The Mysteries and Myths around Workforce Credentialing—
Back to the Roots or Fast Forward to the Future?

BCS/CEDMA Europe Workshop
16th October, 2017

Moderators: Sue Martin & Kevin Streater
The Workforce Credentialing Workshop held jointly by CedMA Europe (Computer Education Manager Association Europe) and BCS (British Computer Society) was a lively discussion with a highly engaged audience and the excellent speakers/panelists provided a variety of perspectives around workforce credentialing.

The workshop was divided into three sections: The Vendor Perspective, the Customer/Learner Perspective and the panel discussion.

## Agenda

- 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
- 13.45 – 14:45 The Vendor Perspective
  - 13.45–14:15 Adam Barrigan, Pearson VUE
  - 14.15–14:45 John Kleeman, Questionmark
- 14:45 – 15.00 Break
- 15.00 – 16.00 The Learner & Customer Perspective
  - 15.00–15.30 Zeshan Sattar, CompTIA
  - 15.30–16.00 Chris Kirk, City & Guilds, DigitalMe
- 16.00 – 16.45 Panel Discussion
  - Moderators: Kevin Streeter & Sue Martin
  - Participants: Dr. Terri Simpkin, Chris Kirk, Zeshan Sattar & John Kleeman
- 16.45 – 17.00 Summary & BCS L&D SG AGM
- 17.00 – 18.00 Refreshments

## Introduction

- What do we all hope to take away from today?
- Who do we have here to help us?

![Speaker Photos]
The workshop got off to an excellent start with a presentation from Adam Barrigan, Market Development Manager for Pearson VUE. Adam spoke about Pearson’s badging platform called Acclaim, the key features and benefits of badging to clients and how it can add value to a client’s certification programme.

**Acclaim is the leading Open Badge platform for employment competencies**

Founded in 2013 with backing from Pearson’s CEO, from Pearson Higher Education and from Pearson’s Professional Credentialing division, Acclaim has grown to be the leading platform for providing learners with credentials that are ‘resume-worthy,’ and become an important part of someone’s permanent profile.

**Open Badges: Credentials for the modern workforce**

1. **Digital emblem** which symbolizes learning achievements at any level: skills, certificates, diplomas, certifications, licenses and more
2. **Contains metadata** with skills tags and accomplishments
3. **Easy to share** in social media: LinkedIn, Twitter, FB, blogs
4. **Real-time verification** of every badge, connected to official issuer records
5. **Standards-based** on IMS Open Badges standard

Adam illustrated the components of Open Badge and how they are made up of the same data for each achievement. This allows learners the interoperability, transparency, and verification they need behind their learning achievements – important qualities for 21st century learning credentials.
In other words, badges in Acclaim help learners to communicate what they know and what they can do, what organizations are backing that achievement, and the specific criteria or steps they took to earn that recognition.

What do you know and what can you do?

What organization is backing your claim?

What did you do to earn this recognition?

Acclaim works with many of the world’s leading companies like Microsoft, Cisco and IBM, with third party credentialing authorities like PMI and AHIMA, and with colleges and universities who want their learners to connect to live, real-time job listings.
Acclaim’s labor market and job search features are unique to Open Badge platforms and an excellent way to demonstrate to learners the timeliness and relevance of the learning and skills that badges recognize and communicate.

Adam shared some statistics which showed that the Open Badge ‘idea’ is well and truly taking off, for example that the platform issues a new badge every 4 seconds. About 2/3 of those badges are being accepted and shared by learners. Although open badges are issued by organizations, it is important to note that learners must find them valuable enough to claim and share them. Many open badges go unclaimed because they don’t recognize achievements that the learners find persistently valuable, or resume-worthy so the “share” statistic is an important measure of the value of individual badges – and indeed of the overall approach. Acclaim badges are shared more than 5,000 times per day, generating millions of valuable brand impressions and leads for credentialing organisations on the platform.

- **4 seconds**
- **65% acceptance**
- **5,000 shares/day**
- **Millions impressions**
Acclaim has issued more than 10 million badges since its launch in 2014 and that number is expected to grow to more than 120 million by 2021 – so Adam showed that the revolution in learning credentials is well underway! He also shared a demo for the workshop participants to get a better understanding of digital badging can be used across the entire breadth of social media.

After a good discussion around the value of badges and how they work in practice, Adam handed over to John Kleeman, Founder and Executive Director of Questionmark. John looked at where the market is with regard to credentialing and emphasised that organisations were about 1-2 years ahead on the adoption curve in the US but that awareness of the benefits was increasing at a rapid rate globally. He asked where the workshop participants were on the adoption curve and very few were using badges but a larger number were considering how it could add value to their programmes.
John also provided some excellent insights on the importance of digital badges and where and how they add significant value.

