



## Diving into Digital Badges with Dr. Ginger Malin

### Leading Learning Podcast Transcript for Episode 322

**Ginger Malin:** [00:00:00] So, again, the individual who's sharing their badges becomes a conduit, so, so to speak, for an organization to really put the word out there that they wouldn't necessarily be able to do on their own through traditional marketing avenues.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:00:16] I'm Celisa Steele.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:00:18] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:00:26] Welcome to episode 322, which features a conversation with Dr. Ginger Malin. Ginger is founder and CEO of BadgeCert, which provides an enterprise-class platform for creating, issuing, storing, and sharing digital badges that verify earners' skills, credentials, and continuing education experiences. BadgeCert got its start in 2013, but Ginger has been in the learning and development space for almost 25 years. Ginger and Celisa talk about a digital badging broadly and get into related topics like verifiability, microcredentials, stacking, blockchain engagement, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the marketing potential of digital badges. If you're thinking about doing more with digital badges at your learning business or thinking of getting started with badging, this is a conversation for you. Ginger and Celisa spoke in August 2022.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:01:27] So tell us about BadgeCert and the work that you do.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:01:31] BadgeCert started—I'll just kind of give you that context—but BadgeCert started. I was a professor of education before starting the company. In my research and in my experiences as an instructor, I really came to understand that there are lots of different ways that we could recognize students for all the things that they were doing. And transcripts really weren't a real effective way to say this is what the competencies and skills are that were most effective for success in the work world. So, as I was looking through that, I really came to understand, hey, we need a new way of recognizing all sorts of different competencies and skills. So I came across digital badges a long time ago—now it's almost 12 years ago—

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

through Mozilla Open Badges framework as a researcher and said, “Hey, this is really an interesting medium to recognize all sorts of experiences and especially those skills and competencies.” So I started to utilize that in my classroom and really came quickly to understand that there was a lot of opportunity here for professional use, and the Mozilla Open Badges framework was just that. It was a framework, and it was a really good foundation, but then decided to take the leap from, so to speak, the ivory tower and build the platform from the ground up, using that framework really to broaden the opportunity to utilize digital badges as a means for recognizing professional development, recognizing training, recognizing certification and licensure. So that’s really where it got its start, is looking at those kinds of ways to, again, do recognition. And then there’s a lot of other opportunities there through the technology that were really meaningful for the types of organizations that we were approaching. So things like expiration, which I’m sure we’ll talk more about and things like revocation of credentials. So digital badges really made a lot of sense at that point. So I started the company from, again, the ground up and started building a business on it.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:03:21] Well, great. Thanks for that origin story there, and you’ve begun to get into it, but I would like to ask directly about the benefits of digital badging and how you describe that to folks when you’re talking about why they should go down the digital badge path.

[00:03:40] Certainly. So, just again, I mentioned a little bit about this, but expiration was a big feature factor with the types of organizations that we work with, particularly those in certification and the licensing world because their revenue is tied to people re-certifying and going back and re-upping their licenses. So, because that was a factor for a lot of certification bodies, that became a real good fit for digital badges because that expiration opportunity then became something that we could send out reminder e-mails automatically through the platform that said, hey, your badge is going to expire in 30 days. Please click here to submit your CEs. Please click here to take this training. Please click here to do whatever it is that they needed them to do. So that was one of the features, one of the benefits and goals that organizations had that we could fulfill with digital badges. But, expanding beyond that, looking at training providers and other folks in the L&D space, expiration is also really interesting for engagement because a lot of these organizations want to engage meaningfully with people who’ve already gone through their programs. So, just again, in the broader L&D world, those are training providers, both small and large. We know a lot of organizations that have started over the last couple of years that are individuals hanging a shingle that are interested in providing training for a broader audience in whatever topic it may be.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

