



Cisco Data Center Certification

Case Study Subject

Colin Lynch
Principal Consultant

Industry

IT services and consulting

Area of Focus

Cisco data center solutions

Cisco Certifications

CCIE Data Center
CCIE Routing and Switching

Professional Benefits

- Increased data center knowledge useful in advising clients
- Ability to instill confidence with customers and bring business to employer
- Recognition by industry as an expert and increased opportunity to share expertise with IT community

LinkedIn Profile

<https://uk.linkedin.com/in/colin-lynch-87628311>

Diving Wholeheartedly into Data Center

A former “server guy” embraces big change in the data center field, becoming an industry expert along the way

Colin Lynch, principal consultant for a large IT services and consulting company in the United Kingdom, is finding it an exciting time to be advising customers on Cisco’s data center solutions. In particular, the steady addition of products to Cisco’s UCS integrated infrastructure has provided Colin with a “massive portfolio” for addressing the specific data center architectural needs of practically any client.

Add to this that Colin was chosen a few years ago from among 400 consultants at his company as “Consultant of the Year,” and has been named a “Cisco Champion for Data Center” the last three years running, as well as having achieved his CCIE Data Center certification, and you’ve got the picture of someone fully immersed in the rapidly transforming field of data center today.

In fact, many readers might be familiar with Colin from his frequent presence at Cisco Live sessions and from his [UCSguru blog](#).

Falling into IT by Accident

Not a bad resume for someone who left high school at age 16 with no existing tech knowledge at all, made a casual decision to enroll in a technical vocational college while waiting to hear about jobs with the police or army, and from there started to build a name for himself in IT. His first job in IT was as a server specialist supporting Novell and Unix networks.

Colin, who claims “never to do anything halfheartedly,” has the kind of determination that’s driven him to take scuba diving to the level of Divemaster, technical diving, and cave diving—or engage during the week in rugby, a sport that he not only plays but organizes. “If I do something, I go to the Nth degree,” he says.

And so, even though he’d somewhat stumbled into IT, it’s become its own wholehearted dive for him. In 2009, his company assigned Colin to a brand new data center product called Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS). Since he’d started his career as a server specialist, his first reaction was “I’m a server guy again!” But he soon realized UCS was a complete data center solution. “Previous years of server, storage, networking, and virtualization experience all moved into conjunction,” Colin states. “It was like this system had been tailor-made for me, and I took to it like a duck to water.”

Eight years later, how does Colin view the current data center landscape? “The software-defined data center, where automation and orchestration are enabled, is the biggest thing right now,” he states.



“The software-defined data center, where automation and orchestration are enabled, is the biggest thing right now.”

– Colin Lynch

It's About the Software

As an example of this major shift, Colin describes a typical client who might be interested in having an application network, a web network, and a database network, each with a virtual machine (VM) on it. Historically, this need might have called for a VMware administrator, a host, hardware (possibly including the purchase of an additional blade or rackmount), and manual creation of the VMs—effectively weeks of work, not counting the security requirement. However, with a software-defined data center incorporating Cisco's Application Centric Infrastructure (ACI), “the click of a button,” according to Colin, “automatically provisions the three networks you want, plus manages the security between them—and you can have that in a matter of minutes as part of a single workflow.”

For Colin, his degree of data center experience coupled with adoption of the latest technologies, such as software-defined networking, are what enable him to focus on higher levels of work at his company. “One of the things I love about my job is that it is so varied,” he says. “One week I could be presenting a solution to a client's board or directors, the next week I might be installing a software-defined network, and the week after that I might be training a client or an internal team.”

In addition, having his CCIE Data Center certification instills confidence in the customer. Says Colin, “When a customer sees ‘CCIE Data Center’ under your name, you've got their trust upfront to a degree, and then it's just down to you to maintain it.”

CCIE Data Center: Man vs. Clock

CCIE Data Center certification has enabled Colin to win additional business opportunities for his company in its efforts to design data center solutions that meet today's infrastructure demands, and to advise on high-complexity deployments.

Of course, all this cachet didn't come without some sweat. When Colin went to take his CCIE Data Center lab exam for the first time, he'd been an expert for Cisco Nexus and UCS for quite some time and had become “a storage expert, a computer expert, and a networking expert,” and was also “doing a lot with virtualization.” He'd studied well, and felt very confident.

However, it turns out that he was a bit too methodical during the lab exam—“configuring and testing each box before moving on to the next one.” He ran out of time, and didn't pass. Not one to wallow in disappointment, Colin worked fervently on the time management aspect of the exam, and, just a couple months later, he emerged with his CCIE Data Center certification, and a half-hour on the lab exam to spare.

En route to his CCIE Data Center certification, Colin increased his knowledge and skills with CCNA and CCNP Data Center certifications. Cisco's updating of CCNA, CCNP and CCIE Data Center has brought increased focus upon the knowledge required by today's data center professional: automation, virtualization, converged infrastructure, cloud integration, Cisco ACI.

Colin applauds this new direction, stating, “With Data Center certifications, you’re now going to learn about basic automation and orchestration work flows, because that’s the job you’re going for these days.”

For More Information

To begin your exploration of Cisco Data Center certifications, visit www.cisco.com/go/dccert.