



# Executive Director's Blog

By Scott Flora—May 26, 2010

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## Publisher Certification: Recognizing Quality & Professionalism

I have a vision. My vision is to create a class of independent publishers that are recognized for their professionalism and the excellence of their product. This class of publishers has increased opportunities for reviews and publicity, and better access to distribution and bookstores.

Great vision, but how do we get there? By the end of the year, SPAN plans to implement a certification program for independent publishers. With a working designation of Professional Independent Publisher (PIP), the program will create recognition for this class of publishers.

The industry problems that certification will work to overcome are well known:

- Titles are rejected from the publicity and review process, not because of quality, but because the publishing company is unknown.
- Publishers are unable to get bookstore distribution because their company is small.
- Booksellers and media often have difficulty determining which titles are quality and which publishers are professional.

We will use the SPANnet Online Community and the SPANpro Education Program to plan, implement, and administer the PIP Certification. These three programs will combine to build, identify and certify successful independent publishing companies.

### *PIP Certification*

Developing the PIP Certification by the end of the year will include:

**Assessment**—We will evaluate independent publishers to determine the characteristics of a professional company and will develop the certification criteria based on this assessment.

**Criteria**—Certification will be based on specific criteria being met, such as publishing a completed title, creating a quality product, having an active Web site, and using financial and publishing software.

**Education**—Companies that do not currently meet the criteria for certification will be able to use the PIP Curriculum in the SPANpro Education Program to gain the necessary skills and experience.

**Industry Benefits**—SPAN is developing industry partners who will provide premium access, discounted prices, and other benefits to PIP certified publishers.

**Program Management**—Program management tasks include development of program policies, applicant tracking, certification procedures, communication channels, and PIP Web content.

**Marketing**—When we begin implementation, we will publicize the program to publishers and actively recruit participants. The value of the program to publishers will be driven by the benefits provided by the industry.

These industry benefits will achieve real significance when a threshold number of publishers enroll and attain certification.

### ***SPANpro Education Program***

The SPANpro Education Program, accessed through paid membership, will be available to all certification applicants. A specific curriculum will be created within SPANpro to help publishers achieve PIP Certification.

Currently, the program is organized into curriculum topics, including book production, marketing, finance and taxes, digital products, and writing. The curriculum will be expanded and reorganized to support the PIP Program.

SPANpro combines visual (Webinar video recordings), auditory (audio recordings), and reading (articles, newsletter archive, and marketing plan workbook) to generate a complete system for learning.

### ***SPANnet Online Community***

Launched in January 2010, SPAN's Online Community, SPANnet, is a significant support structure for certification. With over 800 members (and growing rapidly), this free community is an active hub of interaction and problem solving on a wide variety of publishing and business topics.

I invite you to be part of this ground-breaking program. We will use member input through the SPANnet Community to cooperatively build the PIP program.

In addition to using the community to develop the PIP, SPANnet discussion groups will be used to supplement instruction on how to become certified. SPANnet will also be a place to discuss PIP design and administrative issues.

### ***“Do You Have PIP Certification?”***

The time is right for the PIP Certification Program. With the dilemma facing the media and the supply chain in identifying quality publishers and the difficulties of independent publishers in finding publicity and distribution, I am excited to have SPAN leading this important work.

Combining our three major programs, PIP Certification, the SPANnet Online Community, and the SPANpro Education Program, SPAN has created a powerful foundation for building successful, professional publishers.

I invite you to contribute to this process by joining the **Publishers Certification Group** on SPANnet at: [www.spannet.org/group/PIPCertification](http://www.spannet.org/group/PIPCertification).

Soon the solution to this dilemma and a common qualifier for publishers in the industry may be “Do you have PIP Certification?” Stay tuned!

Scott Flora, SPAN Executive Director

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### ***Learn More***

The SPANnet Online Community can be found at [www.spannet.org](http://www.spannet.org). Membership is free.

The SPANpro Education Program can be found at [www.SPANpro.org](http://www.SPANpro.org).

Complimentary SPANpro memberships are available to industry professionals.