

Origin and Purpose of the Institute of Career Certification International

From time to time it is a good habit to review the history, origin, purpose and development of any organization and the Institute of Career Certification International (ICC International) is no exception. Career practitioners and others who are interested in learning about certification, regularly ask about the Institute's roots, its usefulness and its legitimacy. This paper is designed to address these questions.

The predecessor to the ICC International – the Outplacement Institute – was created in 1994 by James Gallagher, Ph.D. with the endorsement of two organizations. They were the Association of Outplacement Consulting Firms (AOCF) representing firms that provided career transition services to employers, and the International Association of Outplacement Professionals (IAOP), which represented individual outplacement practitioners.

Since that time, the nature of services provided in the career field has undergone dramatic change. Initially the focus was on outplacement, which was an employer-sponsored service dedicated to supporting displaced employees by helping them to leave their former employer, to assess career direction and to find appropriate employment.

Today, outplacement, now frequently called transition consulting, is still delivered in much of the world although its substance, scope and mode of delivery have changed over the years. In some markets, pressure is building to commoditize the product towards less service for a lower fee.

The field itself has also changed, providing less service in outplacement and more in other career management services. As a result, the associations eliminated the term “outplacement” and changed their names. AOCF became the Association of Career Firms International (ACF International) and IAOP became the International Association of Career Management Professionals – IACMP – and then changed again to its present name, the Association of Career Professionals International - ACP International.

In recognition of the differing emphasis given to career services in different parts of the world, ACF International established four regional chapters - ACF Europe, ACF Latin America, ACF Asia Pacific and ACF North America. Diagrammatically, the picture looks like this:

CAREER FIRMS

Association of Outplacement Consulting Firms - AOCF
which changed into the Association of Career Firms
International ACF International
with four regional chapters:
ACF Asia Pacific
ACF North America
ACF Europe
ACF Latin America

CAREER PRACTITIONERS

International Association of Outplacement Professionals – IAOP which later became the International Association of Career Management Professionals – IACMP, and is now the Association of Career Professionals International - **ACP International**

The Outplacement Institute - OI
which changed to the International Board for Career Management Certification – IBCMC and changed again to the Institute of Career Certification International - **ICC International**

What led to the establishment of a standards and credentialing body in the first place? Essentially it was driven by two interests. The external dynamic was that these two associations had been under increasing scrutiny by their stakeholders, supporters and clients to establish practice legitimacy. The other was internal to the associations which wanted to demonstrate their claims of practice quality in a rigorous and institutionalized manner. Since the career field was unregulated, a background concern was that the industry should establish practice standards itself, rather than wait until government bodies introduced regulatory requirements.

The career field was calling for proof of practice excellence that the public and consumers of career services could rely on with a high degree of confidence. A formal organization was needed whose sole function would be to assess practitioner legitimacy; to be the keeper of career practice standards.

Of course the associations claimed that the services they represented were of excellent quality, provided at a high ethical standard and were supported by solid education and training credentials by practitioners who had extensive experience in the field.

Moreover, the anecdotal evidence was vast and rich that career practitioners helped their service clients deal with career transition issues and find new work that was fulfilling and in harmony with their strengths and interests. This benefit to the service clients in turn provided value to the former employers in many ways. All of this was persuasive information but it was not systematic proof of legitimacy. It did not pass the test of detached external scrutiny.

Pressure continued to mount internally and externally, and in 1991 IAOP set up a committee to study different approaches to certification with Bonnie Maitlen, Ed.D. serving as Chair. In 1992 the committee proposed establishing the Outplacement Institute as an independent standards and competency body. It would utilize a portfolio review process based on the practitioner's education, experience, competence and adherence to ethical standards. Its recommendations were adopted by the IAOP, and later by the AOCF and its first certificants were accredited in 1994.

Twelve senior practitioners, of whom six had doctoral degrees, were appointed by IAOP as Charter Fellows under the leadership of James Gallagher, Ph.D. who served as the Founding Chairperson. Then later an additional twelve were appointed by the AOCF. The Charter Fellows are named at the end of this article. The initial Board of Governors consisted of 10 members of whom four had a doctoral degree. Over time, the Outplacement Institute changed its name to the International Board for Career Management Certification and then to its current name, the ICC International.

The original standards were subsequently revised and expanded beyond outplacement to reflect the growing diversity of career management and career coaching practices. In 2005, the application process, still portfolio-based, was moved on-line to make certification more accessible to practitioners throughout the world.

At the beginning, two of the Institute’s goals were to inform the public and to provide educational services to practitioners, (“a university without walls”); however these goals were not implemented on the premise that it was necessary for the Institute to be totally independent from organizations that provide lobbying or training services. As a result, the Institute relies on the communications and educational capabilities of the ACP International, the ACF International and other training organizations.

The Institute, then and now, represents neither the firms nor the practitioners. It represents international service standards and competencies for career management professionals who may be located anywhere in the world. Applicants may be members of ACF International or ACP International or not. They may be independent service providers or employees within government, the private sector, educational institutions or agencies. The Institute examines the competencies, experience and education of applicants who work in the career field, and it operates within the broad description of career practitioners as defined by the Association of Career Professionals International.

Over the years, communication, joint planning and collaboration between the Institute and its two supporting associations have been strong, but always with the clear recognition that it must maintain independence in carrying out its mandate as the keeper of career service standards. Since its creation, therefore, the Institute has not been a subsidiary of either association, but is a stand-alone body managed by its independent Board of Governors, working towards the goal of maintaining and improving standards of practice that consumers can trust.

Charter Fellows

Representing IAOP

Representing AOCF

Murray Axmith	Charles Cates	Thomas Davoren	Stephen Johnson
Robert DeLargey	James Gallagher	Michael King	Staffan Kurten
Saul Gruner	James Kacena	David Miles	Pat Morton
Richard Knowdell	Sandra Lanto	Win Nystrom	John Poynton
Robert Lee	Bonnie Maitlen	Fairfax Randolph, Jr	Amy Rogat
Clyde Meredith	Alan Pickman	Angie Troisi	Charles Zjiderveldt
John van Hecke			

Many thanks to the Charter Fellows and Governors of ICC International for their input and suggestions for this paper.

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 23 April 2006