He also shared a comparison on the issue of paper certificates and digital badges.
His thought-provoking analogy around the movie cameras and how they were initially used to film theatre plays perfectly illustrated that it is important to look beyond digital badges as the replacement for paper certificates in order to see the opportunities for shifting the paradigm and addressing the ever present issues of skills shortages in a new dimension.

But Wait There’s More

> When movie cameras were invented, people weren’t sure how to use them
> Early use was films of stage plays
> For example an 1899 film was made of Shakespeare’s King John
> Movies quickly moved outside to make their own dramas
Digital Badges

- Just like movie cameras can film stage plays, digital badges can replace paper certificates
- But digital badges can also open new paradigm
- Help solve society challenges with skills shortages and mismatches

OECD Analysis of Skill Shortages

- “In most countries, large shares of employers complain that they cannot find workers with the skills that their businesses require”
- “College graduates face difficulties in finding job opportunities matching their qualifications”

John also analysed the reasons the individual learner finds value in credentials.
Badges and Certificates

- People value
  - Achieving something they or others see as worthwhile
  - Having others see that achievement and recognize/value it
  - These are human drives/needs that impact motivation & behavior

- Paper certificates
  - Traditional way of recognizing achievement

- Digital badges
  - Newer way of recognizing achievement
  - Can be used in very flexible ways for value

Badges can be used to combine all these and more

- Signal completion of a course
- Certificate passing a test or exam
- Recognize accomplishments, minor and major
- Help signpost pathways to learning with each step a badge
- Provide a digital currency to reward learning and achievement
- Act as a verifiable electronic pre-requisite for further learning
- Portable proof of achievement

He also looked at the various organisational types using credentialing and illustrated the potential benefits for these institutions.
Uses of Digital Badges for Certification Providers

- Improve existing certifications
  - Candidates get shareable badge
  - Reduce fraud as harder to claim false certification
  - Efficiency savings vs paper certificate
  - Better candidate engagement
  - Help brand promotion

- Introduce micro-credentials
  - Progression badges can increase take-up of certification by offering steps for people to take
  - Micro-credentials offer potential additional revenue

- Deal with fast pace of technology change
  - Use digital badges to keep credentials current (e.g., delta exams)
  - Use digital badges for add-on credentials re new technology

Success Stories for Certification Providers

- AICPA (American Institute of CPAs - accountants)
  - Use digital badges and see them as
    - “more visible than paper certificates”
    - “allow you to build a visible portfolio of respected, valuable certificates”

- American Medical Certification Association
  - Used to offer paper certificates for its healthcare exams, now digital
  - Saves $2.39/certificate
  - Allows details of transcript to be shared with badge
  - Allow badge holders to share on social media
In addressing the usage in higher education John cited the example of Open University UK, which has issued thousands of digital badges for free adult learner courses and has found:

- 98% student satisfaction
- 71% see a digital badge equally important to a paper certificate
- 57% say they will share badge with employer
- 25% formally enquire to take a paid course

John also shared how badges are adding value in the workplace and cited some highly successful programmes, such as Lynda.com and Extreme Networks.

To round off the overview and provide a solid foundation for the later discussions in the panel debate John took a look into the challenges of badges and how credibility at both badge level and programme level can become an issue if not adequately addressed.
How do you keep Badges Credible?

A badge reflects on the organization who issues it
- Get organization buy-in and top level commitment
- Just like a dog, a badge is not just for Christmas

Badge criteria should be transparent
- Make public
- Include within badge information

Badge allocation process must be
- Valid
- Reliable
- Fair

Avoid inflation
- Like any currency, badges needs sound underpinning
- Badges should recognize genuine achievement

How Big Should a Badge be?

Advantages of badges for micro achievements
- Helpful to encourage learners to make small steps
- Precisely define competence associated with badge
- Makes personalised learning easier
- Clear description of how badge earned

Problems awarding small achievements
- Risks devaluing a badge if it's too easy to get
- Hard to see wood for trees: a LinkedIn page with 100s of badges is not very useful

No right answer. Important to make each badge a genuine achievement that earner can take pride in and others will value

The ensuing discussions during and following John’s presentation showed clearly that these were some of the most prevalent questions in the audience’s minds as he also talked about where badges and assessments align and how a badge is only credible if the underlying assessment criteria are robust and transparent.
The audience was also highly interested in better understanding the importance of community initiatives, open badge standards and how they link into common competency standards.

Badges more Valuable with Community Initiatives

- In the US, Credential Transparency Initiative
  - Has defined CDTL credential description language
  - Has 124 credible participants

- In Europe
  - Many initiatives developing
  - Important that we know what a credential means

John shared a few guiding principles he has developed to help leverage the full potential value of credentialing and simultaneously address some of the potential challenges.
He then talked about why Questionmark is partnering to provide badging and credentialing solutions for clients and the commitment to this as the major paradigm shift.

