

## ICE Digest: 2014 Q3 Edition

### Executive Director's Message

Enhancing Your Experience  
*By B. Denise Roosendaal, CAE*

### Features

Goodbye Paper: Recognizing Professional Achievements with Digital Badges  
*By Ginger Malin*

Badging: The End of a Trend  
*By Jarin Schmidt*

10 of the Top Social Media Resources for Organizations  
*By Eric Mills*

### CEO Profile

William Ellis, Executive Director, Board of Pharmacy Specialties

**Special Thanks to the Industry Partners Who Made the 2014 Q2 Edition Possible:**



## Executive Director's Message

### *Enhancing Your Experience*

By B. Denise Roosendaal, CAE



Hello, *ICE Digest* readers!

You may notice a few new enhancements to this quarter's *ICE Digest*. As you know, *ICE Digest* is the official e-newsletter of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE). The publication regularly features content that focuses on credentialing best practices, legal issues, case studies, association news, member news and industry news. *ICE Digest* will continue to focus on those topics; however, after last year's conference, ICE was able to capitalize on the volunteer interest of one of its members, Cynthia Allen, who has a background in journalism. She volunteered for the chair position of the newly formed Editorial Advisory

Group, made up of Elisa Kahn, Francine Butler and Susan Davis Becker. This group began examining ways to enhance the editorial format of the *Digest*. Recognizing that the writing had already achieved a high quality, they focused their efforts on ways to increase readership with various enhancements.

After eight months of discussions and brainstorming, what you see now is the fruits of their labor. There are many more enhancements to come in the future, though, so stay tuned!

Something new we're trying, starting this quarter, is a themed issue. This issue of *ICE Digest* focuses on the content from the 2014 ICE Exchange, to be held Nov. 11-14 in San Antonio, Texas. This collage of topics is meant to give you a small taste of the content coming from the conference presenters. We've focused on a few hot topics: digital badging and social media.

The other new feature is an interview with a CEO member of the ICE community. The idea is to give readers the opportunity to see the perspective of the business and strategy of certification from the executive level. We may also see how future trends and external forces are impacting on the credentialing field universally. This month's inaugural CEO feature focuses on Bill Ellis, executive director of the Board of Pharmacy Specialties.

Future enhancements you may see coming from the Editorial Advisory Group may include an enhanced delivery method and graphical layout. We hope you enjoy these enhancements and welcome your feedback. Please send any thoughts, ideas or comments to [droosendaal@credentialingexcellence.org](mailto:droosendaal@credentialingexcellence.org).

## ***Goodbye Paper: Recognizing Professional Achievements with Digital Badges*** **By Ginger Malin**

Credentials matter. To move their careers forward, professionals need ways to differentiate themselves from their competition. They also need others to understand the rigor, time and effort they have devoted to developing their professional expertise. But, in today's digitally connected world, professionals share practically everything online to be publically searched and viewed. These professionals must have ways to communicate their verified advanced skills and expertise on the Web, beyond just putting a few additional letters after their names or providing a static paper certificate.

Moreover, for professional associations and training providers to stay competitive and continue to retain and grow their membership or participant pools, they too must find innovative ways to extend their reach and engage their stakeholders by providing additional membership value.

Enter digital badges.

### **What Are Digital Badges?**

Sometimes referred to as digital credentials, digital badges recognize stakeholders' certifications, awards and other continuing education experiences in a format that can be readily shared online. However, a digital badge is more than just a visual image or logo. It is a dynamic, portable icon embedded with qualifying information, such as who issued the credential, where and how it was earned, and it provides a detailed description of the competencies met. It can also include expiration dates and continuing education units, if applicable, with links to pictures, websites, videos, documents or other media. When the badge icon is clicked, the information is revealed and the credential can be authenticated and verified by the viewer.