**Ginger Malin:** [00:04:55] So those organizations want to say, okay, we had these people go through our courses a year ago. If we expire badges, then we have this opportunity to re-engage them and say, hey, why don't you take this two-question survey? How have you use this course in your professional life, and are you looking for any other courses? Are there other content areas that you're interested in? So something as simple as that could be the call to action to have that badge renewed for them for another year or two. So there's lots of different ways to use that expiration feature as one piece of that. But, in terms of other goals and features, we also have—again, I mentioned this before—revocation. So a lot of the organizations that we work with have to have the opportunity then to say there's misconduct here, there's a mistake here, we're going to revoke this badge, either reissue it or just revoke it altogether because somebody in a professional space that says, "I'm credentialed" when they no longer are is a problem. So there's that opportunity as well. And then, more broadly, from a goal standpoint, is marketing because organizations really want to utilize their credential holders or their participants as a tool or as a medium to spread the word out about their programs.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:06:00] So as people accept a badge and then want to share their badge, they can share it on any social media platform, e-mail signatures, etc. They become a really important piece of the puzzle for marketing because, again, they're spreading the word really organically with their broader communities. So those three are really key tools that we see for badging. But, just again, an alternative to a paper certificate, something that people can, as I mentioned, display on social media. It gives them the pride that they're looking for and something, again, that's authentically meaningful to them that they can share. A paper certificate is something you put in your door. We no longer have walls, a lot of us. So we're not getting that plaque anymore and hanging it on our wall unless we're the only ones that want to see it. So, again, the change or that tipping point really occurred as people were living their lives online and then wanted to have something that's verifiable that they can share again on social media, but also on resumés and job boards and all those other kinds of things. So they can really legitimize the kinds of experiences that they've had personally and share the digital badges and means to do so.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:07:03] And you just mentioned verifiable. And I feel like that verifiability comes up a lot when reading about, thinking about digital badges. In your mind, does the expiration and the revocation, all of that, does that fall under the verifiability heading, or do you think of that in any additional ways?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:07:22] Certainly. And so those two pieces are necessary for that verifiable piece. But, again, that idea of clicking on the badge, seeing that it is up to date, that it's relevant,

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

that it is current, those are things that are necessary for anybody saying I have this skill or competency, having the authority in the space saying, yes, indeed they do. Here's the assessment that they took. Here's the course that they took. Here's the experiences that they've had that lead us as the authority in the space to say, yep, this person can do this. That piece of it is huge. A paper certificate sort of fulfills some of that, but it doesn't have all the metadata that's necessary, that underlies that to help somebody understand the nature of that credential. So I can tell you that I am an expert in whatever technology. Unless a viewer sees, oh, but this is the class. There was a 12-hour class, or it was a three-month class, or it was an endorsement program from a university, whatever that is. I can see those nuances and really understand, yes, this person says they can do this, this authority says they can do it, and here's all the information that helps me as an employer, as a viewer understand, yeah, there was some rigor that went behind this credential.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:08:32] And there's even the possibility for sample work that could potentially be linked to or built into the badge, sort of a portfolio that might further speak to, yes, I really have this skill. Here's what I did to prove I have this skill.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:08:46] Absolutely. So we call those artifacts. You can put in links. You can put in JPGs, PDFs, all that can be included in that metadata. Again, lending that context to somebody earning that credential and seeing what it was really about. So the other thing that we're seeing is, not only just in credentialing, but let's say you do a podcast, as I'm doing right now. It could even be as simple as that. Recognition that I've done this—I'm a guest on your podcast, wherever that may be. I can actually put a link to the podcast in the actual digital badge itself. And so I know that I'm doing this as a relevance since you and I are talking, but it could be even just, again, more opportunities. Let's say I'm a contributor to a specific industry. My contribution can also be part of that record. And somebody could say, oh, I see that you've done this. I see that you're a board member of this organization, and then it may have a link there to some of the podcasts that I've done or some of the blog posts that I've written or what have you. If you're in the assessment space, it could be different content that you've written or things that you've done in order to contribute to the industry. So I think it's really important in terms of, again, what goals people are having for utilizing digital badges. It can do a lot of different things depending on, again, what the benefits may be to your community.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:10:05] At Tagoras, we're experts in the global business of lifelong learning, and we use our expertise to help clients better understand their markets, connect with new customers, make the right investment decisions, and grow their learning businesses. We achieve these goals through expert market assessment, strategy formulation, and platform selection

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

services. If you're looking for a partner to help your learning business achieve greater reach, revenue, and impact, learn more at [tagoras.com/services](http://tagoras.com/services).

