



## GUIDE

# Professional Associations and Verified Learning

## A Guide to Effectively Market a Learning & Development Program



Professional associations are made up of a vast network of individuals who value learning, training, and education as a method of professional and personal advancement. With over **66,000** professional and trade associations in the United States alone, there is always a new skill to be learned or relationship to be made. How, then, can an association stand out in the crowd and successfully attract new members?

### Overview

Being clear and effectively communicating their benefits to members and potential members, being innovative, and keeping their courses relevant and up-to-date, associations are primed for effective recruitment and retention of members. Adding value to the community in which they serve is critical for an association to stand out amongst its peers.

Here are three tactics every association can use to successfully market themselves, attract new members, and retain existing members:

**01 Offer proof of learning through digital credentials.** The world consumes information online, and paper certificates are no longer an adequate method to verify learning. By moving to a verified, portable achievement, professional and trade associations empower their members to own that learning and share it with their networks, with potential employers, and just as importantly, with the association itself. Digital credentials allow an association to verify that existing members have continued their learning and

have paid the necessary dues to extend their membership. Issuing paper certificates leaves an association open to potential fraud by not being able to verify, in real time, that membership is valid and current. Digital credentials enable earners to prove that they've taken the necessary steps to stay up-to-date on their chosen field.

**02 Highlight members in marketing campaigns.** Everyone loves a success story. Using members in marketing materials is an easy way to highlight a learning and development program, an association's use of digital credentials to verify that learning and brings a human element that celebrates achievement. The [American Institute of CPAs](#), which boasts over 429,000 members worldwide, has instituted a "[Wall of Fame](#)," that allows badge earners to tell the story about why they chose to earn a certificate and the benefit it's had on their careers.

**03 Harness the power of social media.** Branding via social media channels is a significant component to successfully selling the offerings of a professional and

trade association. When association members have proof of their membership and learning by way of a digital credential, the next step is to teach and encourage those earners to share that verified credential with their networks. Crafting a communication plan that can be shared with earners before an association makes the switch from paper to digital certificates will set both earners and the issuing body up for success. An effective plan will expedite the transition, aid in increasing the acceptance rate of newly created digital badges, and provide an association the opportunity to craft messaging about their learning and development programs that are in-line with their organizational goals.

*“Allowing our members to make their achievements portable through the use of digital credentials helps contractors stand out online. We show our earners how to embed their credentials on their websites, resumes, and social media channels and that visibility is great for them by validating their skills to new customers, and it is great for us because as our credentials are shared, our brand reach increases.”*

**Stephanie Owen**

Education and Member Engagement Director  
National Wood Flooring Association

*“Marketing and communication to our members is a key component to the success of our digital credentialing program,”* says Stephanie Owen, Education and Member Engagement Director for the [National Wood Flooring Association](#).

Successfully communicating the benefits of continued learning and training to existing and future members of a professional and trade association is an effective method to ensure brand consistency and evangelism.

**If you're interested in learning more about how digital credentials can be a valuable tool to engage members, email [learn@credly.com](mailto:learn@credly.com).**