Digital badges are gaining significant traction in the credentialing industry because they are secure and verifiable, which protects the integrity of the credential. They also deliver significant additional value to certificants, because the badges can easily be shared via email, on email signatures and on social networks, websites or digital résumés. Depending on the vendor, earners can also create an individualized digital badge portfolio to store and manage their earned badge(s).

As earners, or certificants, share their digital badges with others, employers, colleagues or licensing boards, they essentially act as ambassadors by extending the brand of the issuing organization to a wider network. Once shared, the issuing organization can track the sharing and opening of badges, accruing vital data about the impact of their programs.

### **How Are Digital Badges Issued?**

Typically, the issuing organization creates a digital badge for each course or credential. This involves designing the front-facing image and the information associated with the accomplishment. Upon completion of the credential, the organization issues the badge via a software platform to earners. Earners receive an email or similar communication informing them of the issued badge and how to access the profile page. Then, depending on the vendor implementation, the badge can be shared with the earner's social networks or via email.

## What Value Do Digital Badges Deliver?

Digital badging offers earners tremendous value, including:

- **Verified skills and expertise:** Digital badges provide an easy path for employers, colleagues and licensing boards to verify an earner's credentials with a single click. They also convey all of the underlying qualifications needed for earning the badge.
- **Differentiation in the job market:** The badges help earners differentiate themselves when looking for jobs by showcasing their validated skills and expertise in a cutting-edge, technologically savvy way.
- **Convenience:** The badges offer a convenient way to digitally record, store and share certifications and experiences online.
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Digital badging also offers issuing organizations a number of significant, quantifiable benefits, such as:

- **Branding and marketing:** As earners share their badges with others, the issuing organization is able to market its programs virally and build its brand organically.
- **Risk mitigation:** Unlike paper certificates, digital badges are 100 percent verified and authenticated, which protects the integrity of each credential. Some badging platforms, such as BadgeCert, even allow issuers to set expiration dates and other business rules that further mitigate the potential risk of earners sharing credentials that are no longer current.
- **Analytics:** Some platforms offer highly sophisticated data collection tools that allow organizations to analyze market impact by reviewing badge sharing, clicks and views.
- **Cost mitigation:** Digital badges allow organizations to reduce mailing expenses and paper processing labor. Moreover, organizations with international certificants do not need to be concerned that the paper certificates won't (or can't) be delivered properly.
- **Global:** Digital badges can be rendered in multiple languages.
- **Skills:** Along with credentials, organizations can create programs to capture and verify skills, especially for renewal purposes, through the badges.
- **Revenue generation:** Organizations can upsell digital badges as an additional value for certification and continuing education courses.

## What Do Organizations Need to Consider When Investing in Digital Badging?

Digital badging clearly delivers value to both organizations and individuals. However, not all badging platforms are created equal. Before choosing and investing in a specific digital badging software platform, the organization needs to consider its overall objectives and goals.

Some questions the organization will want to consider include:

- Does the platform include a badge creation and authoring tool?
- Does the platform include open interfaces that can be readily integrated with existing credentialing processes?
- Do the digital badges include underlying data describing the accomplishment or are they easily reproducible static images?
- Can the embedded data fields encapsulate the organization's requirements, and can they be customized to meet other objectives?
- Does the platform track and communicate expiration, as well as cluster continuing education courses that can be leveled up into a certification?
- Does the workflow align with the organization's volume and frequency requirements?

- How is the digital badge profile to be shared and communicated to both the issuer and the industry?
- Does the platform track badge analytics, such as “clicks” and sharing?



***Ginger Malin*** is the founder and EVP of business development at BadgeCert. She is a recognized leader in employing cutting-edge virtual learning technologies to help organizations educate, inspire and recognize their stakeholders' accomplishments. As an award-winning professor and technology entrepreneur, Malin has published widely on the subjects of learner engagement and motivation, instructional design, and educational technology and has held faculty appointments at Lake Forest College and DePaul University.

