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Analysis and Personal Opinion of the CompTIA Network+ Exam

The CompTIA Network+ test surprised me. I expected it to be a breeze, after taking the CCNA certification, but it turned out to be quite a challenge. It certainly didn't go into the detail as the CCNA, but it covered a much wider spectrum of material. The website lists exam objectives as follows:

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| 1. Media and Topologies | 20% |
| 2. Protocols and Standards | 25% |
| 3. Network Implementation | 23% |
| 4. Network Support | 32% |

This breakdown of material is more or less what I experienced on the test. A majority of the questions were about network support- specifically troubleshooting. The test gave a network configuration, and the problem being experienced with the network, and you had to figure out what the problem was. Some answers were obvious, but most required a good bit of thought. In fact, this test was the same length as the Cisco test, but actually took a longer time for me to take.

The implementation questions were mostly about the knowledge of the TCP/IP utilities (netstat, ping, tracert, nbtstat, ftp, telnet) and their respective parameters, options, and switches (which I thought was not really necessary, since all of these have a help switch which lists syntax and usage). It also had questions about other network configuration commands specific to NT, 2000, and even Linux.

The protocols and standards tested the OSI model, TCP/IP, and IPX/SPX as would be expected. However it did have some questions about lesser known protocols such as AppleTalk and DECnet. It also tested knowledge of NetBIOS, NetBT, and NetBEUI. There were a few questions about PPP, PPTP, SLIP, and WAN protocols, but not nearly as many as I expected.

The media and topologies covered the basic media types and network topologies, and was the easiest type of question. The only thing that surprised me was that they covered the different types of fiber optic connectors (SC and ST), which are not as well known as RJ-45, RJ-11, AUI, and BNC. The test also expected you know the different types of hardware used for wiring, such as punch down tools, tone generators, etc.

All in all, the Network+ test was not nearly as hard as the Cisco test, but it definitely was not easy. A lot of the same material in your book was tested in the exam, and MNGT3040 definitely helped me a lot. Also, the difficulty of this test, I believe, was comparable to that of your 3040 final. I have much more respect for this test now than I had before taking it.

On a side note:

I read that the Network+ test was revised on January 31, 2002. I asked the exam proctor about it, and she said that, in the revision, CompTIA had made both the Network+ and A+ certifications more difficult. These tests are also expected to be revised again, making them adaptive- like many of the Microsoft tests are.