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Badging & Certification

Do digital badges really provide value to businesses?

18 June 2019 | Written by: David Leaser

Categorized: Badging & Certification

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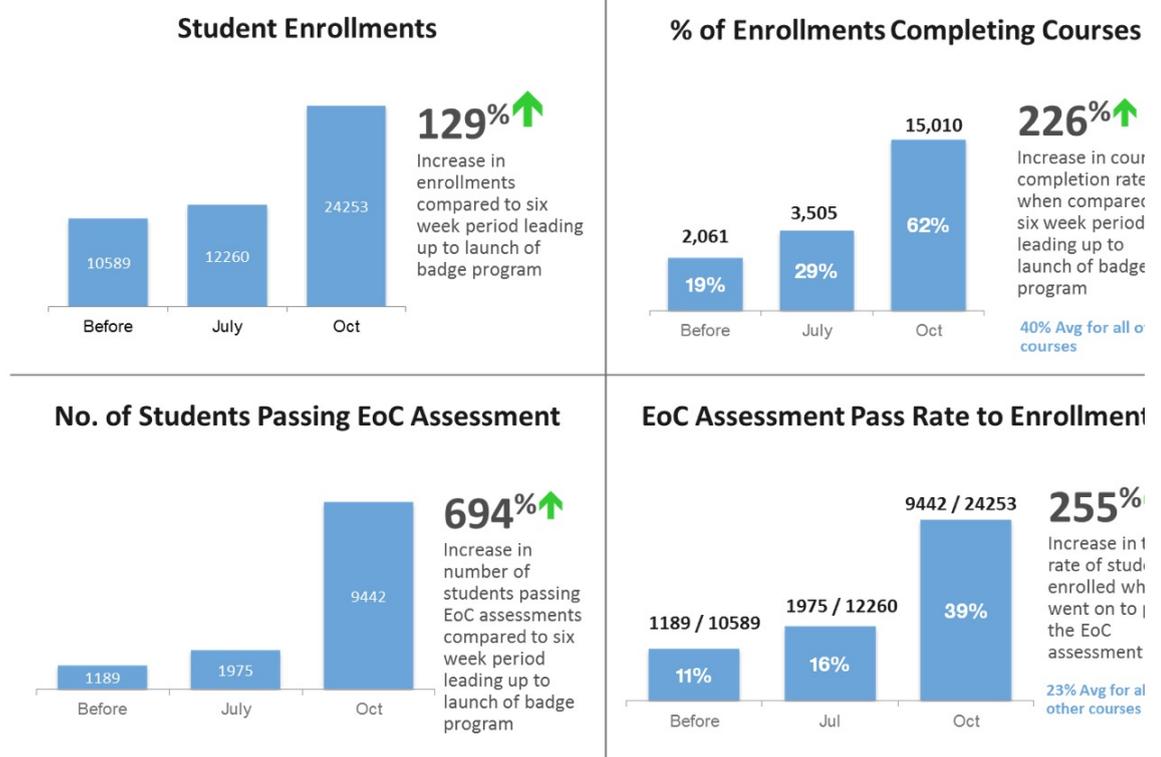By David Leaser

When the Open Badges standard was established in 2012, the mission was straightforward: Create a method information about accomplishments and embed it into portable image files as digital badges. The use cases v business was unknown. But when IBM jumped in and decided to develop its own digital badge program, the v began to emerge.

In the summer of 2014, we began to explore the value of digital badges for a single use case: How can we inc software developers who use our data products? We had launched a successful online learning platform calle now called Cognitive Class, where we hosted valuable free training developed by our top developers and data receiving good traffic, but the engagement was lagging: Students were not completing courses and taking the *introduced digital badges as an incentive to encourage engagement?*

Early success for the IBM Digital Badge Pilot began with or

The IBM Digital Badge Program began in earnest during the early months of 2015 and was ready to launch as learning by spring. Within weeks, we began to see dramatic results. Student enrollments increased by 129% enrollees who actually completed courses increased by 226%. The number of students passing the end of co 694% compared to the six-week period leading up to the introduction of digital badges. It's important to note contributing factors to this success, like promotions or announcements from IBM executives.

