity. Software increasingly has purpose and function related to business processes which can lead to stalled negotiations. Separating who owns what in scenarios that blend software platforms, applications, and business processes in a multi-license environment increasingly mixing open source and commercial solutions can be overwhelming. However, with a firm grounding in the underlying principles of IP, we can effectively enable shared understanding and

communicate with customers and partners when complex foreground and background IP negotiations arise because of that deep understanding of the subject matter. We can better serve our customers, enable them to better serve their customers and do so in the short timeframes required in the era of digital disruption.

## How do you perceive the growth of the CLP certification on an international level benefitting the licensing profession and/or business transactions, and what is your advice for other decision makers considering investing in their licensing/IP staff through the CLP certification process?

The ability to understand and address the intellectual property aspects of licensing agreements, professional services agreements, business development deals, and contract and commercial management tasks in general is increasingly a core element of the roles and functions that manage and shape key agreements for enterprises. Global supply chains and customer bases require application of this skillset and enable mutual understanding across regions. Professionals operating within these workloads (globally or not) will often have depth of knowledge in a large portion of the CLP certification domain but may find they have gaps in knowledge within others (expert skillsets or industry understanding).

I suggest that individuals and employers assess business needs (their own and their customers') in relation to IP sophistication depth and breadth and gauge the degree that a well-rounded view of strategies across that spectrum serves those needs. By leveraging the strengths of the CLP program, my experience is that companies find they can engage a broader customer base with a more deeply informed employee talent pool, and individuals find they are able to take on increased responsibility and create new career opportunities for themselves by augmenting their current expertise.

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