



Networking Certification Provides a Pathway to Prosperity

Thomas Mle Seton was considering a career in accounting when a friend convinced him to enroll in a computer hardware course, which set him on the path to a career in ICT.

Accepting an Invitation to Explore a New Field



"Networking can change your life forever. It can take you places. Networking allows you to interact with people with no boundaries. With a career in networking, you have landed somewhere."

Thomas Mle Seton, Information Resource Clerk and Office Technology Coordinator, UNFAO Liberia

When Thomas Mle Seton graduated from college, his goal was to become an accountant, but two events set him on a different path. First, his older sister gave him a computer as a graduation present. "I never sat in front of a computer before and I didn't know what to do with it," he recalls. "That was in 2005 at a refugee camp, Buduburam Camp in Accra, Ghana."

"Within that same week, UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) was recruiting refugees to learn about different trades, and computer hardware was one of the courses," Seton explains. Although he had no interest or background in hardware, a friend insisted that it might be beneficial, so Seton reluctantly enrolled in the course.

Despite his reservations, the class was so interesting that Seton soon developed an interest in the subject. After completing the hardware course, he was among 15 students who were selected to complete a software course. He did well in the course and was invited to enroll in a networking course at the Kofi Annan Center of Excellence in ICT (AITI) in Accra.

Earning an Important Qualification

Seton enjoyed studying networking at AITI, where he says "networking was made simple by my wonderful instructors, Mr. Haruna M. B., and Mrs. Eleanor." After completing the networking course, Seton was one of 10 students selected to enroll in the Cisco Networking Academy® CCNA course in 2006. The course features he found most helpful were the delivery method, which separated lessons into modules followed by review questions and practical labs using real equipment; the quality of the instructors; and the online assessment and grading system, which allows students to "quickly discover their weaknesses." He completed the Cisco CCNA® courses 1-4 by February 2007.

After completing CCNA, Seton faced an important milestone: earning his CCNA certification. "All eyes were on me that day," he recalls. "I got phone calls from everybody eagerly wanting to know if I passed. The whole refugee camp knew I went to Accra to write the wonderful CCNA exam, as that name was a hot cake and everyone wanted to get a hold of it. If I failed, the whole camp would laugh at me, but if I passed, it would be a turning point in my life. After I submitted the questions, the next page I saw was: Congratulations! You have passed the CCNA Exam."

Launching a Career in ICT

Seton now works as an IT technician for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UNFAO) in Liberia. "With just my CCNA certification, I am paid more than the accountant profession I was thinking about," he says. His extensive job responsibilities include assisting staff members with computer issues, providing external technical support, monitoring security compliance and network services, and maintaining the FAO virtual and physical reference library. He hopes to earn his Cisco CCNP® certification soon and advance his career.

When asked what Mind Wide Open means to him, Seton replies "being free of intellectual bigotry and demonstrating a willingness to listen and understand. A person with an open mind like me doesn't reject an opinion before he hears it, doesn't decide something is bad or inferior because it's new or foreign, and understands that people will look at a situation and come to different conclusions based on their own personal perspectives, priorities, and proclivities."

For More Information

To learn more about Cisco® Networking Academy, please visit www.cisco.com/go/netacad.