**Celisa Steele:** [00:10:35] Speaking of goals, that makes me think about interoperability and being able to connect digital badges with other systems. And in so much of edtech integration, interoperability are just so key. I'm thinking about SCORM and AICC for learning management systems, for example. And I know that already in the conversation you've brought up Mozilla Open Badges, but maybe there are others or maybe you want to talk a little bit more about that. But what are the guidelines or standards that a learning business should be aware of or thinking about if they're going to go down this path of implementing digital badges?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:11:12] Certainly. So there are standards that we, that all the vendors comply with, so to speak, different ways of the metadata, things that we include, etc. There's also underlying technology that all the vendors will also include in there, but it is a proprietary piece of software. So each one of the vendors who are selling into this space do have their own different nuances for their programs. And, while there is some interoperability or some ideas with that, it really is still siloed. There are universal types of portfolios. It's things that some of the large organizations—your IBMs and your Workdays and those other people are kind of proposing out there—but it still really is siloed at this point. And one of the questions I often get is blockchain. So, and I'm not an expert on blockchain, so I don't want to get over my skis on this one, but that is the technology that we're most excited about and have our fingers in at this point. We're doing a lot of work with some of the large organizations, very large organizations, to start building out what's possible utilizing blockchain technology. And I think that's the most exciting thing. But I'm going to equate it—and I don't know the age of everybody listening to this podcast—but I equate it to the VCR and the tape. So, if you have a tape here, but you don't have the right VCR, it doesn't work. They don't work together. So right now we're in the space where the two things aren't together. The wallet doesn't necessarily match. We're not ready to have the reader along with where we're writing to a specific block.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:12:43] Until we have that universal wallet or this universal way of reading the different digital credentials on the blockchain, it's not robust enough yet for widespread use. So we're on that trajectory. One of the things we think about is, beyond just when we think about credentials, your driver's license, your passport. There's lots of things that we think of that are actually credentials. That's what they are. You should be able to go into a bar and not show your ID with all your name and all your important information. They just need to know that you're 21. So, when we think about a credential in the true sense of the word, there's only certain information that somebody needs to know that's relevant to them. When I look at the

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

broader opportunities there of what credentialing can be, that's the things that we're looking for is having that universal wallet to be able to have the reader and having people be able to share relevant information with specific groups of people. So we think about applying for a mortgage. We just bought a car, which is, you know, you want to pull your hair out with this six hours that you have to sit there and provide every document they have. They don't necessarily need it. They just need to know that you're ready to pay, that you can pay for it. So that's what we're most excited about is the direction of where blockchain is going to go, and that's what I think is really going to produce that interoperability, the true interoperability that is going to be really interesting going forward.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:14:05] Well, I did want to ask about blockchain, so I'm glad you brought it up. And—correct me if I'm wrong because I'm trying to make sure I'm hearing what you just shared accurately—to use the advantage of tying a digital badge to blockchain, this relates to the interoperability and this ability to be able to show the relevant credential in the relevant situations and for it to just work out of the box.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:14:31] You've mentioned the marketing benefits of digital badges, and I do think that's really interesting, the inherent shareability of them and that they aren't the paper in the drawer, that they are much more visible to external folks. And one of the things I heard you talking about with marketing is, again, in some of that metadata, you have an opportunity to almost build a case for why someone who's interested in, you know, they're looking at someone else's credential, but it's a case of, hey, this might also work for you. So talk a little bit more about how you see marketing, and digital badges serving that marketing purpose for learning businesses, working.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:15:10] Yeah. So it's a really interesting thing, and it's what I'm really excited about, that I'm talking about with a lot of clients that we have. So the metadata fields, there's some that are required fields, again, building on those standards, and a lot that are able to be completely customized. One of the things that is an example for marketing that I'm suggesting some of our clients do is have an About Us section or Learn More section. So you can have links within the badge metadata itself. And, if you have a Learn More section, it could have a link to an e-commerce page even or a static page that'll give a viewer, another person looking at that badge, opportunities to sign up for a course, or, as they're learning more, it takes them through that whole process. So, again, the individual who's sharing their badges becomes a conduit, so to speak, for an organization to really put the word out there that they wouldn't necessarily be able to do on their own through traditional marketing avenues. So that's one of the things that I find most exciting about the direction that badges are going in this day and age. We've hit the