John summarised by reiterating how badging and credentialing can bring substantially more value and it is important to recognise the full potential benefits whilst addressing the potential challenges.
After the break, Zeshan Sattar, Certification Evangelist at CompTIA, which is a non-profit trade association with more than 4,000 members and business partners and the world’s largest provider of vendor-neutral IT certifications and three of the Top Ten IT Certifications that help IT workers get jobs are CompTIA certifications.

Zeshan started off an excellent presentation by polling the audience around their qualifications. Not surprisingly, all had formal qualifications – and the second poll showed what a wide range of qualifications were present.
Zeshan used these results to illustrate how important visible and measurable qualifications have always been and will continue to be for future generations. Companies invest vast amounts to upskill or retrain staff because they see the value of skills development, but there can be challenges to measuring those skills.

Frequently the emphasis is on participation in learning or “having a pulse” resulting in a “certificate of completion”. If an assessment is part of that process, the question is often how reliable it is, whether it just measures knowledge recall or actually validates what an individual can do in the workplace.
Zeshan pointed out how the quest for more and more badges can lead to a devaluation of credentials.

Zeshan reiterated that the sort of credibility issues which already plague the certification industry can even be accentuated by the use of badges.

Certifications for a long time have been the benchmark of the IT industry. The problem and the value is actually the same thing: coverage. Certifications tend to cover a broad-base of skills dependent on the vendor or body. For example, CompTIA bases its certifications on job roles. Thousands of industry experts help to identify the job role and the certifications are all refreshed on a 3 year cycle.
So Zeshan explained that the approach CompTIA is looking at to leverage the opportunities offered by badges whilst also manoeuvring the challenges is how they can be slotted on top of certifications. Rather than looking at a broad foundation, badges give learners the opportunity to explore a particular technology, skill or idea that enables them to specialise but gives recognition for that learning, thus aligning much better with a Continuing Education approach.

Zeshan highlighted some of the credibility issues and the questions to be answered when considering a credentialing approach.

**Badges: Learning or Skills?**

- Badge of completion?
- Badge of competence?

- Gamification – should skills be a game?
  - What if a badge issued by a corporation and it’s unclear of what an individual can do can have consequence...
  - If systems are not configure correctly, people die
  - If an individual takes up a new job and is unable to do it, they will lose their job
  - When do you retire a badge? Who maintains it?
    - The badge sponsor or the organisation?

He highlighted the importance of ensuring that badges could be maintained if a certifying organisation issuing the badges ceases to operate and the significance of having mechanisms to validate the authenticity of badges.

**Badge Academy**

- https://learning.thetechnpartnership.com/badges-library

- Tech Partnership to close:
Zeshan also highlighted the importance of linking to credible frameworks in order to drive more value into badging and talked about narrowing the divide between personalised learning and credentialing and the challenges of personalised credentialing and a possible lack of transparency.

Linking to Frameworks

- Issue with badges that are created without much guidance is the limited value to its owner
  - Not asked for within a job advert
  - Subjective to the course content
  - (Perception of) candidate skills are not tested under pressure

- A solution could be linking to frameworks
  - SFIA/eCF
  - ESCO
  - But what if your organisation has been creating industry standards for 20+ years?!
He also cited the examples of AWS, Microsoft and Dot.Native who have used badging to illustrate course completion but asks the question: is this a measure of competence?

Limited to Education Market?


- [https://www.aws.training/Faq](https://www.aws.training/Faq)
Zeshan concluded that badges are good for the learning process but hiring managers want robust qualifications/certifications that can help them to identify the leaders of tomorrow. In some ways the perceived trend is towards badges as validation of formative assessments whereas certifications are based on summative assessment and that is important to align badging with certification clearly.
Zeshan concluded his presentation with thoughts around how AI is revolutionalising learning and illustrated with a poll that this in itself can present issues around how badging/certification should evolve to handle this revolution.

On the edge of a Skills Evolution
Chris Kirk, Managing Director of DigitalMe, a City & Guilds Group business, shared with the audience how his organisation is working to prove how much easier it is to realise opportunities when skills are made more transparent and recognised, empowering organisations to develop the right skills for growth through the use of digital credentials.

Digital credentials are already connecting people to opportunities to grow careers and business.
Digital credentials help to democratise an individual’s ability to develop and trade their skills

- **A COMMON CURRENCY**: One consistent format for framing, capturing and sharing all skills & achievements
- **DEMAND-LED**: Employers can set the skills and characteristics they want to see (individually or collectively)
- **RESPONSIVE**: Individuals and educators can more easily develop and/or showcase in the right ‘language’
- **AGNOSTIC**: Can be used to recognise informal and non-formal, not just formal learning (all pathways)
- **AGILE**: Standards can be constantly reviewed and updated to keep pace with change
- **TRUSTED**: Employers can interrogate and validate achievements more easily
- **ACCESSIBLE & SCALABLE**: The digital and open source nature allows for very cost-effective solutions at scale

Chris helped the audience to understand the benefits of a digital credentialing approach by sharing a case study of a global program for the recognition of culinary professionals.
Why become a ‘credentialed’ Chef?