Our online courses saw triple-digit growth in eve

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Student Enrollments

129%↑

Increase in enrollments compared to six week period leading up to launch of badge program

10589 — Before
12260 — July
24253 — Oct

% of Enrollments Completing Courses

226%↑

Increase in cour completion rate when compared six week period leading up to launch of badge program

19% — 2,061 — Before
29% — 3,505 — July
62% — 15,010 — Oct

40% Avg for all o courses

No. of Students Passing EoC Assessment

694%↑

Increase in number of students passing EoC assessments compared to six week period leading up to launch of badge program

1189 — Before
1975 — July
9442 — Oct

EoC Assessment Pass Rate to Enrollment

255%

Increase in t rate of stud enrolled wh went on to the EoC assessment

11% — 1189 / 10589 — Before
16% — 1975 / 12260 — Jul
39% — 9442 / 24253 — Oct

23% Avg for al other courses

Online training enrollments and course completions increased by double digits after badges were

The success of the pilot launched a dramatic expansion of the digital badge program at IBM. The program now employees, clients, students and partners. We have issued nearly two million digital badges in all 195 countri organization issues digital badges and is capturing value from the program. We've implemented surveys and a out how:

Increased engagement

IBM's human resources department found a correlation between badges and engagement. Employees who e higher engagement scores than employees who do not. Among IBM badge recipients, 87% said they are mor digital badge program. A full 72% of IBM managers now employ badges to recognize employees for achievem

Increased sales

IBM found a correlation between sales and digital badges. Technical sales professionals who have earned digital badges are more likely to achieve sales quotas than employees who have not earned badges. These studies show correlation and more work can be done to determine causation. Digital badges can also create leads for products. When digital badges were introduced to an online training site with links to product downloads, those downloads increased by 64%, showing training (with incentives to complete the activities) can actually create leads for p

" 87% of
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A survey of IBM business units found 76% said digital badges motivates employees and customers to develo
said digital badges accelerate shifts in expertise to meet the changing market.

Single skills registry

IBM's digital badge program has created a collective skills registry. At any given hour of any given day, chance
building activity in progress in the IBM ecosystem. But most of these activities employ disparate student regis
learning management systems to simple spreadsheets which sit on a notebook computer. But when the activ
all of these achievements are captured and catalogued in a single "badge wallet system" in a standard format
information about the activity.

Expertise location and staffing

IBM uses a variety of sophisticated tools and programs to identify expertise in the organization. Because digit
with specific information about an achievement, IBM's systems can quickly identify expertise at the granular
skills, relevance and date of achievement. That information allows IBM to match and deploy the right people
problems for its clients and its own business. IBM has incorporated digital badges into many systems, includi
and company directories. That integration improves project staffing, employee development, incentive progra
mapping.

Skills gaps

Readiness in an era where technology is changing quickly presents a challenge to any organization. IBM's bus
and touches nearly every industry on earth. These challenges require a deep understanding of the skills need
value. It also requires a tool to understand gaps and readiness. Because IBM's badge program generates a co
in all 195 countries which includes its employees, partners and clients, the company can use its analytics too
portfolio, to identify skills readiness and then create programs to fill gaps. For example, if the company releas
geography, a business unit can run a report to determine how many skilled individuals are in the area, what sl
activities should be delivered to create success. The metadata embedded into each badge is machine readab
many applications.

Social media presence

When you earn a digital badge, you have the opportunity to share it easily and instantly on social media, incre
building trust. When a badge earner shares a digital badge, the badge shows up in a social media activity stre
for example, and type "View my verified achievement IBM," your activity stream will populate with badges fro

Thousands of IBM digital badges trickle in to activity streams all day long. Even at a fraction of a cent per imp
Badge Program generates tens of thousands of dollars' worth of earned media every week of the year.

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Digital badges increase branding and social media presence as they flow into activity stre

Digital badges create digital resumes

A full 92% of survey respondents said IBM digital badges improve their employability.
Digital badges use a "badge wallet" or "backpack" system. The backpack system
aggregates a person's digital credentials from a variety of issuers to create a digital resume.
Badge issuers can decide whether they want to make that information publicly available,
and they can easily share a web link with an employer or client. Because of their transparency and the data w
issuer, digital badges provide verifiable, trusted achievements, which contrasts with the self-assertions many
on sites like LinkedIn.

