

Your CCNA Exam Success Strategy

The Non-Technical Guide Book

For
CCNA Routing and Switching

By

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Praise for “Your CCNA EXAM Success Strategy”

Kenya Thomas, CCSI #34027

There are many books out there that describe the technical aspects of passing the CCNA, but there is nothing like “Your CCNA Exam Success Strategy”. The first non-technical guide to passing the CCNA is extraordinary. From getting your family and kids on board, to selling the idea to your boss, to managing your energy. This book has it all. A non-technical personal guide written by two top notch Networking Experts. Buy it. Read it. Live it. And pass your CCNA!

Kojo Addae-Mintah CCNP, CCSI #32929

“The co-authoring team of Vivek and Dean has once again delivered the missing piece of CCNA exam preparation. As a current CCNA instructor, I know the curriculum gaps that need to be filled to pass the CCNA exam. This clear concise guide fills those gaps and even gives relevant tips that all entry level engineers need to be successful in the Network Engineering field. “

Yash Modi, CCNA, CCDA, CCNA Wireless, CCNP

"This book is a great mentor for someone who is preparing for CCNA. It highlights the practicality of the entire journey from preparation for the exam to all the hurdles one may encounter during the preparation course. A perfect guide one should follow as they prepare for the certification - a master piece."

Scott Butler CCIE#10560 CCAI (Cisco Certified Academy Instructor)

"Vivek and Dean have not only provided a great framework to get you to your target, but to keep you on track for reaching that target"

Nayyar Farooq, CCNA, MCSENET+, Security +, CISSP

"Gives in depth confidence, knowledge, encouragement, discipline and wisdom to pass the CCNA certification"

"An excellent addition to the collection of expertise, tips, and experiences and especially, those who are new in the field of information technology".

Maurice Walker, CCNA, CCNP

"It is a privilege and an honor to provide a review on a guide that will truly help the lives of many people obtain success in a career such as network engineering.

I would like to start by saying that this book is a very easy read. The chapters are short and to the point which is great. Each one tells a story which makes our own struggles easy to relate too.

I enjoy the ideas brought forth like having a mentor or a partner to work on things. It seems to do very well for you two. The chapter on setting a clear prize is one I'm going to start implementing. Usually I do have a little celebration after I pass a test but I love the idea of getting something concrete to remember my struggle and triumph. Most of these ideas are things I have incorporated into my routine over the past few years like talking with my spouse and using many different."

Glenn Sharpnack, CCIE Candidate

This book is the very first book a CCNA candidate should read during their preparation. Dean and Vivek give straight forward and easy to follow advice that will prepare you for success.

What others are saying:

- ✓ *Everyone tells you to read a book. Vivek and Dean tell you how to read and pass the CCNA exam.*
- ✓ *The advice that is found in this book is not found in any CCNA book!*
- ✓ *This unique book covers the much needed non-technical aspects of CCNA exam preparation.*
- ✓ *Real mentorship from two CCIE's.*
- ✓ *With this book you never lose your way to becoming a CCNA.*
- ✓ *Enough guidance with built in flexibility for anyone who wants to be CCNA certified.*
- ✓ *Tells you how to study intelligently and not just study harder.*
- ✓ *They even tell you how to prepare your resume and how to interview.*

About The Authors

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Vivek Tiwari holds a Bachelor's degree in Physics, MBA and many certifications from multiple vendors including Cisco's CCIE. With double CCIE on R&S and SP track under his belt he mentors and coaches other engineers. Vivek has been working in Inter-networking industry for more than fifteen years, consulting for many Fortune 100 organizations. These include service providers, as well as multinational conglomerate corporations and the public sector. His five plus years of service with Cisco's Advanced Services has gained him the respect and admiration of colleagues and customers alike. His experience includes and not limited to network architecture, training, operations, management and customer relations; which made him a sought after coach and mentor, as well as a recognized leader.

