



International Personnel Certification Summit

The 21st Century Solution to Workforce Competitiveness



Buyer Beware:

Hearing the Consumer's Voice

*Presented by Linda F. Golodner, President
National Consumers League
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National Consumers League

- **Founded 1899, to advance economic and social justice for consumers and workers in the U. S. and abroad.**
- **Healthcare, food safety, personal finance, consumer fraud, technology and telecommunications, fair labor standards, product and service standards**
- **Coalitions: SOS Rx; Child Labor Coalition; Alliance Against Fraud in Telemarketing and Electronic Commerce**
- **Network of organizations in U. S. and abroad**
- **LifeSmarts – consumer education for teenagers**



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National Consumers League and Standards

■ United States

- Conference for Food Protection
 - Certification for Managers in Food Safety
- Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference
- ANSI Consumer Interest Forum
- UL Consumer Advisory Council

■ International

- Fair Labor Association
- International Cocoa Initiative
- ISO-COPOLCO (Consumer Policy Committee)



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Consumers are Confused with Terms and Definitions

- **Understanding of international, federal, state, jurisdiction standards and certification**
- **Understanding of certified programs/services and personnel certification**
- **Consumers need information and education about**
 - **Licensure**
 - **Accreditation**
 - **Certification**
 - **Differentiate among professional association standards**
- **Understand: codes of ethics; codes of conduct; “mission;” principles of customer care**

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What Consumers Might Know About Personnel Certification

- **Some familiarity with**
 - **Education system**
 - **Health professionals**
 - **Safety personnel**
 - **Financial (CPA)**
- **Statement of individual's ability, measured against standards**
- **Assessment of individual performance in exams/tasks**
- **Competency, independence, impartiality**



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When is the marketplace calling for certification?

- **Listen to the signs:**
 - **Opportunities for fraud (finance, healthcare)**
 - **Misleading, deceptive practices (sales tactics, real estate, “professional services”)**
 - **Service quality unpredictable (“yellow pages” search)**
 - **Consumer harm (food safety, healthcare, utilities)**
 - **Consumer health and safety at risk (security)**
 - **Consumer pocketbook at risk (loan tactics, paying for incompetent service)**
 - **Excellence not rewarded (competition between quality and mediocre or incompetence)**

National Consumers League National Fraud Information Center – Top Frauds

Certification could help prevent fraudulent operators from being successful

Credit Card Offers – top fraud of 2003

- **False promises, fee paid upfront**

Direct Marketing Sales

- **Misrepresentation of costs and obligations**

Advance Fee Loans

- **Personal and business loans for upfront fee**

Travel/vacations

- **Offers of free or discount travel that never materializes or is misrepresented**

Top Frauds

- **Victims**
 - **Average loss: over \$1,500 US**
 - **Contacted by con artists in Canada (41% of advance fee loans scams) or from other countries outside of U. S.**
 - **Located in small states, often rural – Georgia, Mississippi, Montana.**
- **How would certification of direct sales personnel help?**
 - **Provide confidence for consumers to deal with trustworthy salespeople –**
 - **Important to have cooperation of industry, media, and consumer educators**
 - **Opportunity in the United States – “do not call” lists law**

National Consumers League Internet Fraud Watch -- Trends

- **Challenge to build consumer confidence in electronic commerce**
- **Top Frauds of 2003**
 - **General Services and Merchandize**
 - **Internet Access Service**
 - **Advance Fee Loans**
 - **Travel/tourism**
- **Certification opportunities as traditional services appear online**
 - **Tourism**
 - **Financial services**
 - **Training and education**
 - **Health**

Responding to consumer safety, harm

- Food manager certification
 - Valid, reliable, uniform criteria for training and evaluation
 - Conference for Food Protection – nonprofit independent body of regulators, industry, and consumers promoting food safety and consumer protection.
 - Situation existed that consumers protection was not uniform – consumer safety a concern -- lack of confidence in marketplace

Certification: need for a parallel certification

- **Food service personnel**
 - **Retail industry – grocery stores, restaurants**
 - **Need for food inspection personnel to be certified**
 - **In some cases, inspectors less qualified, knowledgeable than personnel in industry**
 - **Gap in food safety expectations of consumers**
- **Time and resources to establish uniformity in the system – large chains/companies then small businesses**

How can a Personnel Certification Meet Consumer Expectations?

- **Consumers must be part of every phase of any certification program – we are the end user!**
 - **Establishing criteria**
 - **Determining scope**
 - **Consumer education and information**
 - **Auditing**
 - **Evaluating**
 - **De-certification – education and information**
- **Consumer representation or Stakeholder Involvement**

Consumer expectations for certification

- Meaningful, verifiable, periodic review
- Trust, confidence
- Must be able to **de-certify** and provide this information publicly for consumer.
 - Consumers understand recall of products. Must be able to recall certified personnel and professionals when incompetent
- Need for **transparency**
 - Cannot be closed process (not professional association or industry only)
 - No “smoke and mirrors”
 - De-mystify process

Personnel Certification in Tourism

- **ISO-COPOLCO**
- **Tool to help ensure environmental and social responsibility among tourism operations**
- **Best management practices**
- **Community-based certification including marketing, monitoring, evaluation**
 - **Surveys of standards bodies regarding consumer expectations**
 - **Facility**
 - **Assuring that expectations are met**
 - **Customer service**
 - **Transportation, Facility, Environment**
 - **Eco-tourism competence**
 - **Travel agents (Internet) and tour operators meet an expected standard**

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Social Responsibility

- Personnel certification is important component of SR
 - Audit/inspection
 - Accountability to public
 - Managers who respect customer and employee rights
 - Diversity
 - Accessibility
 - Fair labor standards
 - Transparency
 - Training in environmental, social issues/sensitivities
- Fair Labor Association
 - Need for qualified, experienced personnel for third party independent monitoring
- International Cocoa Initiative – certification system that will train and establish agriculture inspection system.

Expectation that Consumer Rights Will be Respected

- **Education**
- **Information**
- **Choice**
- **Safety and Health**
- **Service**
- **To be heard**
- **Complaint handling/redress**



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Contact Information

**Linda F. Golodner, President
National Consumers League
Washington, DC**

202-835-3323

Lindag@nclnet.org

www.nclnet.org



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