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*



tipping point. I spent the beginning, the foundation of my company, convincing other organizations, yes, you need this. There's so much value here. Again, part of the whole the whole piece that I thought was a no-brainer was it's so much less expensive, less labor, less paper, less mailing, all those other things that you think of. And, if I'm talking to the right people in the L&D space, this is what they literally want to bang their head against the wall about—the cost associated and the labor associated with all of this.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:16:37] So, of course, that's where digital badges get us. That was the hurdle that we faced at the beginning. And now it's like a "Hey, Mom, look, no hands!" kind of approach. It's like, okay, what else can we do with this? And that marketing piece is, just again, so powerful. So I would say that's one piece of it, is utilizing the Learn More Here type of thing in the metadata. But certainly we have other opportunities then to add other static images, static pages in there so that, as somebody is sharing that badge, they understand more of that context. It's even as if, let's say I am a university, as an example, and I have an executive program because a lot of universities are moving in that direction. As they put that out there, somebody completes the program, and that individual shares it with their employer. What we're finding, and I've heard this anecdotally, is that the company, especially large companies, will then go back to that university and say, hey, we saw that you were offering this executive program. Would you be able to create a program for our company moving forward? So we're finding that there's not just opportunities to sign up for that particular program, but it's building on that and creating new opportunities that maybe people didn't know about, or it's connecting people together for new possibilities within the L&D space.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:17:51] I think that's a really exciting side, and I'm glad that you're seeing that opportunity, talking to organizations about that opportunity. And it does seem like a logical next step to go a little bit deeper with digital badging by really using them as these marketing vehicles. And it's sort of like the modern-day referral, right? It used to be one on one, me saying, oh, this is a great class, or this was a great experience. I would recommend it. But now people can do that without having to actively share that information. Just people can look at the badge and go, oh, she did that. I think that could be a good fit for me too.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:18:28] And the icons are part of that. You have something that's really beautifully constructed in terms of I look at that, I understand it from just the iconography standpoint. And then, again, all of that metadata leads me as a viewer to say, okay, let me learn more about this so I can dig in as much as I'd like to. And, again, those layers can really be built into the badge depending on the organization's goals. So being really smart about that. I'm just going to go back on that marketing piece again. One of the things that we always remind our

clients about is that marketing also has to happen, there has to be some foundation to that. So, as you want people to share their credentials online all over the place, you have to build in how they do that, what they're supposed to do. There is some innate understanding of what it is, especially now—again, that tipping point has already happened. Many people have earned badges. They get them. They understand them. But it's really also important from a different type of marketing standpoint.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:19:20] I'm going to take a little detour there, but it's also important for organizations to say, okay, we have a plan to help our earners—is the term we use or the recipients—understand how to use this and the benefits to them to encourage them, again, then to share it more broadly online and then have that, again, then be a conduit for their own organizational marketing. So we always remind our clients that you want to actively remind people that they're going to receive a badge at the end of an experience, or, as they do receive those badges, the benefits to them. Because, again, when we think about engagement in general, and I'm sure a lot of your listeners are also in the type of psychology space, but that intrinsic and extrinsic value, they need to see both once they earn a badge. So encouraging them in really smart ways. And, on our side, we offer what we call Launch Kit, a marketing launch kit. So we give tools for our stakeholders, our organizations, to be able to best do this.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:20:24] I know that digital badges can be awarded for many different types of learning experiences, can run the gamut from very long, in-depth learning experiences to shorter experiences. And digital badges for those shorter experiences tend to get called microcredentials. And then there's the possibility with those smaller digital badges to potentially stack them and create pathways. So would you just talk a little bit about what that looks like and the benefits of that?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:20:54] Yeah, so the nomenclature is kind of interesting. So what we think about what microcredentials are, they're not a digital badge, but digital badges help support the pedagogy around what how to build microcredentials. So, when I think about a microcredential, it's really this capability of structuring content in such a way that somebody can look at that and say, all right, these four experiences, these four Webinars, these modules in a course, if you're building in an online learning management system, these things together will allow me as a student, as a learner, to be able to say, yep, as I complete this series of something, then I'm capable of doing this skill or competency. When I think about my credentialing, it's that capability for an organization to start building those opportunities to cluster things together in such a way that they can then say, okay, yep, you now can have this skill or competency. It could be just one thing, but a lot of organizations are doing what you just

