

# The Main Event

## Why not combine exams with travel and fun?

**BEFORE ATTENDING** graduate school, I only knew the generic meaning of the word quality. That changed during my second semester, in spring 2003, when I took a quality and productivity methods course. This course opened the door to the quality field and ASQ—and eventually led to witnessing some fantastic sights and sporting events.

The course covered Deming and Juran, as well as Six Sigma, Baldrige and standards. I had heard of some of these topics but didn't know much about them. I certainly had no experience with them, so I began to search for more information.

I found Villanova University's Six Sigma program through the University Alliance. I registered for the online program in February 2005—just after joining ASQ—and finished it in September 2005. The program consisted of three courses: Green Belt, Black Belt and lean Six Sigma.

While I was still toiling away with the Villanova program and graduate school, I landed a job with Service Wire Co. I started as a production planner and was involved with the company's ISO 9001 certified quality system. The experience has been beneficial to me, as the company has sent me to external training classes and provided me with knowledge related to ISO 9001. Recently, I became the management representative for my location.

### Looking for more

During fall 2006, as I finished my graduate

capstone project, I began to look for more quality knowledge. On ASQ's website, I saw certification exam offerings, and I began looking at each of them.

I decided to take the certified quality improvement associate (CQIA) exam, and I purchased the CQIA primer from the Quality Council of Indiana. At the time, I belonged to the Dayton, OH, section of ASQ because some friends lived in that area. I figured that if I ever attended an ASQ event, I could visit them at the same time.

So one weekend in December 2006, I traveled to Dayton, visited my friends and took the exam. Leaving Dayton, I felt good about the exam. I presented my graduate capstone project, finished school two days later and found out I passed the CQIA exam seven days after that. Discovering I had passed really got me fired up about ASQ and quality.

### Making the most of it

I opted to take more ASQ exams and, in the tradition of the Dayton and CQIA trip, decided I would make each exam an event. In March 2007, I took ASQ's certified quality technician exam in Knoxville, TN. Afterward, I treated myself to a University of Tennessee baseball game against the University of Illinois-Chicago, and then I drove to Atlanta to watch a Thrashers hockey game.

I enjoyed the trip so much that I completed the quality process analyst certification in June 2007 and the certified quality

inspector exam in October 2007, both in Knoxville. I have recently added the Knoxville Section to my membership.

After passing the three Knoxville exams, I realized December was the next test date. To me, winter time means hockey. I saw the Pittsburgh Penguins were scheduled to play at home Nov. 30, so I signed up to take the certified calibration technician (CCT) exam in the Steel City. While I was there, I saw the National Aviary, watched the Penguins beat the Dallas Stars and completed the CCT exam the next morning.

Even though this was my fifth exam, my pulse still raced when I got that fateful e-mail letting me know my exam was graded. Passing that exam concluded an incredible weekend in Pittsburgh.

Now, I am planning to take the certified quality auditor exam in December. I had to wait until July to register, though, because that's when the National Hockey League releases its 2008-2009 schedule. Where I take the exam will depend on which hockey team plays at home that same weekend.

While I study and review intensely for these exams, I also make ASQ and quality fun. I reward myself for my efforts, and my ASQ certifications will reward me and my career for a long time to come. **QP**



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