## ***Badging: The End of a Trend*** **By Jarin Schmidt**

In the past several years, there has been a lot of conversation surrounding an emerging standard for digital credentials called “badging.” This digital credential is important in today’s fast-paced, electronic world, because it provides credential earners with a way to clearly communicate their accomplishments to employers. Badging technology is designed to identify and communicate a credential’s rigor and requirements in a way that is shareable and verifiable online.

Badges help increase the overall value of a credential in today’s digital world by including both verification and context that can be used for evaluation by employers.

### **Credentials Are Game-Changers for Job Seekers**

LinkedIn leader of Global Business Development Mike Kim recently stated that a LinkedIn profile with certifications receives twice as many views as those that do not, revealing that employers are interested in candidates who:

- Seek out additional training, skill development and continuing education
- Clearly articulate their capabilities
- Provide information about their abilities on LinkedIn and other popular online destinations

However, with the increased popularity of posting credentials online, issues arise. A 2012 [study](#) revealed that 53 percent of those surveyed have falsified a résumé or job application. Due to the rigorous process of verifying a candidate’s qualifications on a standard resume, the prevalence of fraud oftentimes results in hiring decisions that might not have been made if the employer had easier access to necessary information. That’s where badges come in to play.

### **Badges Under Fire**

The [term badge](#) has come under fire, especially from those who don’t want their high-stakes credentials associated with juvenile connotations like scouting, gamification or entertainment. It’s important to understand, however, that the term itself does not diminish the esteemed recognition. It’s also important to understand that all badges are not created equally.

Mozilla Foundation’s [open badge standard](#) provides a means to recognize and verify the learning necessary to earn the credential. At a high level, open badges are defined by the embedded metadata linked to a badge’s image. This badge information includes:

- The name of the credential
- A description of what earning the credential involves
- Background information on the issuer and its authority to confer a credential
- The criteria as defined by the issuer, which determines what must be completed to earn the badge
- Evidence provided by the earner that demonstrates his/her qualifications
- Links to any external standards to which the credential is aligned

- The credential's issuance date and expiration date
- Keywords that connect the badge to other similar skills or achievements

The ability to objectively verify learning and expertise adds value to both credential issuers and potential employers. Badges can easily be shared with professional and social networks, and can be sent via email and embedded on a personal website or essentially any online destination. Plus, with an increasing number of job search engines facilitating validated information as part of a candidate's online persona, it is easy to see why credentialing organizations are taking note of digital badging.

### **A Unique Approach to Badging**

Built around Mozilla's open badge standard, Acclaim focuses on addressing skill gaps and communication efficiencies in employment markets. From badge system design to analyzing a badge's impact on the workforce, Acclaim seeks to meet the needs of large enterprises that develop and certify in-demand skills and competencies.

In Acclaim's approach to badging, it partners with organizations that believe in the following:

- A badge must be conferred by a reputable organization.
- It must have some form of rigor behind it. While attendance and participation are relevant in some instances, Acclaim avoids recognition that fails to differentiate one individual from another.
- The badge must represent marketable skills. Providing access to data and methodologies, Acclaim ensures that badges are recognized through platform maps and all badging translates into employer values.

Simplified: A badge issued through Acclaim should have resume impact, as should any traditional paper credential.

### **Early Findings on Badging**

Since the badging platform's launch in early 2014, the Acclaim team has worked closely with credential issuers and their earners to understand the impact badges have had on them. Here are a few preliminary findings.

#### *Earners*

Credential earners *love* recognition. On average, if someone goes through the process of achieving a credential in the form of the badge, it gets shared at least once on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or email. While more research is required, early indications demonstrate that badges create a motivating feedback loop, while also promoting the value of the credential.

The following are some variables that impact the rate at which earners accept their badges:

- Credentials earned recently are more likely to be accepted than older, less-current certifications.
- The more difficult a credential is to earn, the more likely the earner is to accept and promote it.
- While many assume badging is a way to stay relevant with younger demographics, early indications show that older demographics are just as likely to promote their credentials in this format.