He is also the author of

“Your CCIE Lab Success Strategy the non-Technical guidebook”

“Stratégie pour réussir votre Laboratoire de CCIE”

“Your CCNA Success Strategy Learning by Immersing – Sink or Swim”

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“Your CCIE Lab Success Strategy the non-Technical guidebook”

“Stratégie pour réussir votre Laboratoire de CCIE”

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Donna Menna, our editor for converting our engineer-speak into an understandable and printable language.

We would also like to give a special thank you to Nandini Tiwari, Shiprali Tandon, Avantika Tiwari and Neeka Karimian for their help with the final editing.

We thankfully acknowledge the helpful review and suggestions from:

Kenya Thomas

Scott Butler

Kojo Addae-Mintah

Jeff Crooks

Glenn Sharpnack

Maurice Walker

Nayyar Farooq

Yash Modi

Lastly, we would like to thank everyone else who assisted and encouraged us with this work.

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Dedication:

Dean Bahizad: I would like to dedicate this book to my parents, my in-laws and my siblings who gave me so much to be thankful for. Your inspiration, teachings and blessings have been the invisible hand guiding me forward all my life.

Vivek Tiwari: I would like to dedicate this book to my parents who worked tirelessly and sacrificed so much to make me what I am today. They gave me the wings to fly and freedom to explore anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

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INTRODUCTION

A Wiseman once asked, “Is there any greater blessing conceivable for a man than that he should become the cause of education, development, prosperity and honor of his fellow humans?” No, there is no other.

This book is written in order for you to become empowered and to understand what lies ahead for you in your CCNA journey.

To start off let us explain, what is CCNA? The Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) is a Cisco certification, which tests you on the fundamentals of networking and is seen worldwide as one of the most popular and recognized networking certification. You may take one composite exam (single track) or two exams (ICND 1 & ICND2) to become a CCNA. We will cover these two options in more detail in chapters ahead, followed with a detailed timeline at the end of the book (Refer to chapter 37: Your flight plan). Nowadays it is a must for any network professional to hold at least one Associate Level certification track (CCNA) or more advanced certification such as Professional track Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP).

This certification not only proves your technical prowess but also adds prestige to your résumé. In many organizations, having a CCNA is a great way to build your knowledge to gain a better understanding of today’s networks and to be recognized for your technical skills. **Your CCNA will inspire you to pursue a specialization** and may increase your salary and provide job security in today’s volatile work environment. You may not

know this; but CCNA certification has become harder to obtain in the past 10 years or so because certifications have to keep pace with the technology. If you really think about it, a large number of electronic devices that we touch are connected to the network. The cable channels on your TV, that credit card swipe at the gas pump/petrol pump, your smartphone, your laptop, ATM machine, and countless devices that we deal with are connected to the network. As a network engineer it is our job to provide these essential services without interruption to the end-user. The customer (end-user) may not be aware of the complex infrastructure behind communication of these devices, but they are keenly aware of the outages and the adverse impact on their daily lives.

Therefore, it is essential to know what services the network is providing to the society in general and how these devices communicate and exchange information via various protocols behind the scenes. The more we understand the communication and technology behind many of these devices, the more we appreciate it and the more we want to immerse ourselves in it.

When we were studying for our technical certification exams, we realized that all of the emphasis in preparation was on the technical aspects (which is of course is the aim of that certification) but an important element, the non-technical aspect was missing. There is an uncertainty about where to start and how to pass this test; **but most importantly, how to study effectively to gain sufficient knowledge so that you can use it in**

your daily work. This element has not been taught anywhere; until now. We have created this unique book to discuss the non-technical aspects of the CCNA exam. This book is for anyone, who is considering the CCNA challenge.

We want to tell you at the outset that we are engineers just like you, and because of that, this book is short and to the point. In our experience, we have seen many CCNA candidates approach the exam just like any other exam without proper strategies, planning or preparation. Due to the enormity of this exam, some get sidetracked or discouraged. In many instances, this is due to the non-technical aspects. Here are a few common scenarios that we have seen.

Scenario 1:

You plan and set a target date for scheduling your CCNA exam and start studying very hard. As you approach your target date, you realize that you are not fully prepared and so you postpone scheduling the CCNA exam. After doing this a couple of times you stop trying.

