



Research Brief

ProExam Digital Micro-Credential Market Research (November 2012)

Methodology:

- In-depth interviews were conducted with eleven senior hiring managers at Fortune 500 or similar companies with at least one thousand employees. These individuals were responsible for the evaluation and/or hiring of credentialed employees.
- The interviews, approximately one hour in length, were performed in mid-November at a market research facility in Boston, MA, by a professional facilitator from Martin & Stowe.
- The interview subjects primarily represented four verticals: financial services, health care, food services and information technology.
- The results are qualitative: that is, for directional guidance and understanding.

Premise:

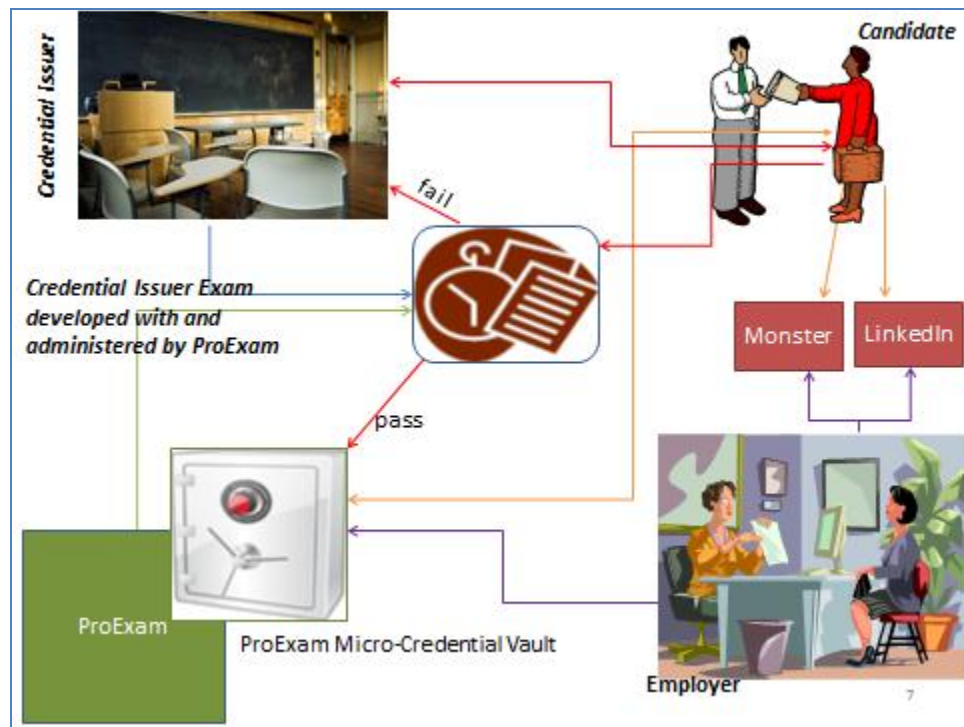
1. Interview subjects first discussed issues regarding credentials, and verification of valid credentials.
2. They then were introduced to the concept of digital “badges” as badges are generally described, and reaction gathered.
3. Finally, they were introduced to the concept of the ProExam Digital Micro-Credential as a validated indicator of accomplishment, skill, quality or interest which could be used as a stepping stone to more comprehensive credentials, as an advanced credential, or as a marker for additional competencies. Reaction was gathered.

Findings:

The **authentication of credentials remains less than ideal for hiring managers**, especially as credentials are applied to more specific skills, or to functional training and knowledge. There is no consistency in how most current credentials can be verified, from online databases to traditional written communications. Skill, or functional, credentials remain for the most part outside of the realm of verifiability. Overall, the current system works, but is neither efficient nor reliable.

Digital credentials and an associated **ability to securely verify credentials online were seen as a significant improvement** over current methods and a significant advance in a hiring manager's ability to find the "right" applicant.

Digital badges, alone, were considered an interesting idea, but lacked substance. There was discomfort that a standard badge could be a true indicator of accomplishment.



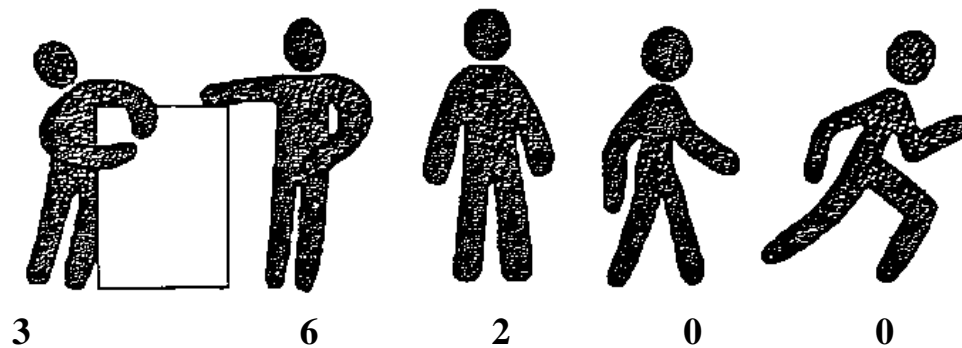
ProExam Digital Micro-Credentials were seen as taking “the fluff off the badges” and giving them real meaning by providing a secure path to verification of the skill or credential. It was immediately understood that the ProExam solution would have a secure, embedded link that would provide a validation of both the authenticity of the credential as well as its current status. Ease and security in verification was key. In addition, it was a strong positive that the ProExam Digital Micro-Credential was based on some form of assessment and couldn't just be purchased.

Professional Examination Service's not-for-profit status, and long history, was seen as credible and reassuring. There was also a clear preference that the credential sponsor be a “known entity.”

All respondents found it reassuring that once the Digital Micro-Credential was issued, it was maintained in a secure digital “vault” that employers could independently access for verification. All were both excited and pleased that there would be no cost to the employer to access the secure verification vault.

Conclusions:

Overall, the consensus was positive. No one had a negative response to the ProExam Digital Micro-Credential, based on an overall ranking (from “embracing it” to “running from it”).



Most respondents shared that the ProExam Digital Micro-Credential could be a serious step forward in the efficiency of looking for a pool of qualified candidates. The benefit was not that it might prove decisive between two otherwise equal candidates, but it would be a deciding factor in whether a candidate was included in the pool of applicants/candidates to be considered.

The ProExam Digital Micro-Credential was also seen as an immediate time saver and probably an indispensable feature of enhancing the selection process.

Finally, hiring managers saw the benefit to potential employees. Just having a ProExam Digital Micro-Credential would indicate which applicants had made an investment in themselves by paying to get a premium credential that could be used online and verified.