

10 Strategic Conversations for Certification Programs

Presentation for the
National Organization for Competency Assurance

How can we create value for our credential?

Precipitating factors

- Plateauing or declining volumes for initial certification
- Low or declining recertification rates
- Emergence of a competitor
- Review of overall business/marketing strategy

What to ask:

- What are our desired market segments and what needs could/does certification fulfill?
- What is our value proposition and how can we enhance/maintain it?
- What are the elements of our value network and how can we leverage them?

**Should we add a
new certification program
to our offerings?**

Precipitating factors

- Development of specialties and subspecialties within the profession
- Older certificants demand an advanced credential to distinguish themselves
- Desire to capitalize on previous successes
- Desire to enter a new market
- A competitor is entering the market

What to ask:

- Is there an important need?
- Is the market sufficiently large?
- How will this impact our flagship credential?
- Will we be first to market?

**Is it time to rename or
revamp our credential?**

Precipitating factors

- Volumes have plateaued or not lived up to expectations
- The name or content of the credential is passe/obsolete
- The name of the credential is not consistent with the new name of the parent organization

What to ask:

- How will this impact our brand equity?
- What will we do with the current certificant?
- How can we avoid another name change in the future?

What should we do about our declining/plateauing volumes?

Precipitating factors

- The profession/occupation is contracting
- Loss of traditional sources of new candidates
- Increased competition
- Absence of an integrated marketing strategy

What to ask:

- What is the cause and what control, if any, do we have over the outcome?
- Was our previous growth fueled by unusual or irreplicable circumstances?
- How can we minimize the impact on our financial status?

**Should we discontinue
our certification program?**

Precipitating factors

- Volumes have not lived up to expectations
- Volumes have declined
- Desire to introduce a new credential which would replace existing credential

What to ask:

- Is this more than just a marketing problem?
- Do the resources expended justify the number served (or benefits)?
- What will we do with existing certificants?

How can we manage our rapid growth?

Precipitating factors

- Certification exam is being used to fulfill licensure requirements
- Certification is required by government regulations
- Certification is required by influential entities (e.g., third-party payors)
- Movement into global markets

What to ask:

- How can we continue to ensure quality, consistency and minimize error?
- What infrastructure will we need to support growth?
- How can we better leverage technology?
- What functions can/should be outsourced?

**Should we transform
our domestic certification into
a global program?**

Precipitating factors

- Candidates from other countries are applying for the certification
- Local organizations have expressed an interest in the certification
- Desire to grow the program and generate more revenue

What to ask:

- Which international/global model is best for us?
- Which markets should we enter?
- What infrastructure will be needed to support a global program?
- Do we really have the expertise or can we access it?

**Is it time to transition to
computer-based testing?**

Precipitating factors

- Candidate demands for quicker scores and more convenient scheduling and test sites
- Significant expansion in number of test sites is needed
- Concerns about security of current test administration procedures
- Introduction of new item types, including use of multimedia

What to ask:

- What is the best strategy for implementing the transition?
- What are the financial implications – for us and for our candidates?
- How will operations be impacted?

**How can we ensure that
our certification remains relevant
to post-Boomer generations?**

Precipitating factors

- “Graying” of candidates/certificants
- Younger professionals seem less interested in certification
- Greater candidate focus on efficiency and “results”

What to ask:

- Is it (just) a generational issue?
- What do candidates today really want from our certification program?
- How can we transform our program while maintaining our: (a) rigor and (b) brand equity?