## Issues

The credential issuers who are working on badge system design, management and reporting believe badging is a case of when, rather than if. Candidates seeking credentials expect to receive recognition for their achievement in a format that is relevant to their lives, today — that is, digitally.

Key considerations for issuers to keep in mind when exploring badging are:

Inform and enable credentialing organizations to evolve their programs based on direct feedback from the market in order to meet skill gaps.

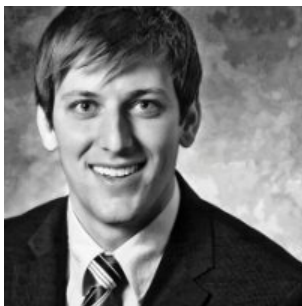
- First, it is critical to understand what employers value, then strike the right balance in granularity to meet that demand.
- Create a connection between the credential and skills valued by the job market, demonstrating the relevance and value of this credential to potential.
- Although early findings indicate current credentials are the most valued badges, some earners do want to represent their entire portfolio with badging technology.

## Now Is the Time to Go Digital

Dynamic digital badges can evolve in response to changing needs within the global economy. They are a viable resource for credential issuers and earners that:

- Inform and enable credentialing organizations to evolve their programs based on direct feedback from the market in order to meet skill gaps.
- Increase brand value through more transparent recognition of what it takes to earn a credential.
- Engage credential earners with the issuers over the span of a career, instead of a moment in time.
- Provide credential earners with the kind of verified recognition that is relevant in the digital world.

Badges aren't just a trend to watch; they are happening now. And *now* is the perfect time to start badging your credential.



*Jarin Schmidt has spent more than 14 years in the credentialing industry at Pearson. His background in design, strategy and product development keeps him forever focused on “what’s next.” After serving as the product lead for Pearson’s badging platform, Acclaim, Schmidt now supports the platform as a business development executive. Schmidt holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from Central College in Pella, Iowa, has served as an executive on the ATP and ICE conference programs and frequently speaks on the latest trends at industry events.*



## **10 of the Top Social Media Resources for Organizations**

**By Eric Mills**

One of the most frequently asked questions we get from the students of our social media certification courses is: “What social sites are the most important to social media success?” It is certainly a valid question. Who wouldn’t want to know if there is a mix of social media platforms that can always be counted on to generate a successful social media campaign? The truth is, the right mix of social sites is never usually the same for any two organizations, and often may not be the same for any two campaigns.

Listed below are 10 platforms that have come up time and time again during our discussions with social media subject matter experts, consultants and instructors that merit consideration for your next social media campaign.

### **Social Media Today**

Here’s how they describe themselves: “Social Media Today is an independent, online community for professionals in PR, marketing, advertising or any other discipline where a thorough understanding of social media is mission-critical.” This website is a one-stop shop for all things social media, including tools, strategies and trends that are important to your business. What we love in particular about this site is that it provides a great deal of information about social media strategy that many other sites lack. If you are looking to do it yourself, or are just getting started in the social media industry, this site will help you get up and running quickly.

### **Social Media B2B**

Some organizations think that social media is not for them because they only sell to other businesses. Here’s our solution: “SocialMediaB2B’s goal is to become the foremost news and discussion site on the topic social media’s impact on B2B companies, help drive social media adoption within B2B companies, and become a repository for advice and commentary from experts in the social media and B2B industries.” Whether you consider your organization a B2B or B2C, this site provides business solutions that are practical for any business. The authors are both social media strategists with real-world experience, and have successfully used the methodologies they write about in their own businesses.

### **Facebook**

Facebook has over a billion users, 500 million of which sign in every day. Yeah, it would be a tough to say that including Facebook in your social media strategy would not be a good idea. Business pages on Facebook provide a great way for customers to connect with your organization, and a great way for you to position yourself in front of a highly targeted audience.