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*



mentioned, is stacking them. When we look at what badges can do on top of what the concept of microcredentialing can do, is it offers that technology and that visual representation to help somebody understand how they move through those programs. What we're finding is, when we provide consulting to our clients about how microcredentials can be beneficial to them, a badge can be representing each one of those layers, or those steps, towards building up to mastery.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:22:19] We look at that final piece of mastery as the microcredential because, again, it's a subset oftentimes. But those opportunities that they're doing that are more those steps can also be represented by badges. So it allows, again, that value. When we think about that extrinsic/intrinsic opportunity as a learner, I want to see myself moving through a program, and it is helpful for me to have the acknowledgment from that organization that says, yep, you've completed this step. Now you've completed this step. Now you've completed this step. You need one more step in order to earn the microcredential in a specific skill or competency area. So that's, when we look at L&D, that's the direction that we see lots of organizations moving towards is, because they have the badges as that tool, they can now build on the various concepts of smaller, nuanced skill-building or competency-building through learning and development opportunities. So it could be that stack is attendance at an event or watching a Webinar, creating a blog post, submitting some various work-related types of products. And so the organizations now, as they're thinking through what would be possible, how can we help our learners compile the kinds of things that are necessary in order for them to show mastery? Microcredentials can do that. So I'm excited about that piece of it—as well as, when we look at certification in general, there are lots of things that organizations are missing out on.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:23:42] So they may have their master certification, and it takes years and years. It takes an assessment. It takes all these things. But they're losing sight of the fact that somebody may—I'm going to use nursing as an opportunity here to frame it. But I can be a gastric nurse, and I earn the credential for that. But maybe I work in pediatrics, or I work with infants, or I work with other types of populations. I'm not recognized for being an expert in any one of those. That's what a microcredential can be really, really, really interesting is that I can now be recognized for those other kinds of things that organizations had no way of recognizing me for. Plus, they had to go through a lot of the accreditation steps and a lot of those other steps to create a true certification program, and microcredentials allows them to work on the edges of that and still do that recognition as the authority in the space to say, yep, this person has the capacity to work with this population or to do these certain skill or competency things that are not necessarily under the umbrella of our credential. But the broader credential is too general

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

for them to say, yep, I can do these other things that makes me successful for that specific position.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:24:49] Do you see any issues or have any advice around using digital badges to represent both the really big-picture certification versus more of that microskill level. Does it potentially create confusion, or do you feel like no digital badges can fit anywhere along the line? Any advice or thoughts around organizations that might be sort of wrestling with that, when do we award a digital badge and for what?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:25:19] Yes. So I try and say “resumé-worthy” is one good metric for that. If you’re going to put it on your resumé, that’s a good thing for, a good reason to give somebody a badge for it because oftentimes our resúmes—not mine or yours, but other people’s—so somebody may extend their capabilities on their resumé—I’m being nice here and PC. But, if you have a resumé or something like that, and you’re saying, yeah, I can do these things, and here’s the authority who says I can do them even if they’re micro. We have areas in our resúmes that we may want to say, yep, I can do this. So badges are a really perfect way to represent that. But I would say that the fear of oversaturating somebody with badges, it certainly is there, but I’d say that the metadata really helps with that because, again, somebody can look at that and say, yep, I have this whatever I’ve earned this badge for, whatever it is. And somebody else can say, okay, what does that mean? And look at that metadata. So that’s a helpful piece of that. But the other thing is that an individual can choose to share it or not share it. So we have a portfolio on our side that allows somebody to collect all their badges and keep them there. And so it’s also just a record-keeping way of saying, yep, I passed through these various things, or I’ve done these certain things, or I’ve attended these various things, and it’s just a record of, a verified record of experiences that, again, I can choose to share or not share. So, even if I’ve earned a lot of badges, it doesn’t mean I have to put them places. So I would always err on the side of, okay, well do you want to recognize somebody for this? Is this something that you would issue a paper certificate for that they would need to just file away in case they need it? That would be a really good metric to understand whether it would be badge-worthy.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:26:55] I think you’ve alluded to this some already in the conversation, but I just want to get your view on where things stand with digital badges in terms of implementation and uptake and familiarity. How would you characterize the digital badge movement or market at this point?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:27:13] Sure. So I’d say, again, I used the term “tipping point.” That happened already. We’re five years into that. Many individuals have already earned badges for a variety

