



ROY
GROUP

Badges

A Powerful Tool to Recognize Skill and Achievement

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I commend Roy Group for choosing Open Badges to certify the skills and knowledge acquired at its learning events.

Open Badges expand the ways that we can recognize the outcomes of continuing professional development to keep pace with the diversifying learning needs of today's organizations. They are part of a wider trend, sometimes called 'post-traditional' higher education, to open up opportunities for learning on new dimensions.

One dimension is to open up learning content: Open Educational Resources (OERs) are making material on every imaginable topic freely available on the Internet for copying, sharing, modifying and re-mixing. Another dimension is to open up teaching: MOOCs, Massive Open Online Courses now available free worldwide, give informal training opportunities to millions. The third and vital dimension is opening up certification and recognition.

Most people, when they learn new skills and knowledge, want their extra expertise to be recognized – by their colleagues, by their employers and by the wider society. Traditional frameworks of certificates, diplomas and degrees provide such certification at many levels of education and training. But today these traditional frameworks no longer provide suitable recognition for many of the outcomes of the diverse processes through which people learn new knowledge and skills.

One reason is that traditional qualifications usually require people to study for longer than they really need to learn many important contemporary skills. Today's trends are towards more intense learning experiences and breaking down long courses into short modules.

A second key issue is that the best body to certify the successful learning of many modern skills is not an academic institution, but rather the community of practice

that uses those skills on a daily basis.

Third, the papers that come with traditional qualifications (certificates and transcripts) don't give much information on the competences learners acquired and how they were learned and tested. In pre-Internet days this would have made such papers long and tedious. Digital technologies create new possibilities, as they do for learning generally.

Open Badges address all three of these weaknesses in traditional qualifications systems. First they can provide recognition for learning events of any duration, from a single lecture to a multi-year programme. For example, the DeTao Masters Academy, a pioneer of Open Badges in China, uses them to certify its learners after events ranging from a lecture by one of its Masters (subject to a successful test) to a three-year programme in Film Animation.

Second, any individual, group or institution can issue badges. The currency of the badge depends on the credibility of the entity issuing it. Open Badges began in the software industry, where the best people to assess competence in a particular programming skill are those who work with the software involved. This allows newer organizations, such as Roy Group, to issue badges. The badges can include endorsements from organizations that have found the learning events covered by a particular badge useful for their staff. Such endorsements give badges added credibility.

Third, Open Badges are based on Web technology. Mozilla developed it as an open source platform combining consistency and flexibility. By clicking on a badge that an individual presents, you can see who issued the badge, what content/skills it covers, how they were taught and assessed, how long the training lasted, which organizations endorse its value, and so on.

Badges serve many purposes. Some well-known universities, such as Purdue University in the United States, award them to motivate students for acquiring particular skills within a longer traditional credit course, as well as to interest children in subjects like veterinary medicine, that they might study later.

Roy Group has gained a high reputation for its practical way of developing leadership skills that people can retain and use successfully for years. It is now demonstrating its own leadership by using Open Badges to recognize formally the skills and experience that its clients acquire.



Sir John Daniel is a 40-year veteran of Open, Distance and Online Learning whose career has focused on the meeting point of technology, education and development. In recognition of his efforts towards “educating the world,” each of the three countries in which he has lived and worked have distinguished his achievements with national honours: France – Ordre des Palmes Académiques (Chevalier–1986; Officier–1991); United Kingdom – Knight Bachelor (1994); Canada – Order of Canada (Officer–2013).

Among Sir John's 340 publications are his books Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education (Kogan Page, 1996) and Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers: Achieving Education for All (Routledge, 2010).

For more information about Roy Group Open Badges, visit badges.roygroup.net.

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