### **Twitter**

Twitter allows its users to instantly connect with what’s important to them. You can follow your friends or co-workers, experts in your field and catch the latest breaking news. For your business, Twitter can be a great way to build a following of potential clients and customers and can increase traffic to your website through thoughtful, inspiring and/or entertaining posts.

## **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn allows you to manage your professional identity on a platform that caters to professionals. You can build and engage with your professional network, and learn more about their interests, while also building knowledge, insights and opportunities about your industry. Your business can also establish its own company profile and share the products or services that you offer with a following of like-minded professionals. With nearly 200 million active members, it is hard to ignore this platform as a key part of a social media strategy.

## **Google+**

Google+ is the culmination of Google's work to become more involved in the social media industry. It aims to make sharing on the Web more like sharing in real life. You are able to segment your friends into "Circles" and easily control which circles see the content you share. This platform is a unique, well-designed technology that is quickly gaining traction, especially because of some of the unique features that it offers, such as "Hangouts" where up to 10 people can meet for free in a video chat room. Google is also beginning to integrate your likes, interests and other information from your Google+ account into its search results, which could have major implications for any organization interested in being found online.

## **HootSuite**

The HootSuite social media management platform is an extremely useful tool for managing a social media presence. It aggregates your social networks into one easy-to-find account, and post your content to each of the platforms quickly. It also allows you to monitor conversations that are taking place on your social media accounts to ensure that you don't miss any valuable information or questions that might arise about your business.

## **Google Keyword Planner**

In social media, content is king. If you want to establish yourself online, you need valuable content for others to consume. This can be a challenging process because at times it can seem as if there is a never-ending stream of content coming from all directions. How will your content be seen? Keyword analysis is the answer. Search terms on Google can be very competitive to be ranked for, but with research you can find that certain key words or phrases are much easier found, and will help you to begin to position yourself to your audience. This strategy cannot be overlooked in your business, and this tool is a great way to accomplish the research that is needed.

## **Google Analytics**

Creating reports to show return on investment on your social media activities is one of the most important concepts that we teach in our Social Media Strategist certification prep courses. One of the data sources that can be used for these reports is Google Analytics. It can show exactly how much traffic is being directed from your social media sites, and along with conversion data from your website contact forms, or product shopping carts you can quantify in real terms how much business is being generated from your social media presence.

## **Social Media Club**

From time to time, it's good to get away from the computer and network in the real world. Social Media Club is the largest association of social media professionals in the world and offers opportunities to network and connect with other social media professionals. Their website is a great place to learn and grow along with other peers in the social media industry.

These resources, along with a variety of others, can be found in the National Institute for Social Media's free social media industry resource directory. In addition, should your organization be interested in developing a social media strategy or starting a social media campaign, our NISM-certified professionals will be able to help you maximize your use of these amazing tools and resources.



***Eric Mills** has been creating unique training experiences that transform organizations, employees and students throughout his career. As the founder of the National Institute for Social Media (NISM), Mills helps those who are passionate about social media find the core skills and confidence they need to develop a new career in the social media industry. Prior to founding the National Institute for Social Media, he was an education program director, responsible for developing high-quality training programs in a variety of industries including manufacturing, health care and information technology. He developed and managed over 600 college training programs, helping over 4,200 students develop and enhance essential job-related skills, or create new opportunities for displaced workers to find employment.*



Professional certification is an exciting field that poses complex challenges and offers endless opportunities. The chief executive officers and executive directors of certifying agencies lead the effort to address challenges and take advantage of opportunities in a balanced partnership with the governing body. In this new column, *ICE Digest* engages one-on-one with industry leaders to understand the role of the CEOs and executive directors, delving into the issues facing certification today.