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

of things. As people are looking at it in terms of are we ready to jump into this space, it's here already. Organizations, the biggest organizations in the world, have adopted it. And what we're finding from a business standpoint is I'm getting many, many, many inquiries every single day for organizations that are 100 or less people that they're training. Organizations span the gamut in terms of the types of organizations that are doing it, as well as the types of industries. In terms of uptake on that—if it's industry-specific—I don't know industries that aren't doing this. And a lot of organizations will say, yeah, but my population is 60 and above. Will they really want this? We find that it doesn't matter how old the recipients are, that there's reasons and benefits to every age of individuals earning this and every industry, like I said before, even if it's not a technical industry. So we have organizations that are HVAC, where they literally wear the patches on their sleeves still. They also want a digital badge because they're hanging their own shingle, or they want to stay compliant, and they need to turn something in to their employer. So there's lots of those kinds of reasons. When I think about the industry in general, age isn't a factor; industry is not a factor.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:28:35] So those kinds of things we put to the side at this point. In terms of where digital badges function from a business standpoint, again, the reduction of costs was huge. So that was what the other hurdle was. A lot of organizations are recouping costs for labor, recouping costs for mailing, for printing and all those other things. So that's become, again, one of the hurdles that we've already crossed, that a lot of organizations are choosing to move to the digital badging space as their key way of recognition. I look at it as a currency. If we think about badges as a currency, people start to understand, okay, yeah, now I want badges for this. We find that the organizations that have adopted badges, maybe just for their credential or for one experience, they find that their recipients are like, okay, but am I'm getting a badge for this, right? So it's also pushed by individuals who've earned badges, or they've earned badges for other experiences. They'll go back to the organization that they're either working for, they're embedded with at that point and say, oh, I've earned a badge here. Let me show it to you. So we also, in the digital badging space, have seen it be, again, organic, of people earning them for different experiences and then going back to the organizations that they are also participating in and say, but here's what I have here.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:29:49] So the referrals that we get from a business standpoint also come from that, oh, so-and-so earned a badge, and they showed it to me, and I really like it. How can I do that? The last thing I'll mention is just the technology itself. We're constantly adding features and different things onto the technology that are evolving with the way that work is evolving. As we think about the types of work that people are getting involved with, they may have multiple jobs. I don't want to get too deep into it, but the gig economy and all those other kinds

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

of things, people upskilling. People are changing their industries far more rapidly than they ever did before. All those other things are reasons why people want digital badges and need them because it's no longer that you've worked in the industry for 20 years, so therefore I have different skills and competencies. I may be zigzagging between lots of different types of industries. Or I'm consulting. I'm doing all the things. And so digital badges are really the medium of choice for people who don't necessarily have the years of experience, but they may have the learning and development types of experiences that allow them to enter into new careers.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:31:03] When you think about the future of digital badges and where things are going, what comes to mind?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:31:09] I'd say the microcredentialing piece is something that our business is really evolved with, so the capability of our technology to allow an organization to stack credentials so badge A plus badge B plus badge C can automatically level up to badge D. From a standpoint of where we see education moving as well as how our technology matches that or meets that need, that's one of the things that is the most growing trend. And now that we have a term for it, organizations are like, that's what I've been thinking about. Or learning and development people are like I've been wanting to do this, but now that we have a terminology and a framework around this, oh my goodness, I can do these things now. So, as we see those two things coupling together, I think that that's one of the things that we're always keeping in mind on is how can we match our technology to meet the needs and kind of push the industry a little bit forward. Because I think there is a push and a pull there, that we respond to the things that are happening, and we say, yeah, other people are doing this. We have a bird's eye view that other organizations don't have because I work with literally thousands of organizations and thousands of different industries, so I can say these are interesting things I'm seeing in these other spaces. Perhaps you should try this as well. So us producing content as a business to help the broader L&D companies or organizations develop and say, okay, what's new? That's one of the things that I think is exciting about being in the space that I'm in and digital badging is in because we do touch our toes into so many different things. So those are some of the things I'm keeping an eye on. And, as I mentioned before, the blockchain types of technologies that we're working on are so exciting, and they're not there yet, but they're moving in that direction. And that's something that we're really excited about.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:32:53] You mentioned having a bird's eye view, working with thousands of organizations. So I want to be sure to ask what lessons have you learned that you can share

with listeners, especially folks who are maybe looking to get into it or to increase what they're doing? Any secrets or lessons learned to share with folks?

