My name is Aidan Dalgleish and I am VCDX #10. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was to push myself to become more knowledgeable in order to be more proficient in my role as a PSO Consultant and improve my future career. The VCDX presented a new target to aim for, and being assessed by a panel of some of the best from VMware presented a great challenge and the opportunity to meet like-minded people. My experience of the VCDX panel covered a range of emotions, from nervous anticipation through to enjoyment and a sense of relief upon finding out that I had passed. In preparing for the panel I read, re-read and then again re-read my design, spotting small mistakes or things I might do differently each time – this review and self-criticism was a great learning experience in itself. Once settled in I actually enjoyed the challenging questions from the panel and relaxed a little. If I could share one piece of advice, it would be know your design, know your design and, did I mention, *know your design*! When reading your design, be self-critical; ask yourself:

■   what could potentially be improved on?

■   how might somebody else tackle the same issue?

■   what risks are there in the design?

And don't forget, the most technically complex solution is not necessarily the best. Simple can be good too – remember: KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid).

My name is Matthew Theurer and I am VCDX #18. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was multi-fold. First, I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of achieving VMware's highest certification from a review board of peers whom I respect. Second, I felt, and still do, that the technical diligence required to achieve a VCDX would benefit my career and reputation as a forward thinking technologist. Finally, third, and certainly not the least, achieving my VCDX has continued to help my company gain clients and grow revenue and profit. My experience with the VCDX panel was tough, but fair. The VCDX panel consists of highly technical and skilled consultants. They are fully capable of drilling down into your submitted design and asking penetrating and tough questions. While they are tough, they also understand that there is very rarely only one way to get things done and are willing to listen to and understand why a VCDX candidate made design decisions with which they may or may not agree. If I could share one piece of advice, it would be to prepare yourself in depth. The VCDX Panel will absolutely pick apart your design and ask very penetrating questions. Remember, it's not just about technology, it's also about your consultative skills, ability to think on your feet, and respond to the unknown. While the design defense is the longest part of the panel, the design-on-the-fly session and troubleshooting session are just as important. You need to know the VMware product set and your design from A to Z. Last, but not least, you need to be able to translate technological "geek" speak into business speak.

My name is Mark Gabryjelski, and I am VCDX #23. My motivations for pursuing the VCDX were a mix of personal and professional goals. Personally, I like to be the best of the best at what I do. From a professional perspective, I believe that the VCDX certification would add to my resume's credibility. Since I have always worked for a Value Added Reseller (VAR), it would add confidence that my company is capable of delivering on Virtualization solutions. I have realized both professional and personal goals since I have achieved the VCDX.

My experience with the VCDX panel was humbling. I have been fortunate to have practiced in all areas of IT in the past 20 years; desktops, printers, servers, operating systems (Windows, Netware, Solaris, AIX, RedHat, SUSE, ESX/ESXi), networking, Storage Area Networks (FC and iSCSI), the application stacks, disaster recovery (pre and post Site Recovery Manager), and most importantly, the business requirements side of IT. Even with all that under my belt as real world experience, it was nerve racking to sit before a panel of experts and be judged by my peers. I truly believe that once you defend your design, and pass the VCDX defense, you know you are ready to tackle any situation that can come up in a datacenter design or strategy.

If I could share some advice when considering the VCDX as a certification:

- Write your own design. This will help you to know your design intimately.

- Know your design intimately. You may not be an expert in every area of the datacenter, but you need to be able to justify each and every choice, explain the reasoning for the selection of physical components of the design, and how it all works together.

- Be confident when you are defending your design. Your design has already passed a review. You, as the architect, now need to defend your design. Those of us with confidence can architect AND lead people through the design AND implementation of an architecture.

- Go to the Boot Camps offered for VCDX. I did not have that luxury when I went through the program (as it was brand new). I attend every one of them at PEX and VMworld, and am amazed at how they assist you in your preparation for the defense.

- And since you must create a presentation for this defense, practice your presentation skills, and keep your presentation on topic.

My name is Alexander Thoma and I am VCDX #26 and a regular VCDX panel member. The main reason for me to go for the VCDX certification was this one: it was to demonstrate my ability to generate high quality, highly efficient and technical profound VMware designs. I had gained this ability during my ongoing field project work as a VMware PSO consultant – but VCP only did not really reflect the level of knowledge I had collected during the years. This certification promised to not only certify technical skill sets, but (much more important in my opinion) also the skillset of an architect, who leads his customers to success.

My experience with the VCDX panel proved to be hard work and the investment of a lot of time, but it did provide an exceptional experience and a perfect learning opportunity. With John Arrasjid, Pang Chen and Mostafa Khalil in my panel I had the top group of VMware expertise in the room and could discuss / present my thoughts / reasons for design decisions.

If I could share one piece of advice, it would be:

- *Please Read This Book!* It contains all the knowledge that you need to successfully go through the VCDX certification. Benefit from the experience of the authors - they have been sitting numerous panel sessions.

