Motivations, Barriers, and Opportunities for Increasing Credentialed Commercial Tree Workers

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Project support
The issue
ISA has:
- 36,595 Certified Arborists
- 10,500 TRAQ
- 54,000 ISA credentials holders

Paralleling ISA, TCIA introduced numerous qualifications and certifications geared towards improving safety in the industry.
Understand the motivations, values and barriers commercial tree workers place on ISA certifications

To expand CAs in the South, it is imperative we understand why tree workers become certified and why others fail to pursue certification.
Value of certification in other professions

- Nursing
  - Increased earning potential & bonuses
  - Achievement, employee growth & recognition
  - Empowerment, self esteem, confidence
- Safety, Health, Environmental (engineering)
  - Personal satisfaction
  - Income (> $17 thousand more)
- Information Technology
  - Employment/hiring
  - Continuing education in fast-paced industry (competency)
Approach

- **Study Area**
  - Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia
    - 1 small/medium sized city & 1 large city per state

- **Data Collection**
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - 20 interviews per state 50% certified and 50% non-certified
  - Mail/Email survey

**Analysis:**
Thematic analysis
Qualitative findings extracted due to copyright
What influenced you to become certified in the past?

- Certification adds to educational knowledge (23%)
- Professional belonging (16%)
- Sense of achievement (17%)
- Need it to be competitive (15%)
What influenced you to stay certified?

- Sense of professionalism (20%)
- Continuing Education (22%)
- Achievement (19%)
- Employment expectations (15%)
- Client demand and marketing where near the bottom....
What prevents you from becoming certified?

- Intend to, never got around (20%)
- Doing fine without it (12%)
- Studying time (9%)
- Clients don't care (7%)
Deterrent - Survey Results

Why did you drop certification?

- **Expensive renewal (27%)**
- **Other ?? (27%)**
- **CEU maintenance (18%)**
Summary

- **Deterrents:**
  - Limited economic incentives
  - Client awareness
  - Referral clients
  - Excess tree work
  - Testing difficulty
  - Prioritizing study time

- **Motivators:**
  - Educational replacement
  - Knowledge
  - Credibility
  - Mentor/peer influence
  - Professional identify
  - Ordinances
Thank You!

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