"92% of
respond
digital b
their er

Credit for college

In the past when an employee completed a learning exercise or was rewarded for an achievement, that inforr
stored in a company database or learning management system. With digital badges, the achievement can be
digital record. The digital record can provide all of the information a college or university needs to make a dec
to assign to the activity. The digital badge serves as a proxy transcript for the activity. The Open Badges speci
recognized technical standard for scale and interoperability that makes this possible. IMS Global Learning Co
interoperability in practice by certifying their compliance and keeps implementing organizations current on th
standards.

Northeastern University was the first university to articulate IBM digital badges for credit toward an advanced badge provides extended value to employees as credit toward a degree, and the school can use digital badge
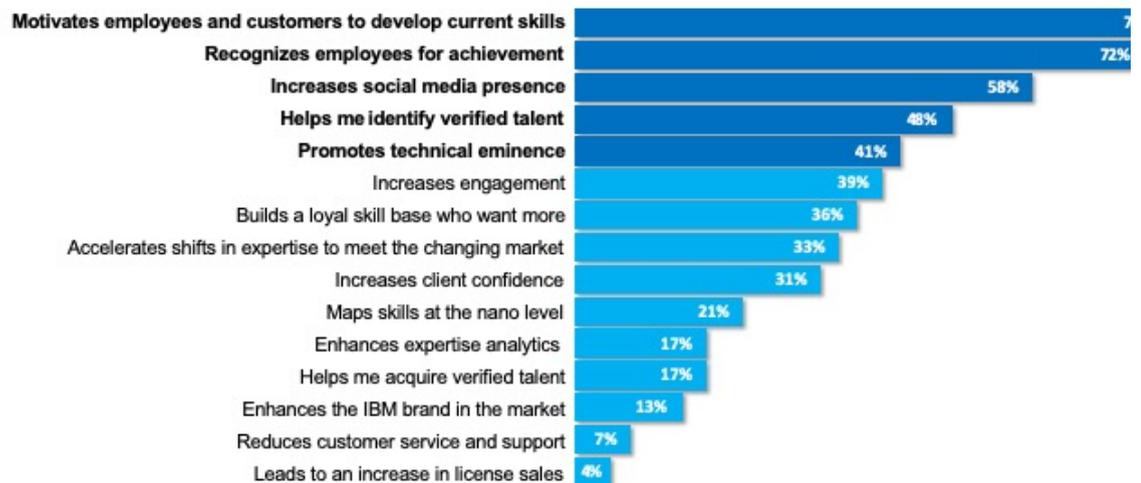
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Northeastern University was the first institution to prove that IBM badges for "on the jo used as college credit.

Digital Badges have provided value in every area we measu

An internal IBM survey of badge issuers found digital badges impacted every area they measure, from ensuring continuously reskilling to increasing product sales.

How do badges impact your business?

Motivates employees and customers to develop current skills	7
Recognizes employees for achievement	72%
Increases social media presence	58%
Helps me identify verified talent	48%
Promotes technical eminence	41%
Increases engagement	39%
Builds a loyal skill base who want more	36%
Accelerates shifts in expertise to meet the changing market	33%
Increases client confidence	31%
Maps skills at the nano level	21%
Enhances expertise analytics	17%
Helps me acquire verified talent	17%
Enhances the IBM brand in the market	13%
Reduces customer service and support	7%
Leads to an increase in license sales	4%

Sources: IBM internal survey of badge issuers, 2017

Digital badges increase skills and more: IBM badge issuers identified at least 15 areas where badges

IBM is democratizing IT with its skills programs

Badges serve an important and growing purpose in business. By focusing on skills over degrees and geograph mindsets in the IT industry and make tech more diverse and inclusive. We want to bring in people with non-tr who build skills through coding camps, community colleges or modern career education programs like our P-apprenticeship program. We want to attract people reentering the workforce or relaunching their careers, and jobs for people in parts of the world where tech jobs are scarce. This is about creating tech career opportuniti areas. The big picture: IBM has a program for anyone seeking a role in IT.

Badges are part of a broader strategy to rapidly build skills through multiple channels:

• IBM Skills Gateway: Hosts one of the largest IT training programs in the world and a network of Global Train provide skills development programs at every level.

