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The Computing Technology Industry Association

Testimony of Scott Watkins, CEO, Modern Tech Squad

Before the

House Small Business Committee

**"Innovative Approaches to Meeting the Workforce
Needs of Small Businesses"**

September 8, 2011

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Velazquez, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Scott Watkins, and I appear on behalf of my company, Modern Tech Squad, and as a member of the Computing Technology Industry Association, also known as CompTIA. My company is the <u>ONLY</u> CompTIA Authorized Service Center for computers, networks, and server support in the Florida panhandle. I want to thank Chairman Graves and Members of this Committee for holding this hearing on the value of industry-led portable skills credentials. This is an extremely important issue for my company and for countless other small businesses across the nation.

Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy. As I'm sure you are aware, there are an estimated 30 million small businesses in the United States, which employs over half of all the private sector employees. An even more important statistic for this hearing though, is the fact that *small businesses hire 40 percent of all high-tech workers.*

On behalf of my company, Modern Tech Squad, and CompTIA, I would like to share with you our perspective about the importance of credentials in the I.T. industry.

Modern Tech Squad and CompTIA

CompTIA is a non-profit trade association representing over 2,000 corporate members and 1,000 business partners in the information technology (IT) industry. Many of its members are like me -- small businesses that provide I.T. services to others. CompTIA is also the leading global provider of vendor neutral I.T. workforce certifications. The CompTIA Authorized Service Center (ASC) credential validates an organization's level of technical certification, resulting in competitive differentiation and customer confidence. As I mentioned previously, Modern Tech Squad is a CompTIA Authorized Service Center.

First a brief word about CompTIA certifications and why our company values these certifications as an important market differentiator.

The success of the personal computer led the computer service and repair industries to commission CompTIA to create its vendor-neutral CompTIA A+ certification examination program in 1992. Today, nearly 800,000 people hold the CompTIA A+ certification. The continuing success of this certification demonstrates an ongoing need to provide a means of validating skills across a wide spectrum of computer hardware and software. Following on the success of A+, CompTIA developed and introduced the CompTIA Network+, and CompTIA Security+ certifications. Each of these certifications is industry-driven, validating technical skills and abilities for both individuals working in the I.T. field, and for the people who hire and train them.

By securing and validating core skills and knowledge, both job-seekers and established professionals can progress to more complex and specialized credentials, such as vendor-specific hardware and software training.

Description of Modern Tech Squad Business Involvement with Certifications

These certifications have played an important role in our company. Together with my father and brother, we founded Modern Tech Squad about three years ago. Typical services that Modern Tech Squad provide include computer-based diagnostics and repairs, network and server support, break-fix work, and remote I.T. support.

At the time that we started the company, my father was a General Contractor and my brother Matt worked with him in construction. You may remember three years ago as the economy hit bottom in the housing industry and things were pretty tough. I had on the other hand, been the I.T. manager at a local hospital and suggested that the three of us start Modern Tech Squad. The availability of an industry recognized, vendor neutral certification through CompTIA made our business possible. With a new-found passion and a good deal of study, my father and brother were able to transition from construction to the high-tech field of I.T.

It is also interesting to note, that the first time I went to take the CompTIA A+ exam, I failed. My years of being an I.T. professional gave me a false sense of security in my knowledge of computers. The adage "you only know what you know." was a hard lesson learned and opened my eyes to the need for certifications. I needed to learn more about computers and I.T. specific areas and I firmly believe that has made me a better technician and a better value to our customers.

Many of our customers – over half of them in-fact – are small businesses just like us. These small businesses depend on I.T. services, but are too small to have a dedicated I.T. department. I have heard horror stories of a small business hiring an I.T. guy who claimed to know what he was doing only to realize that was not the case. A small business cannot afford to spend their hard-earned money on solutions that do not work. With a CompTIA certification, I know that the customer will have piece of mind that their hard earned money is being well spent on someone who is trained properly and who provides the right solution the first time.

CompTIA's credentials also allowed us to chart a successful business plan. There are over 3,800 registered I.T. based service companies in the State of Florida. In our rural part of the Florida panhandle, there are 11 such companies in our area offering the same services we offer. We felt that a great way to differentiate ourselves was to highlight the fact that we were CompTIA certified. Our strategy was dead on. In only 3 years, we have not only held steady but we have grown to eight employees and nothing seems to be in our way for growing more.

CompTIA's certifications are just the beginning for us though. The concept of stackable credentials is essential to provide an even higher level of service to our customers. My brother Matt and I are currently studying for the Microsoft Certified I.T. Professional Certification. Some of our employees are also pursing I.T. credentials in additional I.T. fields. We see a lot of opportunity for expanding our business based on stacking these vendor specific certifications on top of the CompTIA credentials we already hold.

In conclusion, here's the bottom line. Industry certifications are a necessity. They give companies like ours – no matter where we are located – a chance to meet consumer needs, grow our business and branch out into various additional professional opportunities as technology evolves. Our success proves this and it is our hope that others can learn from that success.

Conclusion

I want to thank the Committee again for the opportunity to share my story with you and encourage you to support the broad dissemination of stackable and portable industry credentials.