

CERTIFICATION

Leaders vs. Followers

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I'll never forget having dinner with a well-known industry leader just after the team at Wicklander-Zulawski & Associates launched the certified forensic interviewer (CFI) certification in 2002. It struck me how critical this individual was of the program. He voiced the belief that our industry didn't need another interview-and-interrogation class. He questioned why any seasoned professional in our business would need a certification, firmly believing that years of experience should simply speak for itself.

Value of Certification

This person had no understanding of the true value of certification, and the validation of knowledge that results when completing a professionally developed exam. He failed to realize that by only participating in seminars, conferences, and workshops, regardless of how good those programs might be, there is very little confirmation that the message is understood and the lessons learned. There is no constant standard that measures comprehension or successful application of the information.

Even our pillars of higher education can lack consistency. With each professor and each university interpreting and communicating information in their own way, it can be very difficult to ensure that students always learn the same lessons and share a common understanding. Certification not only offers a forum for learning, but a benchmark for consistency. Everyone must demonstrate that they understand the content by passing a validated exam.

That same person now embraces the CFI program. Why? He opened his mind and took time to evaluate it objectively. Ego and personal agendas were replaced by the heart of a leader. He realized that just because he wasn't involved in developing the program, it didn't mean that it wasn't a great thing for our industry. He also decided to welcome positive change and accept progress by taking a leadership role, for it takes vision and guts to be one of the first.

"A Waste of My Time"

I remember in 2006 when LP Magazine led discussions for creating a general industry certification. I had someone tell me that participating on a content-development committee was "a waste of my time." I remember others becoming defensive about the idea for many of the same reasons cited above.

Over the years since, I have had many conversations with senior LP executives regarding whether our profession needs professional certification. I've concluded that clearly those that did not express a positive attitude toward continued learning were often threatened by the idea of professional certifications. They were those who were unwilling to take the time for self-improvement; those who were skeptical and often resistant to the idea of something new.

(Certification Cont.) How can anyone possibly believe that establishing industry educational standards and the creation of LPspecific degree programs could be anything but a positive reflection on the industry? Could it be the fear of finding out that, regardless of their years of experience, they might not actually know as much as they thought? Perhaps the fear that others might find out they failed an exam? These same executives resisted MBO plans and opportunities for self-discovery and improvement. They were the ones who hated to establish goals and objectives. They were often the ones who would prefer to be critical versus volunteering to help create. They were the ones who always seemed to criticize peers who took the time to speak at national conferences, but would never volunteer themselves.

Some Just Don't Get It

I have concluded that some people just don't get it, and others just don't want to get it for self-serving reasons. Some say they are career-motivated, global thinkers and want to advance, yet are not willing to invest time and energy into learning. They fail to see that it is their responsibility to educate themselves and not their company's responsibility to do it for them. They always offer the excuse that they are too busy. Deep down inside, I think they are afraid to push the envelope. Ultimately, they are followers, not leaders.

Why should we embrace certification for our teachers, financial planners, realtors, tax preparers, internal auditors, safety, and human resources, but not loss prevention? I think you know why. Just look at past actions and attitudes, and the reasons become crystal clear.

As 2012 starts, we want to thank the Wicklander-Zulawski team for having a vision to elevate our industry. And, thanks to the majority of LP executives for supporting the Foundation's efforts to further evolve this industry into a true profession.

Recently Certified

- Kevin Ach, LPC
- Carson Altice, LPC
- Anthony Arnold, LPQ
- Wes Bank, LPC
- Lee Bland, LPC
- Mark Bunyan, LPC
- Jeffrey Cotterman, LPC
- Tom Counts, LPC
- Dereck Ethington, LPC
- Grady Fuller, LPQ
- Christopher Gibson, LPC
- Gina Guardamondo, LPC
- Jarod Gustafson, LPC
- Keith Harmon, LPC
- Tyrun Haynie, LPC
- Brent Holley, LPC
- Reginald Holliday, LPC
- Ronald Holliday, LPC
- Thaddeus Hugues, LPC
- Laura Kay, LPQ
- Patrick Kerby, LPC
- Jody Kershaw, LPC
- Jason Lutz, LPQ
- James McClory, LPQ
- Kevin McMenimen, LPC
- Dane Meaux, LPQ
- Michael Miller, LPC
- Mark Mnich, LPC
- Anthony Nelson, LPQ
- Thomas O'Mara, LPQ
- Andrew Palmer, LPC
- Dan Provost, LPC
- Danielle Pyle, LPQ
- Glenn Rowe, LPQ
- David Shaffer, LPC
- Neshia Smith, LPC
- Ron Taylor, LPC
- Renee Thomas, LPQ
- Joseph Throneberry, LPC
- Stephen Trefry, LPQ
- Daniel Tucker, LPC
- Kevin Valentine, LPC
- Melissa Van De Carr, LPC



Gene Smith,
President

Smith is president of The Loss Prevention Foundation, the not-for-profit organization charged with the responsibility of managing certification. He was formerly president of the industry's largest executive search and consulting firm. During the past fifteen-plus years, Smith has provided career counseling for thousands of industry professionals nationwide.

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