**Ginger Malin:** [00:33:14] Sure. I've already said this, but I want to go back to it, is really the more organizations help their learners or their recipients know what to do with them, the better and more successful they are. So that's one of the things and the lessons learned that we tell every one of our clients, our new clients, is let's create a plan for marketing to the people who are receiving your badges. And then also how can they help the recipients utilize badges as a means for getting them to the next level? So be it upskilling, be it look at how can this help them to differentiate themselves in the job market. Helping, providing that context around how it's going to help the individuals and how it's going to support them in their own professional life, that's a really, really important lesson, I think, to the success of programs. And, as I said, we have analytics so people, organizations can see how often badges are being shared with whom and on what mediums. So it's interesting. We think about Facebook and Twitter and LinkedIn as our key places that people share them. LinkedIn is still the top place that most of our clients, most of our earners will share their badges. But I always find it interesting that Facebook is still a big part of where people share their badges. You can see it reflected in the analytics. So I'd say that's also really telling for our organizations to say, okay, if you find that 70 percent of the people receiving badges are sharing them on LinkedIn, and 30 percent are sharing them on Facebook, 30 percent is not nothing. And perhaps your population is still using Facebook.

**Ginger Malin:** [00:34:50] So that's a key data point to understand, again, when they're thinking about their own businesses. Where are the people? Where are there people in their industry? Where are they living, you know, online? So I'd say that there's some data points within that you can look at from how people are sharing their credentials to really get some insight into different things that they may want to do in their own businesses. Along with that, they may have ten badges that they're issuing to their stakeholders for various things, and perhaps only two of them are those that are getting shared widely, and the other eight aren't. That's another question they may want to ask is why aren't people sharing their badges related to these courses? Maybe that's something they want to dig in through a survey or just through anecdotal conversations or something like that. So the data can really help support the kinds of questions that people are asking. And, on the other side of that, when I think of job task analyses and things that our clients will engage in, what are the next things that they can provide that feedback loop that could potentially come from expiring badges or having our badging platform that can send messages out to gather that data that's necessary for them to know what courses to create.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*

**Ginger Malin:** [00:35:59] You think you have a pulse on what the industry looks like, but you may be too far removed from that. So you need to dig in to the people that are actually getting their hands dirty in your industry to best understand what it is that they're looking for, and digital badges, the data around it, plus the kinds of feedback that you can get from sending the messages out because, again, meaningfully engaging people. They don't want to be inundated with, "Take this survey. Tell us what you think," what have you. The badges can provide a more natural way for people to be like, oh, I need to look at my expiration here. I want to maintain it on my LinkedIn profile, and it can then provide some of that information to say, oh, I need to take this survey, or I need to submit something to my organization or to maintain my badge that can give them the really important information that could be revenue drivers for them that they didn't even know about. So, when I think of that, those kinds of things, I think that the secrets that are behind it. It's not just a badge technology. If we think about that, lots of people can do that. But it's all that other stuff that underlies the capabilities of it and the benefits of it that are really where the nugget, the good nuggets lie.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:37:10] Dr. Ginger Malin is CEO at BadgeCert and founder of BadgeCert. She welcomes listeners to reach out. You can e-mail her directly at [gmalin@badgcert.com](mailto:gmalin@badgcert.com). You can also find a link to the BadgeCert site in the show notes for this episode at [leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://leadinglearning.com/episode322).

**Celisa Steele:** [00:37:30] At [leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://leadinglearning.com/episode322), you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast. We'd be grateful if you would subscribe if you haven't yet, as subscriptions give us some insight into the impact of the podcast.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:37:43] We'd also be grateful if you take a minute to rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you enjoy the show. Celisa and I personally appreciate reviews and ratings, and they help the podcast show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

**Celisa Steele:** [00:37:59] Lastly, please spread the word about Leading Learning. At [leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://leadinglearning.com/episode322), there are links to find us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

**Jeff Cobb:** [00:38:09] Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

*[music for this episode by DanoSongs, [www.danosongs.com](http://www.danosongs.com)]*

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode322](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode322).*