SUMMARY

Switching certificate issuing from a paper-based process to Accredible has delivered significant time and cost savings for the IAPP. But more than that, it has increased the visibility of the IAPP and its programs, allowed delegation of work, and portrayed the organization in a positive light. Following on from the successful roll out of digital certificates, the IAPP is now planning to expand its credentialing program with Accredible’s support, by introducing digital badges to recognise people in service roles.

CHALLENGES

The IAPP used to print and mail paper certificates. As the number of program participants grew, the situation became untenable with four people from the certification team spending two days per month printing and mailing certificates. Corey Stewart, Certification Coordinator, explains: “It wasn’t just the time spent sending out the certificates. They would get lost or damaged in the post, take weeks or months to arrive, or get returned to us. Furthermore, as a global organization we were sending a lot of certificates internationally, and the postage could be as high as $20 per certificate.”

The IAPP had concerns that recipients would be upset by a switch to digital credentials. As Doug Forman, Certification Director, put it “Our main concern was that people felt satisfied and had something tangible to represent their achievement. We thought ‘are they going to be upset about not having a paper certificate?’”

The International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) is the largest and most comprehensive global information privacy community and resource. It is a not-for-profit organization that helps define, support and improve the privacy profession globally. The IAPP issues around 20,000 certificates related to information privacy and data handling to professionals like lawyers, consultants, and chief privacy or technology officers at large multinationals every year.

https://iapp.org/
HOW ACCREDIBLE HELPED

The IAPP made the decision to issue all certificates through Accredible. Forman describes the process followed in making the move: “We did a hard switch. We said ‘on this date we’re going to stop sending out paper certificates, for all our programs.’ We then sent digital certificates to all current certificate holders - we didn’t wait until the time for them to recertify came around.”

This ‘big bang’ approach worked well for the IAPP. Many recipients hold several certifications, so there was no confusion as to which certificate was where. It also simplified administration, as everyone was working solely with the new system.

Forman continues: “It was a pretty smooth transition. We found the Accredible platform very intuitive and easy to use. We are able to be up and running very quickly once we designed the certificates. There were no unanticipated problems.”

RESULTS

The switch to Accredible eliminated the problems associated with the printing and mailing of paper certificates. The IAPP can now create, send and update certificates quickly and efficiently. If somebody needs a certificate the same day that’s no longer a problem.

Fears of a lack of acceptance by recipients were unfounded: they overwhelmingly accepted the change positively. As Forman comments: “We were really pleasantly surprised that there was virtually no negative response to the change. It made sense intuitively to people to have something that was portable, that they could put on their LinkedIn profile, on their email signature or wherever they wanted. The benefits more than made up for any loss that might have been perceived in not receiving a paper credential in the mail.”

“We were eager to show that we were on the forefront of a new kind of credential that had different capabilities. It was very satisfying for us to make a smart decision about how we were going to recognise our certified individuals and to gain all that extra efficiency and nimbleness.”

Rolling out to all recipients also brought marketing benefit. The new digital certificates are shared on LinkedIn and other social platforms, increasing the visibility of the IAPP and its programs.
The permissions control within Accredible has meant the workload can be handled more evenly and efficiently. For example, the customer services group now sends out certificates, performs name changes etc. These operational activities no longer need to be managed by the certification department.

Cost savings were immediately apparent. The IAPP estimates that the direct cost per certificate was at least halved by the switch. But the time saved - around three days per month for four staff members - represented the most significant saving.

CONCLUSION

The move to Accredible allowed the IAPP to free up staff time, reduce costs, deliver better customer service, manage certificate expiration, and increase online visibility. In addition, recipients can now more easily provide evidence of their achievements. “It is probably one of the best decisions that we made as an organization,” comments Forman.

The IAPP is now planning to implement digital badges with Accredible. Badges will be used to recognise more specific service roles, such as chapter volunteers, chapter presidents, subject matter experts, exam developers, or volunteer board members.

“I would tell people that there’s almost no disadvantage to changing to the digital credentials that Accredible offers. There’s only been positive experience and I haven’t looked back once.”

Doug Forman, Certification Director

Contact Accredible today or reach us at sales@accredible.com to see how we can help your organization implement a secure and streamlined digital certificate or badging solution.