

Steps to Success

Jim Long

A detailer describes his firm's positive experience with NISD's Individual Detailer Certification exam.

When the NISD's Individual Detailer Certification (IDC) program was first mentioned, I was thrilled to hear about it. I had been detailing since early 1980, and from the start I noticed that many detailers felt unappreciated and lacked professional recognition. The IDC program is the beginning of the process to raise the professionalism of steel detailing.

In 1999, 14 detailers from J.B. Long took the IDC test. All passed the requirements to receive certification. Three years later, in 2002, 11 detailers from our firm either took the test for the first time, or retested to achieve a higher certification level. Once again, all successfully reached their goals.

I noticed an immediate benefit: When the IDC certificates were placed on the wall in glass frames, you could sense the pride, professionalism and recognition felt by those certified.

"The test and certificate makes you feel that you have accomplished something over the years," one detailer said.

Another benefit was the opportunity for education. Experience with the 1999 IDC exam pushed detailers to spend a considerable amount of time reviewing and studying for the 2002 test. It is an open-book exam, but this does not make it easy.

"It's a good way to tell what kind of a detailer you are," one of our detailers said. "No one can memorize all the information, but knowing where to go to find it is important." We dusted off our manuals and brushed up on what we knew. The learning and studying process is a tremendous benefit in itself.

The time required to complete the test ranged from three and a half to six

hours, depending on the person. The difficulty level of the test prevents inexperienced detailers or non-detailers from earning a passing grade. In fact, despite having the required years of experience, some in our 1999 testing group failed to achieve a score to qualify for the level of Senior Detailer – Class 1. This underscores the need for preparation. "The

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test is very comprehensive," a J.B. Long detailer said. "It's a good test of the broad base of knowledge required by today's steel detailers."

The IDC certification also benefits steel detailing firms. A firm can advertise the fact that it has certified detailers on staff. The combination of the IDC

program with the NISD Quality Procedure Program (QPP) certification enables potential steel fabrication clients to immediately recognize a company as one that is concerned with quality.

The IDC program has been and will continue to be a benefit to individual detailers and detailing firms. The next step with detailer certification is to strengthen the process. This added strength will be gained through greater participation by detailers and the steel industry, improvements to the test and the testing process, and continuing detailer education. These are prerequisites for the successful future of steel detailing and the structural steel industry as a whole. ★

Jim Long is owner of J. B. Long, Inc., in Fleetwood, PA. Long is certified as a Senior Detailer with the NISD IDC program, and J. B. Long, Inc. is certified under the NISD QPP program.



Detailers from J.B. Long show off one of the IDC exam certificates.