



Academy Graduate Wins Top Prize in U.S. Competition

Eighteen-year-old Gabe Cornman of Washington aced three days of tests to win the SkillsUSA Internetworking National Championship, and then landed a new job as a network technician.

After a rigorous three-day competition that included a network design problem on Tuesday, hands-on troubleshooting and error-handling on Wednesday, and a comprehensive written exam on

“The first time I laid hands on a piece of Cisco equipment was eight months ago at the start of my Networking Academy course at New Market. I had a very basic understanding of networking at the time. Every bit of knowledge I have now was gained through this course. I have a very high regard for New Market, for providing this wonderful service to me, and Cisco, for providing the knowledge I draw upon and caring about our country’s future in technology.”

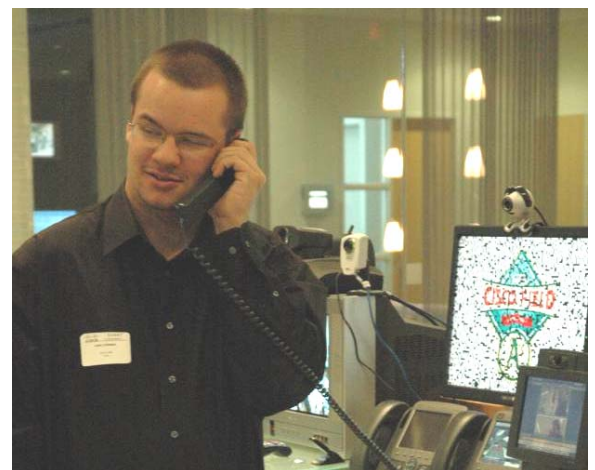
Gabe Cornman,
Academy Graduate

Thursday, Gabe Cornman came out on top at the 2008 SkillsUSA Internetworking National Championship in Kansas City. Cornman competed against 35 other state winners at the event, which was sponsored by SkillsUSA, a nonprofit that prepares students for careers in technical and service occupations.

“The competition was more difficult than I thought it would be,” says Cornman, an 18-year-old graduate of W.F. West High School in Chehalis, Washington, who attended a Cisco Networking Academy class at the New Market Skills Center in Tumwater. “But I really loved the sense of excitement. It was so awesome to be there, sizing each other up, wondering who was going to be the big winner.”

“My strongest area was definitely the hands-on network configuration,” he recalls. “That part was so easy for me that I wasn’t sure I had done it correctly, so I went back and did it again within the time limit. I think there are two reasons I did so well. First, I was thoroughly prepared for the competition by my Networking Academy instructor, Chris Bradshaw, and by the ease of access to information on the Networking Academy website. Secondly, I have great intuition when it comes to computer systems.”

Cornman appreciates the format of the Networking Academy curriculum. “I have a unique style of learning,” he says. “I tend to excel in a hands-on environment, rather than one that’s by the book. I would enter the classroom in the morning and find a piece of paper on my desk with a network topology on it. My instructor would tell me to implement the infrastructure in hardware, using some advanced configuration that I hadn’t learned yet. I thrive on that sort of thing, and was always able to build the system successfully.”



Cornman's success in the Networking Academy course and his performance at the competition has since led to a job as a network support technician at the New Market Skills Center. "The thing that I love most about my new job is the challenge," he says. "I'm working with software and hardware that I have never had experience with before, and it is very exciting. There are days when I find a problem to be so interesting that I don't want to leave. Several people have told me that if you find a job you love, you'll never work another day in your life. This job really makes me feel that way."

Cornman foresees a bright future ahead in networking. "I plan to continue accumulating network certifications while building my skills, and then go on to bigger and better things as my experience level grows," he says. "I've learned how networking works from the ground up, every step of the way. And I'm helping to build and maintain the backbone of our society in this new age of nearly universal Internet access. It's a great feeling to be where I am now."



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