# Transcript: IT Podcast - Ep 116 - D114 Tips with Jeff Ferdinand and Jessica Galterio

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Jessica

Welcome to the IT Audio Series. I'm Jessica Galterio, and I have been with WGU since 2015. Today I have with me Jeff Ferdinand from the Cisco group, who has been with WGU since 2013. Thank you for joining me today, Jeff.

Jeff

Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

Jessica

Tell me, what is this course about?

Jeff

CCNA course is basically an upper entry level, what they call, associate exam, and it covers the fundamentals of networking. It's focused, but not completely based around Cisco products, and is very broad-based. It covers a lot of materials to get a person competent, and comfortable with working with a network. It's focused on Layer 2 and Layer 3, which make more sense if a person has a bit of a background, or once they get into the course, and it provides a solid understanding to implement and care for basically small to medium-sized networks.

Jessica

Perfect. What are the key resources that students should be using in this course?

Jeff

On the WGU course page for Cisco, the CCNA course, basically they go there, and then they log in to Cisco, because we utilize Cisco provided course materials, and once there, they access the full study materials through the Cisco log on there. We also have separately a student folder that holds in just an abundance of pertinent information, and things that they can utilize to make their journeys smoother and more focused for the exam, and for the course.

That's one of the things that we highly recommend, is the students first stops, especially reviewing folders 1, 2 and 3 at a minimum there.

I love that shared folder. As a program mentor, I'm always happy to direct students there. That's for sure.

Jessica

What are some of the common barriers that students run into with this one?

Jeff

Two of them really. A big one is false confidence, and that comes from having a background in Cisco. The thing to remember is that this is academic Cisco, it's not necessarily field Cisco, and it's just a lot of materials that people don't use every day in their jobs, it's the nitty-gritty, the basics. Because it's so broad based, there's just so much content to cover, and to prepare for, and that's one of the major things. People may be working in the field and feel that, hey, I know all this, and they may be comfortable with it, but they don't remember, or know it academically, all the nitty-gritty, all the details, because a lot of times you just look that up. For the exam, you need to have it down. Cisco also tends to punish skimming, which as society, we are currently almost geared for, because you go look online, most of the time you're just skimming an article, or to see if you're interested in something. A lot of exams you do the same, you skim the question to get the pertinent, or the important information so that you can go ahead, and answer it quickly. With Cisco, that can be misleading, because if you do that, you can end up answering a question that makes sense to you, and seems to have an answer, but it's not the question that was actually written. Cisco tends to punish that. They also are layered. The questions can be layered, so they're going to expect you to know some information that they may not state to be able to answer the question that they do give you.

Basically, the person has to understand what the question is not telling you, as well as what it is telling you, and take all of that into account. It's a bit more challenging than the usual exams.

Jessica

Wow, definitely. How many questions can students typically expect?

Jeff

Right now, you're looking right around 100. But that changes for each iteration, and they don't specifically state. Best bet is to look at the forums, talk to your instructor, look at what the community is saying as well, but you're looking about a 100, give or take.

Jessica

That's part of this certificate objective assessment, that once students pass, they turn in that score sheet, and then they get the credit for the course.

Jeff

Correct.

Jessica

What's the best way to get through this course efficiently?

Jeff

Step 1 is to review the Cisco CCNA topic guide, and that can be found linked in the student folder. In Folder 1, there's a one-page FAQ that goes over course information, and the exam information. You can find a link to the Cisco topic guide there, because the topic guide itself is basically Cisco saying this is what we expect you to know for the exam in a line item format. That would be the first step.

Jessica

The [inaudible 00:05:20] are toughest.

Jeff

Yes. That would be Step 1, to review that, to see how they're feeling about things. Step 2 is look at the pacing guides on Folder 2 of the student folder, and decide on what pacing the student is after, what they're thinking about. Then Step 3 is to contact your chosen Cisco instructor either via email, or set up a brief phone quick consultation, or via phone call basically, based on your background, and your study habits and your time available, what's the best, and recommended path forward for you is. If you take those three steps, that's a [inaudible 00:06:01] to get through the most efficiently.

Jessica

Perfect. I love that advice. It's always great to talk to your course instructor, but it sounds like it's vital for this course.

Jeff

It makes things a lot easier. If a student has a great background, knows what they're doing, maybe taken the CCNA before, then it's not absolutely a mandatory thing. It still doesn't hurt because of that false confidence that I mentioned earlier, at least to touch [inaudible 00:06:26] briefly. But in general, yes, highly recommended just because of the way the exam is set up, and the way the course is set up, and just the material itself. It's a different approach.

Jessica

That's great advice. Give us your top tips for the exam. Is there anything in particular that students should be watching out for?

Jeff

Cisco exams allow for forward movement only, so once a person submits a question, there's no reviewing it, and there's no going back, and that's a big one. I mentioned before, the topic guide, you want to focus studies around that, because again, it is Cisco telling us what they expect us to know. Historically, it's been fairly accurate, especially CCNA level. It also shows percentages once the person's gone through all the material.

That gives a person a place to start for their review, because you don't want to just study everything and think, okay, I'm good to go, you want to study, go through the materials, and then you want to do at least a week to two of focused review. What you can find from the topic guide, or from your course instructor, is that the first three topics for the current exam, 65 percent of the exam. The other thing that you can find if you look through it, is that wireless runs through topics one through five.

Off the top of our heads, we know that those are going to be large portion of the exam, so you want to make sure that you focus in, and get those solidified before you even sit for the exam.

That would be the top tips, is the percentage, knowing where to focus, making sure you set aside time for a review afterwards, focus review, so you hit those highlights, and make sure that you're solid on the larger percentage of the exam. Outside of that, the question, making sure that you understand that you can't go back, and then stepping back to that other question that was asked earlier, also, the way the questions are set up, so that it's a question interpretation, so you don't skim. Those three item.

Jessica

Solid advice. Thank you. That's great. Those are good test-taking tips in general, but it sounds like it's really important on this one.

Jeff

Exceedingly, yes.

Jessica

What kind of IT industry jobs does this course help prepare you for?

Jeff

Basically entry to mid-level networking based career. It really depends on where you're at, but you're looking at possibly network technician, administrator, engineer, analyst, it can get in a security analyst, and depending on where you're located, your average salary, 60-80. But it depends, because a lot of different factors go into that, but in general, that's kind of what you can expect.

Jessica

That's great. Well, Jeff, thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate all the advice, and guidance that you have shared here with us today. That concludes this episode of the IT Audio Series.

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