• SkillsBuild: Provides jobseekers, including those with long-term unemployment, refugees, asylum seekers a
assessments, training, personalized coaching and the experiential learning they need to re-enter the workfor

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recognized, two-year post-secondary degree, as well as a high school diploma.
• IBM Skills Academy: Provides IT training through a network of higher education institutions.
• IBM Apprenticeships: Allows candidates to develop skills and make real-world contributions – all while earr

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David Leaser is the senior executive of strategic growth initiatives for IBM's Training & Skills program. Leaser
cloud-based embedded learning solution and is the founder of the IBM Digital Badge program. He is a Fellow
University and a member of the IMS Global Consortium Board advisory group for digital credentials. David has
the US Department of Labor and the US Department of Education as an employer subject matter expert. He h
from Pepperdine University and a Master's Degree from USC's Annenberg School.

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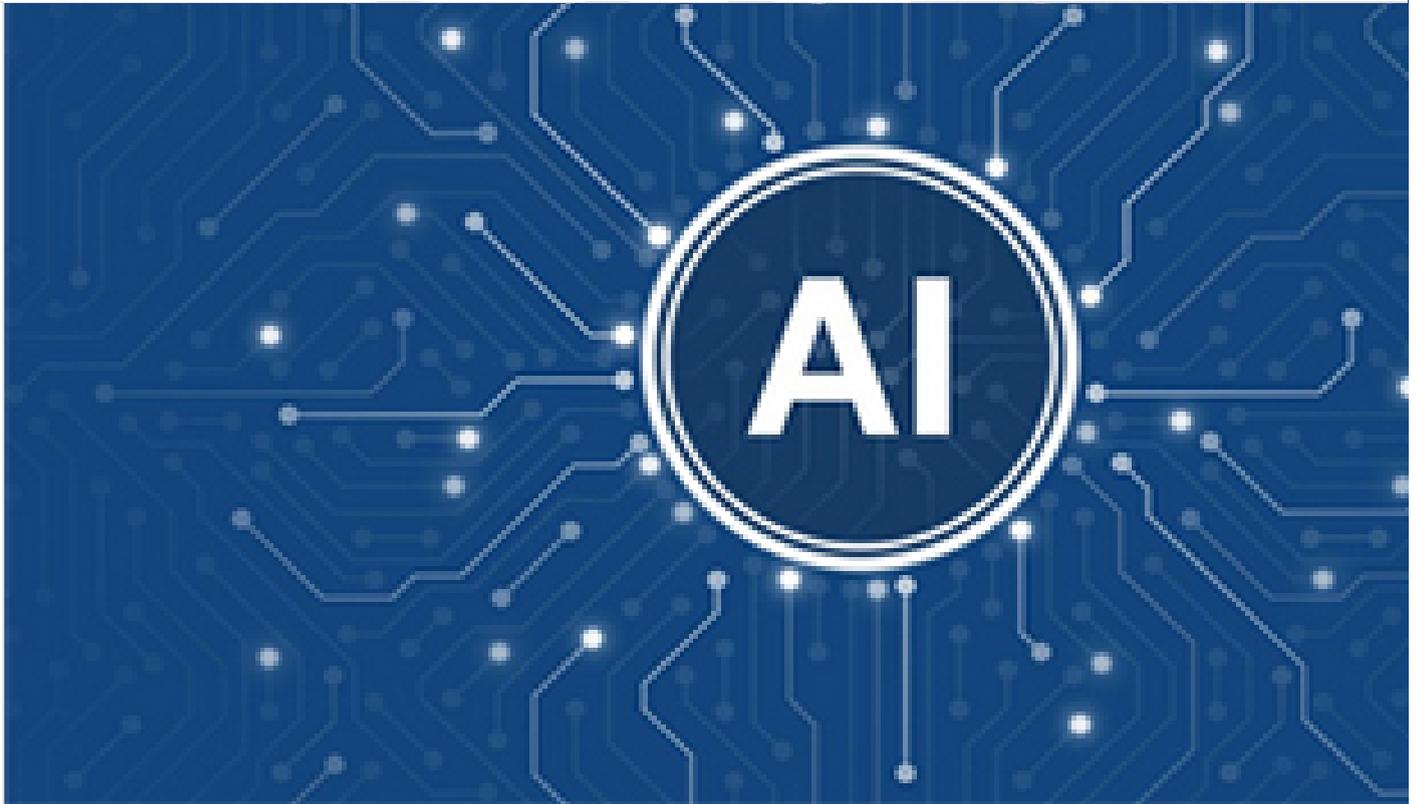
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