In meetings this past week, I spoke with two security colleagues who had let their Certified Protection Professional (CPP) credentials lapse. Their common lament was “I wish I had never let this happen!”

One of the best things I did was to earn my CPP. The career opportunities, friendships forged, and the continuing education and exposure to new ideas and concepts have been invaluable to me.

I earned my CPP 1983. At the time I worked for Pedus Security Services and the company president, Timothy Gilmore, CPP, encouraged security managers to earn their board certification by offering to pay for the POA, exam fee, and review class. With that incentive, in just under a year I was able to earn my CPP (and a $100 monthly salary increase!). My story is similar to many colleagues I know who work for managers that value ASIS certifications and encourage their employees to sit for the exam. It’s this kind of peer-to-peer support and encouragement that helps elevate our profession.

It was certification that helped open the door to national volunteer leadership with ASIS when, in 1999, I joined the Professional Certification Board (PCB) and eventually served as its president in 2003. The PCB is comprised of an impressive group of individuals dedicated to the advancement of our certifications, including the meticulous review of our exams. It was during my PCB tenure when Cliff Dow, CPP, made the analogy between the medical profession’s use of “board-certified” and ASIS certification. The concept “board certified in security management” to characterize experience and tested competence quickly took hold. To this day, when I submit a risk assessment or project proposal, I am confident that the embossed “board-certified” seal I apply to these documents reflects the high professional ethics and competency behind my work.

Studying for the exam will make you a better security professional. From personal experience, the preparation was eye-opening. The POA alone provided valuable insight into the world of...
security. Even though I learned things I didn’t need for my job responsibility at the time, the studying made me aware of the body of knowledge and where I could turn for resources when I needed them.

There are a number of ways you can get started.

- Familiarize yourself with the reference set. Whether you purchase these or borrow from a colleague or your chapter’s library, all questions from the exams come from these publications.

- The ASIS Linkedin group and CPP, PCI and PSP certification study subgroups offer excellent sounding boards for practitioners when there are no local review programs available.

- ASIS, as well as many ASIS chapters, offer online and classroom review programs, which provide important opportunities to assess your strengths and identify areas in need of more concentrated study. In addition, the professional relationships you develop in these programs can stay with you throughout your career. Not only was I later offered a job by somebody in my classroom review but –30 years later, I still keep in touch will colleagues I met during the program.

The benefits are many. For government, military, or law enforcement professionals planning to leave the public sector, certification provides a way to build on previous security experience, develop a proactive orientation, and transition to a successful second career. For corporate managers, security has become more and more a global issue. ASIS certifications provide instant recognition and respect, as well as a common language necessary for working with colleagues down the street or at locations around the world. Once you have earned your certification, the rigorous recertification requirements ensure you remain current in your profession.

And finally, board certification sets you apart. It demonstrates your experience, education, and professional commitment. When I meet somebody who is board certified, I know I am dealing with a dedicated and competent professional. The three letters—CPP, PCI, and PSP—make a powerful statement about the expertise you bring to the table.

I congratulate those of you who have already earned your ASIS certification. For those of you who have not, if you meet the criteria to do so, I encourage you to make the commitment now and become a board certified security professional. You will not regret it! Once you have done so, I would love to hear from you.