The problem in this scenario is that your target date is not planned well. Either the date is too aggressive or you are not able to devote the requisite amount of time for studying. Both of these are non-technical reasons that we will tackle in this book.

Scenario 2:

You start preparing after reading the CCNA Exam blueprint. The sheer number of books and video content on the internet can be overwhelming

and at times confusing. When this happens, you may get overwhelmed and stop studying altogether.

The problem in this scenario is that you need to change the way you prepare and study. You need to be very specific about what training resources to use, and how to use them. This is another non-technical aspect. We will give you guidelines on how to maximize your studying efficiency later on in this book.

Scenario 3:

For your specific CCNA track you may purchase books and other training resources. The next question is, where do I start? Do I just read the first book and then move on to the next? When should I start my lab? Do I use simulators like DYNAMIPS/GNS3 or PACKET TRACER or should I buy actual gear? As you study you will see that the number of doubts in your mind start to grow. There comes a time when you have so many doubts and questions that you are overwhelmed. This may cause you to postpone or give up on your CCNA quest.

The problem in this scenario is that the candidate has many gaps in their knowledge. Without proper planning, preparation and mentoring, the technologies become more daunting. This book addresses the gradual step-by-step processes you should follow to succeed.

Scenario 4:

You have studied hard and are well prepared for your CCNA exam. You have scheduled your exam and you reach the testing center on time

and complete all the formalities. You start your exam and you take your time with some of the multiple choice questions. You soon realize that with this speed, you may not be able to finish the exam on time. You start to speed up but are not sure of all the answers and your confidence and preparation is beginning to stall. You start to have doubts and think you will fail the exam.

The problem in this scenario is not your technical knowledge; it is the lack of a test taking strategy which is again a non-technical issue.

We can keep on going with many more scenarios; these and many other pitfalls are addressed in this book.

In this guidebook we tell you:

- The three essential keys to unlock your success.
- How to effectively utilize your training provider's resources.
- The four step process that will help when using Video on Demand.
- The Do's and Don'ts for your CCNA exam preparation.
- Detailed timelines with milestones to prepare for either the two exam CCNA approach or the single exam CCNA approach. (See Chapter 4 to decide which approach is suitable to you)
- How you can do all of this, and still work your full time job.

This book is easy to follow. What we have written is advice that we gave to others about our Cisco certification experiences. It contains short concise chapters that will not take away your study time, it should only enhance it.

All the chapters in this book are suggestions based on our successful personal experiences. Use these suggestions to suit your specific needs. But **remember, these are suggestions, and not rules that are set in stone** to help you succeed in your CCNA exam.

If you have a huge task which is outside your comfort zone, you need to break it down into smaller manageable chunks. At times, you may feel overwhelmed, but you need to be in control and rationalize the purpose behind this undertaking. This reminds us of a story someone told us, about a man who was planning to follow his dream of hiking the entire Appalachian Trail in one summer. For those who don't know the Appalachian Trail is about 2,184 miles (3515 KM) and passes through 14 states on the eastern side of US. He knew very well that many enthusiasts start to hike the trail in one season but can't complete. He was excited for the challenge and to experience what so many people start but only few get to finish. He had planned that each day he will hike the trail from 15 to 20 miles and next day he will get up and do the same regardless, rain or shine he will move until he reaches the end. Once he started he realized how difficult it was. The difference in terrain, weather, and elevation made it difficult to do the 20 miles a day. After just 10 days he was on the verge of quitting but then told himself if he quits now he will think of himself as a quitter all his life. Instead of thinking about the difficulties and the long walk he told himself that all he has to do is put one foot in front of the other, while looking at the nice views around him. Before long the day was

done and he was closer to his ultimate goal. He continued to do this and soon realized that his goal was much closer and achievable.

Once you follow our guidelines and decide on what path to take, your sole job is to be persistent and aggressively pursue your plan, without looking at the distance that you have traveled or the long road ahead, just keep going.

