DESIGN CREDENTIAL FRAMEWORK

ACTIVITY C3

DESCRIPTION: DEVELOPMENT OF A CREDENTIAL DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR THE ORGANIZATION

INPUTS: CHANGE PLAN

OUTPUTS: CREDENTIAL DESIGN FRAMEWORK

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DESIGN CREDENTIAL FRAMEWORK

The **design and adoption of a Credential Design Framework** by an organization is an important step in presenting a consistent, high-quality presence in the marketplace. This is an activity that each organization needs to undertake near the beginning of their credential journey.

A Credential Design Framework should reflect **how, where, and when an organization goes to market**, any important aspects that are not market related e.g. volunteering, best practices, and any other reference sources.

The framework is used to **guide team members when they are going through the credential design process**, ensuring that the organizations' credential portfolio is coherent and consistent across all issuers (corporate, local, partners, etc.). It spells out the overall look and feel of the credentials.

By its nature, the **framework is a living document** which is amended and updated to reflect both the maturity of credential design within the organization and changes in the marketplace.

The framework should be **owned and managed** by an appropriate corporate function, such as a Credential Advisory Board.

HOW TO DEVELOP A DESIGN FRAMEWORK

From experience, the best way of developing a design framework is to gather the key stakeholders to review and agree on the framework.

Preparing for the Workshop

A draft proposal needs to be prepared before the workshop. When developing the proposal, a number of aspects need to be considered. The most important consideration is how the organization "goes to market" or markets its services. Two key sources of inspiration for developing this plan are:

- The organization's market-facing website (the internal "intranet" may also have useful materials)
- The marketing team!

This proposal should consider both the business (issuer) and the customer (learner) needs.

It's best to start with the business dimension. What is the primary business focus of the credential program? In general, programs will relate to an industry, discipline, offering, method or asset. Most credential programs focus on a single business element. Selecting that element is the first step to scoping your program. If your program has more complex requirements, then you should ask for specific support.

The second step is to consider what your organization uses credentials to recognize i.e. the types of activities, also known as the Personal Achievement dimension. There are six elements:

- Knowledge,
- Skill,
- Certification,
- Excellence,
- Relationship,
- Others.

Most programs will incorporate a number of these elements. The first step is to consider the Knowledge / Skill / Certification trio. They form a hierarchy of value:

- **Knowledge** – a learner has participated in learning but there's no evidence that they put the learning into practice.
- **Skill** – a learner has gained a skill, through learning or on the job, and there's evidence that they have demonstrated that skill.
- **Certification** – an organization is certifying that this person is able to perform a specified activity to a set standard.

HOW TO DEVELOP A DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The other three elements meet specific needs:

- **Excellence** – recognition that a learner has reached a specific level of performance in a relevant area. Examples include: winning a competition, peer group recognition, hitting specific business targets, etc.
- **Relationship** – the person has a relationship of value to the organization. Examples include: Coach, Mentor, Alumni, Volunteer, Official, etc.
- **Others** – there are other special elements such as eminence, but these should really only be considered if the other elements don't meet the organization's needs.

A good place to start is to complete the attached worksheet.

At this stage, it's sensible to engage a **Graphics Designer** to design the visual identity of your badge or certificate. *There's a specific module that sets out best practice for visual design of credentials.*

It's also worth considering other items that the organization may wish to include in their Credential Design Framework. Here are a couple:

- **Format** – What format of credentials will the organization issue and in what circumstances? Certificates or Badges––or both?
- **Alignment with Standards** – Could be internal (skill levels, study time, taxonomy etc) or external (Educational Credits, Industry Standards, etc.).

Once the framework has been drafted, it's good practice to test it by designing two or three real life examples. These examples will also be useful input into the design workshop.

As the organization's use of credentials matures, the framework will be enhanced and amended. Therefore, it's good practice to agree on the ongoing governance of the framework. In preparation for the workshop, a draft governance proposal should be prepared. Guidance to Credential Governance can be found in a separate module.

HOW TO DEVELOP A DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Holding a Design Workshop

The purpose of the design workshop is three-fold:
1. Review the draft framework for alignment, completeness, etc.
2. Validate the applicability of the framework to meet all the credential needs of the organization.
3. Build consensus and support for the ongoing use of the framework.

The participants should include representatives from all the business areas participating in the credential program and subject matter experts from relevant functions such as Learning, Marketing, Customer Experience, etc.

Draft Agenda for a Design Workshop

- Introductions
- Purpose of the workshop
- Potential use of credentials within the organization: Generate a list of uses, ensuring that everyone understands the potential usage
- Share the draft Design Framework using "real life examples" and collect general feedback
- Map each of the potential uses to the framework to identify gaps, inconsistencies, etc.
- Discuss ongoing framework governance identifying issues and concerns for resolution
- Agree action points, assign responsibilities and due dates

After the Workshop

The action points identified in the meeting need to be resolved and agreement sought from the stakeholders. The design framework should then be published and shared with team members who are educated in its usage.

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CREDENTIAL DESIGN FRAMEWORK - EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

Element	Description	Examples	Image
Knowledge	Understanding gained through learning or experience		
Skill	An ability that has been acquired by training / practice		
Certification	Validating the authenticity of something or someone		
Excellence	Possessing good qualities in high degree		
Relationship	A state of connectedness between people		
Others	Elements that are not included above or where special focus is needed		

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