- **INDUSTRY RECOGNITION**: Get their skills and experience certified to the global standard, set by industry.

- **INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY**: The Worldchefs global badges help chefs be objectively seen for their ability, no matter which country they need to demonstrate them in.

- **PLOTTING CAREER PATHS**: The nine levels are crucial in the planning and demonstration of their progression through the key stages of a successful career.

- **STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD**: Showcases their commitment to learning and development of their talent, without needing support from an employer.

- **GREATER EMPLOYABILITY**: Makes it easier for employers to understand, validate and trust skills and experience through the evidence and objective assessment.

- **JOINING A GLOBAL NETWORK**: Connect with their peers and employers through the largest network of chefs in the world.

The recipe for a masterchef

Total career progression stepping stones now clearly mapped and understood by Chefs and employers.

End point for traditional qualifications.

Workforce

Workforce development.
Multiple routes into credentials is essential

**The ‘issuer’:**
Worldchefs is the ‘issuer’ of these global credentials. They manage a team of assessors, assigned to the different levels.

**The assessment process:**
- Chefs apply for the level they are working at and upload evidence from their day-to-day job work.
- Assessors, located across the world, review the evidence and make a judgement on competence.

**The standards:**
There are nine levels. Each level is linked to a career stage and has a clearly defined standard behind it.

**The quality assurance body and certification partner:**
City & Guilds collaborated in the design and also externally quality assures the assessment to ensure every outcome is valid, reliable and viable.

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**What does a Worldchefs badge show an employer?**

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**GO TO WORLDCHefs BADGES**

Chefs can use existing evidence the ‘Fast-track route’

- Applicant provides evidence of ‘fast track eligibility’ (qualifying certification)
- Worldchefs verifies qualifying certification
- [If applicant qualifies for ‘fast track’ certification]
  Worldchefs issues badge

**GO TO FAST TRACK BADGES**

Chefs can join at any level the ‘Standard route’

- Applicant provides all evidence, against the standard, as required
- Worldchefs assesses all evidence
- [If all requirements are met]
  Worldchefs issues badge
Agile and responsive assessment / Judgement

Tackling assessment head on:

- Anywhere, anytime
- Experience not just formal learning
- Competency, not just knowledge
- Viable
- Digitally enabled
- Valid and reliable = 3rd Party QA

See and be seen socially and professionally

Formally - Jump the queue on jobs boards...

Informal - stand out socially
“This is a unique development for the global hospitality industry, which has long been seeking standards that reflect the highly mobile nature of its workforce.

Millions of highly talented chefs from around the world who could not afford to take time out from their busy jobs, can now demonstrate the wealth of experience they have gained over the years, easily online.

In becoming a Worldchefs Certified Chef you will be joining the standard bearers of our Global Industry.”

Thomas A. Gugler
Worldchefs president

A better outcome for individuals

- Capture & convey skills accurately and at right grain size
- Builds confidence
- Own & carry credentials with them
- Navigate job market with skills & competencies validated by third-parties
- Advocate for self more effectively

BCS
Learning & Development
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CEMA Europe
Following the four excellent presentations, which each gave a slightly varied perspective of the digital credentialing approach – from a learner, vendor and certifying organisation perspective, the audience was keen to continue the discussion with a panel debate. The four speakers were joined by forward thinking academic and thought leader Dr Terri Simpkin, Higher and Further Education Principal at CNet Training and Senior Lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University.

The panel discussion was highly interactive with an engaged audience and focused strongly on the thought provoking topics introduced by the speakers in their presentations, which included:

- ensuring credibility of badges
- aligning and differentiating badges and certifications sensibly
- driving transparency around the underlying evaluation criteria for badges
- ensuring alignment with European and global initiatives and common frameworks
- ensuring the strong “currency” of credentials
- aligning credentials to job and learning opportunities
- ensuring “interoperability” of credentials and leveraging the ability to have third part validating organisations in addition to the issuing organisation
- importance of brand awareness and brand protection
- ensuring the alignment with the increasingly personalised and continuous learning experience

The overriding conclusion drawn from the workshop was that digital credentialing does in fact have the potential to be the “great leap forward” in the learning and assessment space and drive a true paradigm shift but that the challenges, such as possible dilution of validity and credibility, need to be taken into careful consideration when embarking on a digital credentialing approach.