- Do not be afraid – on the other side of the table there are only humans, searching for the good.

- Take your time for preparation – better postpone to a later date than running into this certification in a hurry.

- Deliver 100% of the required documentation – do not take parts of it light. You will easily lose points with light documentation.

My name is Andrea Mauro and I am VCDX #35. My motivations for pursuing the VCDX were (initially) mainly just curiosity and to accept the challenge. I filled the VCDX Qualification Review on August 21, 2008 when only a little information was available. My first (wrong) idea of this certification was that it was possible to complete with only having intermediate-level certifications (this was later formalized as the VCAP level). So each time I attempted the next step to complete this path, the more confident I was of the final goal.

My experience with the VCDX panel was strange because I was really nervous on what to expect (there was only limited and fragmented information); there was a language barrier as English is not my native tongue, and to conduct a defense, without any extra-time, is not the same as taking an exam. But I have to really thank the panel because they tried ease my fears about the language (this does not mean that the defense and the questions were easy, just that it wasn't a test on my language).

If I could share one piece of advice, it would be to plan your VCDX path well; spend time building a good application (before completing the

VCAP part) and try be critical of it (maybe ask for reviews). I think that if you are prepared, honest, (you cannot know it all, and you can simply admit that, or know where to find the missing information), and you know your application really well, then you can have a good chance to become a VCDX. Also this book and the VCDX Bootcamp are a good and proficient sources of information…knowing what to expect really helps in this journey!

My name is Michael Francis and I am VCDX #42. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX certification was to improve my knowledge and test my qualities as an architect. My experience of the panel process absolutely achieved that goal; the process to become a VCDX drove me to gain the knowledge of the technology to effectively architect it; the panel process itself confirmed that I had the consultative qualities to be considered an architect. I found the panelists eager to test my knowledge and my architect skills in a very quantitative and structured way. I was mentally drained at the end of the panel, but enjoyed it immensely as one of the best things I have done professionally. If I could share some advice it would be to know your design and as an architect understand the technologies that are included in your design. You may not have configuration level skills on all technologies; but as an architect you need to understand how they operate and integrate. It was a wonderful experience and I recommend it for people aspiring to become architects of Software Defined Datacentres to engage in the process. Good Luck.

My name is Magnus Andersson and I am VCDX #56. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX comes down to the personal challenge to see if I got what it takes to:

■ Master the technical aspect of the VMware software, Virtual Infrastructure 3 at the time i started the VCDX journey.

■ Putting my thoughts and decision on paper in a structured way.

■ Stand infront of a couple of very skillful persons and explain what i have done and why.

■ This would be a great way to differentiate myself from other virtualization consultants

If I could share a few pieces of advice, it would be:

1. Take the time to understand the VCDX requirements before you start. You will need to spend a lot of time so make sure you are doing the right things.
2. Before taking the defense, make sure you know your VCDX application by heart including:
   ▪ What decisions were taken.
   ▪ Why the specific decisions were taken.

- The customer constraints.
- The customer requirements.
- The customer risks.
- The assumptions made during the design process.
- How things were implemented.

Have fun and enjoy your VCDX journey. You will meet a lot of nice and talented people.

I have put together a summary of my VCDX journey at http://vcdx56.com/vcdx/ if you would like more information.

My name is Christian Strijbos and I am VCDX #64. My experience with the VCDX panel was a positive feeling to have the chance to defend my concept with all these great people on the panel. If I could share one piece of advice, it would be the discussions during my defense. It was a great experience to discuss different topics of my concept.

My name is Nathan Raper and I am VCDX #85, having successfully defended my design in Toronto in May of 2012. I was motivated to pursue the VCDX certification by my own ambition to reach the pinnacle of VMware certification and also differentiate myself in the job market. I love to challenge myself, and the VCAP and VCDX certifications are certainly challenging! The VCDX panel defense in particular was especially challenging for me.

It's difficult to prepare yourself mentally to walk in to a room of experts that will judge whether or not you have the skills to be certified as an expert. In my case, I recognized the name and face of one of my panelists as a well-known blogger and speaker and expert in one of my weakest areas. Very intimidating! The panelists ask some very difficult questions, probing the depth and breadth of your knowledge, but it didn't feel hostile or like I was under attack. Instead, I really felt that the panel wanted me to pass and gave me the opportunity to prove my skills and score well.

If I could share one piece of advice it would be the same advice that was shared with me: *know your design!* This doesn't just mean memorizing aspects of your design like storage and network "speeds and feeds". It means knowing and remembering why you made certain design choices, recognizing if and when those choices deviate from recommended practices, and being able to justify your decisions. How would your design have changed if you were forced to use NFS or iSCSI storage instead of fibre channel or if a constraint were lifted or another was introduced? Knowing your design means that if the customer (or your panelist) changes something, you've thought of all of the different risks and design changes that could be introduced, and be able to discuss them.

And if I could share a second piece of advice it would be to read the blueprint. Again.

Good Luck!

