



by Gene Smith

Smith is president of The Loss Prevention Foundation, the not-for-profit organization charged with the responsibility of building a certification and membership program. He was formerly president of the industry's largest executive search and consulting firm specializing in providing human resource solutions for the retail loss prevention, safety, and audit industries. During the past fifteen-plus years, Smith has provided career counseling for thousands of industry professionals nationwide. He can be reached at 704-837-2521 or via email at gene.smith@losspreventionfoundation.org.



Get Qualified Now

As of April 22, 2008, the exam for LPQualified (LPQ) certification was available nationwide. The exam was designed by loss prevention professionals as well as educators from university-based LP programs, and was approved by the Foundation's exam committee. The entire exam development was overseen by Knapp & Associates, one of the country's leading certification consulting organizations.

In order to receive the LPQ designation, you must take and pass the LPQ exam. While the exam is based largely on the LPQ coursework, it is important to note that you do not have to purchase the courseware to take the exam. The LPQ courseware is a study tool designed to aid those who wish to earn their LPQ.

The LPQ exam consists of 100 multiple choice questions of various degrees of difficulty. The exam will test an individual's understanding of general retail concepts, business practices, and basic loss prevention concepts. Any individual who passes the exam will receive an LPQ certification and will be able to use the LPQ designation after their name. As with any professional designation, this can also be added to your resume as an educational achievement.

The LPQ exam will be administered on behalf of the Foundation by Comira, a leading national test facilitator. The exam will be available at Comira testing locations throughout the U.S. The test will be available in six-week intervals throughout the year. The first administration interval is April 22 through June 9. All individuals who are interested in taking the exam must first register at the Foundation's web site, pay a \$250 testing fee, and then schedule their date and location with Comira.

Academic Initiative

Last year the Foundation, in cooperation with seven national recruiting search firms, conducted a statistical review of how many retail loss prevention professionals hold college degrees. It has previously been reported that only 20 percent of one firm's database had degrees. Our research estimates that the figure is between 20 and 30 percent—which is not much to brag about. The results indicate that there is a need to attract more college graduates into our profession.

To that end, the Foundation aggressively launched a program last year designed at increasing the awareness for opportunities in our industry with college and university academic programs. The goal is to demonstrate that retail loss prevention is an

excellent career alternative to the traditional criminal justice options, giving retailers a better chance to attract top talent.

At this stage we can report tremendous progress, with greater mountains yet to climb.

Academic Committee. We have created a first-class academic committee comprised of professors from Eastern Kentucky University, Northern Michigan University, University of Florida, North Carolina Central University, University of Houston Downtown, University of North Carolina Charlotte, and Northeastern University.

College Database. We have created a college database of almost 800 academic degree programs designed to help individuals identify the best programs for continued education.

Scholarship Program. We have created a scholarship program for university students and have distributed ten scholarships over the past year.

Email Contacts. We have sent thousands of emails to professors and student organizations describing our new initiatives, creating a buzz about LP that never before existed.

Conferences. We attended the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Convention, as well as the Alpha Phi Sigma Annual Convention (national criminal justice honor society), where we promoted LP as a career choice and awarded five scholarships for the coming academic year.

Thanks to the support of the National Retail Federation and the Retail Industry Leaders Association, who both sent us very useful information, we have captured the attention of 1,500 to 2,000 professors and 500 premier students, not to mention distributing hundreds of *LossPrevention* magazines.

We urge everyone to contact your alma mater or your local college or university to help us spread the word about careers in LP. We also hope that the industry trade associations, vendors, and other LP-related support groups aid us in this effort.

Professional Membership Growing

The Foundation now has members from over 150 companies and ten different countries. Our membership centers were created as comprehensive educational resources for the loss prevention professional. You can review the membership demo on our web site to get a look at the benefits of belonging to this program.

For more information about any of the programs or initiatives of the Foundation, visit www.LossPreventionFoundation.org. ■