



# ACCREDITATION KEY TO CREDIBILITY

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AS ORGANISATIONS BECOME INCREASINGLY INTERNATIONAL, MORE AND MORE PROFESSIONALS FIND THEMSELVES WORKING WITH COLLEAGUES, ADVISORS, CLIENTS AND CUSTOMERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. THIS HAS BEEN COMMON FOR LAWYERS, BANKERS, ACCOUNTANTS AND ENGINEERS AND IS BECOMING EVEN MORE COMMON FOR COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS.

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If you are a lawyer or banker or accountant or engineer, there is general acceptance that you have the education and credentials necessary for your profession. Communicators, however, aren't so fortunate, as there are few barriers to entry. Education and training vary widely and people from other fields can easily move into communications. How can professional communicators demonstrate their capabilities and gain credibility? Through accreditation. 'Accreditation is the passport that gives us the opportunity to travel with worldwide standards and qualifications,' commented an accredited communicator from Mexico.

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) offers the only internationally-recognised accreditation programme for organisational communications practitioners. The programme requires candidates to evaluate their work from a critical perspective and challenges them to demonstrate their knowledge in communication planning, implementation, measurement and ethics. Candidates successfully completing the programme earn the designation Accredited Business Communicator (ABC).

An ABC from Slovenia explained, 'Everybody communicates. But to some of us, this is a profession as well! Coming from a tiny dot on the map of new Europe, the accreditation

process was an exceptional challenge allowing me to match my skills with the best in the communication field around the globe.'

## THE PROCESS

Any accreditation programme should allow candidates to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses through a robust assessment process. IABC's accreditation process has three steps - application, portfolio and written and oral examinations.

### + Application

This demonstrates that the candidate meets the minimum requirements for accreditation - five to nine years of work experience in communications, depending on educational background.

Candidates should also understand the goals and philosophy of organisational communication, appreciate the role of the communicator and communication in modern organisations, have the knowledge to plan, direct and implement a broad range of communication programmes, and have the skills and abilities to apply that knowledge to practical, real-life situations.

### + Portfolio

This consists of two work samples representing a broad range of communication

and media functions, such as communication programmes, publications, surveys or audits, campaigns, change communications, or audio-visual programmes. Candidates are required to submit a detailed statement of objectives and results for each work sample.

### + Written and oral examinations

These cover the knowledge and philosophy of communication concepts, tools and technologies. The exams demonstrate the candidate's ability to write or perform professional communication activities by creating a full-range communication programme in a limited time.

### + Peer review

Each component of the process is reviewed by a panel of other ABCs against an international standard of performance developed by IABC's Accreditation Council. Examinations are regularly revised to reflect changes and advances in communication practice and technology.

'It is rare to get the opportunity to evaluate your problem solving capabilities and get an objective peer review when you have been practicing for many years,' added an ABC from Australia. 'The accreditation process did exactly that and prompted me to revise

## ACCREDITATION IS A BADGE OF HONOUR. IT DEMONSTRATES TO COLLEAGUES THAT YOU'VE GOT A STRATEGIC MIND, A DETERMINED ATTITUDE, A CREATIVE FLAIR, BUT MOST OF ALL, A PROVEN TRACK RECORD OF CREDIBLE PERFORMANCE

earlier learning in my career. It gave me new insights into the practice of communication.'

### NOT FOR EVERYONE

IABC's accreditation programme is aimed at the skills-practicing manager or person who has developed the well-rounded expertise necessary to move into communication management.

Many communicators spend their careers working on tactical programmes such as publications, events and websites and are not interested in developing the strategic and managerial skills needed for higher positions. Many communicators who have the necessary breadth and depth of experience do not want to commit the time required for accreditation. Within IABC's 15,000-plus membership, only 20% are accredited.

### THE VALUE OF ACCREDITATION

Like most accreditation programmes, IABC's programme requires time and commitment from those who seek the ABC designation. And ABCs from around the world agree that the programme is worth the effort.

In a survey of IABC's accredited members:

- + 57% said both their supervisors and colleagues recognise the value of the ABC designation.

- + 27% credited their ABC with getting them a job offer over another applicant who was not accredited.
- + 23% attributed a salary increase to earning their ABC.

Career advancement and salary increases aren't the only reasons for undertaking accreditation. Many participate to demonstrate their knowledge and competence to their peers, while others decide to pursue accreditation to test their abilities against a global standard.

'For a professional communicator, nothing is more important than one's credibility,' added an ABC from the USA. 'Accreditation is a badge of honour. It demonstrates to colleagues that you've got a strategic mind, a determined attitude, a creative flair, but most of all, a proven track record of credible performance.'

If you're a professional communicator or looking to hire one, consider IABC's accreditation programme as an important differentiator in a crowded marketplace.

For more information about IABC and its accreditation programme, visit:

[www.iabc.com/abc](http://www.iabc.com/abc)

### LIFELONG LEARNING: THE FACTS

Overall labour productivity in the EU15 (the 15 non-accession countries of the European Union) has been greater than that in either the USA or Japan over the period 1994-2003.

The EU15 countries spend a higher proportion of their GDP on education than the USA and Japan. Leading EU countries such as France (19.6%) and the UK (16.2%) have a much higher proportion of university graduates in science and technology in the 20-29 year old population than the USA (9.6%) and Japan (12.6%).

In the EU15, the proportion of adults aged 25 to 64 who receive education and training each month has almost doubled since figures first became available in 1996.

Lifelong learning is particularly strong in Scandinavia, the Netherlands and the UK.

**Source: Federation of European Employers/  
Federation des Employeurs Européens**

[www.fedee.com/hrtrends.html](http://www.fedee.com/hrtrends.html)