Our first CEO is William Ellis, executive director of the Board of Pharmacy Specialties (BPS). BPS offers certifications in eight specialties and, as of June 2014, it has certified 20,000 pharmacists in 26 different countries. In addition to his position with BPS, Ellis serves as an appointed commissioner on the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

*ICE Digest* caught up with Ellis to talk about his career and key issues on the BPS agenda.

**Tell us about your career. How did you get to this point?**

I am a pharmacist by training and had the opportunity to do an executive residency in association management through the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP). After the residency, I worked with other state pharmacy associations from 1997-2010. In 2010, I joined the Board of Pharmacy Specialties (BPS) as the executive director.

During my time with the American Pharmacist Association (APhA) Foundation, I worked to develop a patient credential in diabetes management. This experience provided me with deeper insight into the credentialing field and the assessment process. I also served as a volunteer on the Continuing Education Committee for the American Council on Exercise (ACE), which again broadened my knowledge in this field. Moving to BPS in 2010 presented a great challenge and opportunity to work in certification with some of the most qualified pharmacists in the health care delivery system.

**How would you define your role as CEO for BPS?**

My job is to ensure BPS is fulfilling our mission to improve patient care by promoting the recognition and value of specialized training, knowledge and skills in pharmacy and supporting the specialty board certification of pharmacists. This is the lens I use for everything that we do. An important part of my job is building a strong relationship with our board to facilitate the achievement of our goals. I strive to create an environment in which the board members can share and contribute their experience as subject matter experts alongside the administrative and professional skills of our staff.

**What questions is BPS asking right now about the future of its portfolio of certification programs?**

There are two significant questions our leadership is considering right now. First, we are looking to conduct a comprehensive review and study of our recertification process to determine if and how we should evolve in this area. Our goal is to determine if there are ways to incorporate and recognize elements of continuing professional development, such as a practice experience, into the process. Our challenge is to ensure that any new elements added to the recertification process are defensible and valuable to our stakeholders.

We are also considering our approach to the development of subspecialty credentials. We are releasing a discussion paper that will allow our stakeholders to address this issue so we can gather all of the necessary perspectives before making a decision.

We are in a good position right now because these systems are not broken, but we know we need to understand the possibilities and determine the right fit for BPS.

**How is your organization adapting to changes in the credentialing world?**

This is where I believe membership in ICE is critical. ICE is my professional home for certification. I rely heavily on the resources ICE provides, such as the annual meeting, workshops and publications, to stay on top of changes and trends in our industry. BPS has a responsibility to evaluate new trends and determine if they make sense for our program. When I joined BPS in 2010, Melissa Corrigan, former ICE president and then CEO of the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB), came to my office with a copy of the *ICE Handbook* as a gift. This resource has influenced a lot of what I have done. It is well worn now, with notes in the margins and dog-eared pages.

**BPS has accredited certification programs. What is the value of accreditation to BPS?**

Accreditation is a valuable recognition for BPS because it attests to the quality of our certification program. We actively promote our accreditation to all of our stakeholders, and it is an integral part of our planning process as we discuss the future. We use these well-developed standards as a guide during our decision-making process, and we believe achieving and maintaining accreditation raises the bar for all certifying agencies.

**What advice do you have for other CEOs and executive directors?**

If you build your program based on the NCCA accreditation standards, you will have a solid program that positions you for success. I also encourage other leaders and staff at all levels to get involved in ICE. This is a relatively small community of people. With just a little bit of involvement, you can grow a valuable network of people with whom you can discuss your organization and your career.

**What topics are you hoping to discuss with your colleagues during the ICE Exchange in November?**

We are interested in learning more about how organizations have successfully expanded and maintained their programs in the international market. This is a potential growth area for BPS, and I'm always looking for new or better information.

Another key issue, one that we seem to always be focused on in the certification industry, is demonstrating the value of our credentials. Finally, I'm hoping to discuss some of the new, cutting-edge technology growing in interest, such as digital badges, remote proctoring and micro-credentialing. While not necessarily mainstream, these are concepts that continue to be topics of conversation within our community.