We recognize that CCNA is at least four to an eight month project (depending on your skill set and the time you can allocate for studying) that you need to break down into daily, weekly activities and goals. Thus the question that you should be asking yourself is, **“What can I do in the next fifteen minutes to help with my daily goal?”** This question changes the way you look at things, namely breaking down CCNA into daily, weekly tasks. The goal is to get a CCNA, but what you need to realize is that every fifteen minutes counts and can **bring you one step closer to achieving your goal.**

This guidebook will give you an inside view of CCNA Exam preparation. We will be mentoring you through a step-by-step process and provide answers to the questions you will have on your journey to this demanding certification. Some ideas in this book may sound deceptively simple, yet they will make a huge difference once you implement them. For example, it is important that before you go to bed; you spend five minutes of your time reflecting on what you did for that day and write down your plan for the next day. This simple gesture will prepare you for the next day to hit

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the ground running. You will not waste a single minute thinking about what you should study or where you should start.

We are here to give you the **straightforward, no-nonsense picture of what it will take to get your CCNA**. These strategies have worked for us, and we are confident that they will help you in your endeavor too.

Visit our website at **2doubleccies.com** for additional information.

CHAPTER 3: WHY THIS GUIDEBOOK

This book will enable you to get yourself the CCNA certified status and help you plan to move ahead in your career.

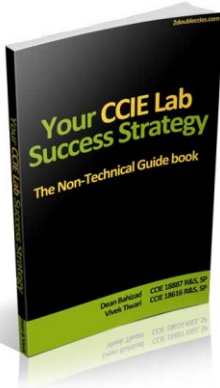
As an instructor, I ^(Dean) have taught many engineers who were keenly interested in one certification or the other. Some did not pass the certification exam in spite of their best intentions because of the non-technical obstacles. Certification exams can be very intimidating for some engineers, so intimidating that they could not sleep the night before, even though they knew the technologies. Others had no strategy for study and preparation for the exam. Some of them treated this like any other exam that they could pass by just studying for a day or two before the exam. All this resulted in them not passing the exam.

By listening to their experiences, both authors (Vivek and Dean) realized that many of the issues they described were non-technical, and perhaps lacked strategy. We therefore decided to provide a comprehensive, and easy to read guidebook that would cover all these issues and provide the answers and the approach that we feel would overcome the above mentioned and many other obstacles. In our experience, **we noticed that the non-technical side of the CCNA exam is just as important as the technical side.** Whenever we are asked about our certification experience, we talk about the technical and the non-technical aspects. Almost invariably, the non-technical aspects are valued more. While studying for our own certifications as well as talking to, tutoring, and

inspiring many other candidates in their quest for certifications, we realized that there were very few, if any, resources for this information. This is one of the only books (to our knowledge) that fills that non-technical gap for CCNA certification.

However, we also realize that each individual has a different approach to learning. We are simply writing about what worked for us and what resonated most with our fellow engineers. We encourage you to adapt this text to best suit your needs and style of learning. **Consider this more of a guidebook than an infallible set of rules to follow.** For instance, from our experience and interviews with a number of other certified engineers, we suggest that after the basic background work, you should be able to attain your CCNA within four to eight months (See Chapter 37: Your flight plan). Our suggestion of eight months does not mean that if you complete your CCNA in twelve months you are underperforming. This also does not mean that you cannot do it in less than four months. This timeline is a framework that can be used to make your own study schedule that is best suited for your situation and needs.

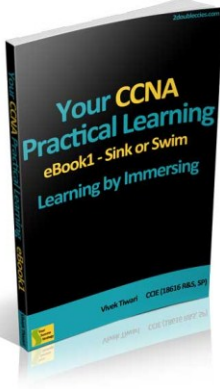
Books by Dean and Vivek.



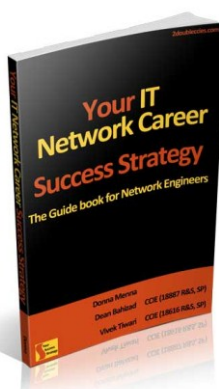
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