My name is Josh Odgers and I am VCDX #90. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was to challenge myself to a become a better all around architect, and to discover more about VMware and related technologies as well as compare my skills with the best virtualization minds in the industry; the VCDXs. My experience with the VCDX panel was a great learning experience which was an intellectually stimulating exercise which I thoroughly enjoyed. The VCDX panel helped me understand the strengths and weaknesses in my knowledge and in the design I submitted. The questions asked by the panel during my defense enabled me to understand and address those areas, which has made me a better architect. If I could share one piece of advice, it would be to get together with like-minded individuals and work together on your Journey from obtaining your VCP, then VCAPs and onto the VCDX application and defense stages. Ensure you challenge each other on every element of design to ensure each of you can clearly justify your design decisions and understand alternatives to your design. Ensure you not just attend, but actively participate in the VCDX boot camps and organize mock panel sessions with individuals of ranging experiences and expertise, including non-technical people. Lastly, don't look at obtaining VCDX as the end of the journey, but the beginning of another chapter in your ongoing professional development.

My name is Brian Smith and I am VCDX #91. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was to improve my skills and abilities and then prove to myself and everyone else that I could do it. My experience with the VCDX panel was that the questions were fair, that doesn't mean I knew the answers just that I probably should have. If I could share a couple pieces of advice, it would be to stay calm, pace yourself, and answer the questions as best you can. Be confident, but not arrogant, show your thought process, and admit what you don't know. Most people do mock defenses, but you should also practice mock designs as well. Lastly, if you don't pass, it isn't a purely technical test, improve your weaker skills and plan on doing a better job next time.

My name is Michael Voigt and I am VCDX #92. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX certification was to prove to myself that I was among the best in the field. Increasing my personal employability was also part of my motivation. My experience with the VCDX panel was that it is very professional. The panelists do not try to fail you but they will challenge you. Even though I did not fail I felt it was fair and wouldn't question the panel or myself if I did. If I could share one piece of advice, it would be to plan ahead, do not underestimate the effort it takes to become a VCDX. It is not like a VCP where you can study and if you study enough you pass, you have to know the technology and you need the experience. The VCDX certification is tough and that is good, it increases the recognition in the field and your personal confidence. With the VCDX title the expectation of others as well as from your self will rise. I feel that I have to prove myself every day that I still deserve to be called VCDX; the VCDX community will challenge you.

My name is Shane White and I am VCDX #95. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was partly to challenge myself, to see what I could do if I placed myself under some kind of pressure. My experience with the VCDX panel was interesting to say the least but enjoyable. I didn't find the panel intimidating, but I found I needed to know all of the why's and wherefore's of my design, and be able to articulate the reasoning for any design decision.

If I could share one piece of advice, it would be "Don't give up!" My VCDX journey included 3 attempts. Each one was a learning experience and more fully prepared me for what was to come. With design research and much preparation, it is possible to be successful in becoming VCDX.

My name is Chris Fendya and I am VCDX #96. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was two fold…First, I was challenged by an old boss to go after it a couple of years ago back when it was in its infancy. It wasn't until then that I really began reading up on what was required, the process, and reviewing other's experiences about their journey to become a VCDX...or not. Saying I was intimidated is an understatement, but the funny thing was...I was inspired and challenged at the same time.

My experience with the VCDX panel was a lot like others; in that I was extremely intimidated walking in that room. After reading and hearing about others defenses, how could one not be intimidated?!? At some point during the defense you realize they are a group of techies just like you, and the nerves begin to ease a bit. I realized after just how difficult their job is to analyze, review designs, and grade the candidates; so hats off to each and every one of the panelists.

If I could share one piece of advice, it would be…Take your time, be thorough, and know your design. There's no race to get the certification. Learn all you can about every aspect of an entire solution. Where the certification is obviously centered around VMware, it will challenge you

on every aspect of a design and a total solution (Networking, Storage, Compute, Business Impact, etc) and how each and every one of those relate to VMware and the end solution. I found I was questioned on things I never thought of during my preparation and honestly, some things I didn't know. The panel isn't there to make you look dumb or prove that they are smarter than you. They will help you through it as much as they can; so as much as it's about challenging you on what you know, it's also about your thought process and how you approach a problem and work through it.

My name is Matt Vandenbeld and I am VCDX #107. My motivation for pursuing the VCDX was primarily to challenge myself to obtain VMware's highest certification. I also saw this as a tool to increase my marketability and propel me into new job roles. My experience with the VCDX panel: Fun, mixed with a bit of fear. It is honestly the toughest examination I have ever had, yet a fantastic experience. If I could share some pieces of advice, it would be to first and foremost attend the VCDX bootcamp. The bootcamp provides fantastic insight into the VCDX process. Next to that, read the VCDX bootcamp book – I was lucky enough to have read a preview version of the book before my defense and it proved invaluable. The last piece of advice I have is to utilize the community and to prepare with a group. The more opinions and conversations you have about your design before a defense the better.