

## Linux Certification: Is RedHat the only Certifier?

Written by Muhammad Kamran Azeem

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There is no doubt that RHCE is one of the most prestigious, and well known Linux certification in the world. Founded in 1993, RedHat has taken over the world by storm, on the basis of its contributions to the open-source world, its excellent technical support services, and its education/certification programs. RHCE is the most sought after, and highly praised certification in the IT world at the moment.

### The Problem:

Just like everywhere else in the world, every Linux enthusiast in Pakistan wants to be certified under RHCE program. And, from institutes in some unknown urban area to the institutes with established names, everyone seems to be conducting training for the same. One of the reasons strengthening this trend, is the demand from the businesses / companies / organizations, who, for any Linux related job, demand, that an IT professional must be certified under RHCE.

To be certified under RHCE, one must appear in the 5+ hour lab-based / hands-on practical exam, conducted by RedHat, through its training partners. This exam has not been conducted in Pakistan, for past few years now. RHCE exam needs (a) a local training partner, and (b) an RHCX (RedHat Certified Examiner) to conduct the exam. Unfortunately, we do not have (local) RHCX in Pakistan. For all past exams, which were conducted in Pakistan, examiners came from India. However, because of the political, and law and order situation in Pakistan, developed in past years, RedHat India, being the regional hub, does not feel safe to send its examiners to Pakistan. Professionals who have been preparing for this exam, literally for years, are extremely disappointed, as they see their time being wasted; and worst, they see no hope of this exam being conducted in Pakistan, in near future. This is causing an adverse effect on the careers of these professionals. We need to find a solution to this, on urgent basis.

Based on the problem explained above, requesting RedHat to resume its examination in Pakistan, again, would not be a solution. One of the solutions is to have our own RHCXs, who, in partnership with a RedHat training partner, can conduct this exam in Pakistan. However, to be certified under RHCX, one must already be certified under RHCT or RHCE. Our Linux professionals, already certified in RHCT/E are a perfect candidate for getting certified under RHCX. Unfortunately, RHCX exams are not conducted in Pakistan. There is a work around. That is, if someone already certified under RHCE is willing and ready to become RHCX, then an institute or the organization he/she is attached to, can invest in sending him/her outside Pakistan, to go through the necessary training and examination, and return as an RHCX.

### The Long Term Solution:

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The long term solution is to consider and adapt other Linux distributions, and other Linux certification authorities, other than RedHat. The Pakistani IT industry (businesses and professionals) has developed a false notion; that RedHat's RHEL is the only Linux distribution, and RHCE is the only Linux certification program in the world. This of-course, is not true. RedHat is not the only certifier. Debian, Fedora, CENTOS, Ubuntu, etc, are few of the many other popular distributions, which we can use as a replacement for RedHat. Since we are focusing on Linux certification problems in this article, we would like to highlight, that there are other industry recognized Linux certifications as well, such as LPIC (from Linux Professional Institute), and Linux+ (from CompTIA), etc. The purpose of this letter is to convey and educate the entire IT industry of Pakistan, including but not limited to: IT policy makers, decision makers, managers, system administrators and general IT practitioners, that opening your doors to Linux Professionals certified under non-RedHat programs, will not only benefit your business, it would also be beneficial to the entire IT Eco-system. When you do that, it would make sense for us to ask the IT professionals / Linux professionals to prepare for LPIC, Linux+ and other Linux certifications; because you (businesses), would already be willing to take them in.

Here are some of the key points, which should convince businesses to open their arms towards non-RedHat certified professionals. And the same points should convince individuals to prepare for these non-RedHat certification programs.

### LPIC

- Conducted by Linux Professional Institute. (<http://lpi.org>)
- Internationally recognized, and well reputed Linux certification program.
- Often considered a better certification program, compared to RedHat certification programs, by professionals around the world.
- Vendor neutral certification.
- Option of taking a RedHat (RPM based), or Debian based exam, to the candidate.
- Exams can be conducted through Prometric and Pearson VUE testing centers. No need for external examiners, or to fly to other countries.
- Memory based / Multiple choice exam.
- Provides multiple levels of certification, such as LPIC level 1, LPIC level 2, LPIC level 3, etc. Each level has two papers.
- Exam cost is usually the equivalent of \$173 US dollars, per exam.
- Exam duration is 90 minutes.

### Linux+

- Conducted by CompTIA. (<http://certification.comptia.org>)
- Internationally recognized, and well reputed Linux certification program. Now powered by LPI.
- Vendor neutral certification.
- Option of taking a RedHat (RPM based), or Debian based exam, to the candidate.

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- Exams can be conducted through Prometric and Pearson VUE testing centers. No need for external examiners, or to fly to other countries.
- Memory based / Multiple choice exam.
- Exam cost is usually the equivalent of \$163 US dollars, per exam.
- Exam duration is 90 minutes.

## Oracle Enterprise Linux Certified Administrator

- Conducted by Oracle Corporation ( <http://education.oracle.com> )
- Internationally recognized, and gaining repute.
- Will increase your chances to work with Oracle based companies too!
- Two exams.
- Exams can be conducted through Pearson VUE testing centers. No need for external examiners, or to fly to other countries.
- Memory based / Multiple choice exam.
- Exam cost is usually the equivalent of \$195 US dollars, per exam.
- Exam duration is 120 minutes.

**Note:** Being a memory based, or multiple choice based exam does not mean, that it is an inferior examination / certification program. All certification programs from Microsoft, Cisco, Oracle, Juniper, etc, and even CISSP, are memory testing exams. The only exception is CCIE from Cisco, OCM from Oracle, which are lab exams, just like RHCE.

As you can see, these exams (LPIC and Linux+) are feasible, and suited to the Pakistani IT industry. Businesses can acquire more vendor neutral, but certified professionals to support their IT operations. And IT professionals can get certified under these vendor neutral certifications, because the businesses would be willing to take them in. It is not limited to Linux only. Vendor neutral certifications, such as Network+, Security+, etc, should be encouraged for related IT domains. It would surely prove to be a healthy and self-sustaining Eco-system. Besides, all internationally recognized companies like HP, Dell, IBM, Lenovo, etc, accept LPIC, Linux+, Network+, Security+ certified professionals, along RHCE, CCNA, CISSP and other vendor certifications. Why can't the Pakistani IT industry do the same?

## Summary:

Businesses and IT professionals must break away from any form of “vendor lockup”. Linux brings you freedom. Don't tie your freedom with one vendor. Open up. Embrace Open-Source in it's entirety. Embrace vendor-neutral Linux certifications. That is the solution. That is the way to the future.

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### About the Author:

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