

The Reality of Competency-Based TSCM Certification Training, Experience and Self-Regulation | Part I

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TSCM Training, Certification and Experience

Part I | The subject of training, certification and dare I say, “minimum recommended experience levels” are absolutely essential components in the procurement of professional-level counter-espionage, counter-intelligence, technical security, and Technical Surveillance Countermeasures (TSCM); often referred to as debugging or bug sweeps. There are literally hundreds of companies with websites, claiming that they provide debugging, counter-surveillance and TSCM services. The vast majority of these offerings are little more than untrained pretenders, without any formal or on-going training and certification, let alone any measure of recent recurrent training. Most have very little actual working knowledge or experience. Further, they are often seriously under-equipped, utilizing older, even obsolete, cheap and ineffective spy-shop resources, deployed well above their understanding of the capabilities, and more importantly the limitations. Let me say up front that there is no legal required level of certification, proof of competence, or sanctioned level of professional ethics required to purchase TSCM equipment, or obtain any measure of actual or verifiable training, obtain certification or attend professional development opportunities in order to provide TSCM services, in a generally unregulated industry. There is no requirement to belong to an industry-based professional association. Ironically, some operators are more than happy to openly boast that no training or experience-based certification is required, to prospective clients and new hires, and we often hear the same from some manufacturers who want to sell their products to anyone. In short, and for the record, you can be as incompetent as you want, and still provide sub-par services to the masses of uninitiated individuals, businesses, corporations, and even government entities who simply believe the marketing hype of equipment manufacturers and the industry damaging actions of those operators that see a big bag of cash.



It is an unfortunate reality that such entities are remarkably successful fooling unsuspecting end-users that the services they provide, are of a competent nature. The reality is that many of these individuals and entities have so little to offer, they build their websites and marketing on the information and concepts taken from the few true industry leaders. This in its self is very disturbing, and unfortunately seems to be a growing trend, in the light that anyone can post a website that is misleading, void of reality and facts, as strictly a marketing tool to attract unsuspecting customers. Apparently, it is possible to fool all of the people all of the time! Since there is only one Technical Security Specialist (TSS)[™] designate certification program available in North America, based on the TSB 2000 (Technical) Standard, it stands to reason that the credentials of the operator you are hiring, will have attended our training, and will have submitted verifiable experience data as required under our experienced-based certification protocol. We encourage you to give us a call with your list of prospective TSCM service providers and we be happy to provide our opinion as to the whether or not the company you are considering are legitimate or not. A call from a recent perspective hire looking to break into the TSCM industry, told us that another company he contacted first, told him that there is no certification or training requirement and all that was needed was to apprentice for a short time with some company, buy some equipment and then provide services on his own to the public. This is not surprising, we have heard it all before, but it identifies a number of serious concerns that need to be addressed across the TSCM industry. When such people make these types of statements, it is a definitive sign that you need to walk-away or ask a lot more questions as to why they feel that no standards-based training, certification, or significant experience is a requirement to provide professional services of this nature. Obviously, they do not have the judgement, training, or experience themselves, or they would not make such uninformed statements about a professional services industry. The reality is, that it speaks volumes about the people that make such absurd statements and it is a powerful indicator of their own lack of qualifications and understanding of the tremendous high-stakes liability involved in providing counter-espionage professional services, and believe that the end-user is just a financial contributor to their personal bank account, and generally nothing more. Sub-contracting to the lowest bidder of an untrained pool of operators is in no way a competent approach to the high-stakes state-sponsored espionage or corporate espionage risk.

Remember, in a Moving Target Threat Model the Technical Operator is the Spectrum Analyzer...

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Self-Regulation

In the reality of a lack of regulation, it stands to reason that anyone offering Technical Surveillance Countermeasures (TSCM), seek a competent source of professional standards that must include initial training, processive certification and monitoring, reoccurring professional development requirements, and on-going recertification activity consistent with the specific types of professional services provided. Anything else is inherently wrong on every level. You really need to talk to a consortium of industry experts that can help to provide a realistic evaluation of your current skill sets and experience suitable to the TSCM role, and guide you accordingly to fill in the missing knowledge. Professional Development TSCM Group Inc., can put you in touch with a number of industry peer group operators of select professional industry leaders to help guide your self-regulation journey to success. Professional Development TSCM Group Inc., is the only private sector entity that has established a formal operational standard, under the umbrella of the TSB 2000 (Technical) Standard[™], to address initial training, certification, and professional development requirements. The number of legitimate operators across the country is limited to a few experienced operators. Our company has provided technical security inspections at all operational threat levels for more than 40 years, and our resident-based designate certification level training for a solid 21 years; and we have been building and promoting competent professional standards since year 2000. We encompass all aspects of the technical-security industry under a common standards-based methodology that is firmly based on a modern moving target threat model. If these so-called industry experts actually have the required industry knowledge and experience that they claim to have; I am sure they will not hesitate in sitting our TSCM Certified Technical Security Specialist (TSS) examination.

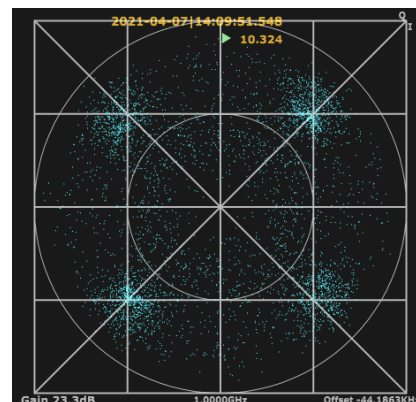
Training

Simply stated, training is a career and life-time long commitment. It never ends. Today's, hostile threat technology and state-sponsored threat actors deploy extremely complex technology using advanced trade-craft.

Even at marginal threat levels, this reality demands initial and on-going formal training, standards-based certification and significant on the job training with a competent Technical Security Specialist (TSS)[™], to have even a remote chance of defeating a motivated and tenacious threat actor. There is no easy out when it comes to proper training, aside from the slick website and big talk and buzzwords, used to convince the uninitiated that they provide a competent service without it.

Certification

Simply put, certification extends your professional credibility and provides personal and professional checks and balances relating to your skills development. People who insist that no certification is required are simply hiding behind their own incompetence and lack of motivation. You need the benefit of verifiable training and literally years of experience that is structured as a formalized certification standard, to succeed as a professional level TSCM service provider. Standards-based certification helps to mitigate the huge liability factor that is associated with the delivery of professional level Technical Surveillance Countermeasures (TSCM) activities, by a factor of training, experience, equipment resources, and the application of professional ethics. We are here to help. Join Team Kestrel



for career guidance and direction. We are here to provide the unvarnished reality when it comes to standards, training, certification, equipment, and on-going professional development.

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