

PREPARING TO LAUNCH WITH
DIGITAL CREDENTIALS



FOREWORD

Thank you for downloading our guide to Preparing to Launch with Digital Credentials. In this guide we will explore and demonstrate the best practices for issuers that are just getting started with digital credentials.

Who we are: Accredible is an industry-leading digital credentialing platform. Founded in 2013, Accredible believes that everyone should be able to prove their credibility with ease regardless of who you are, where you live, or how you gained your knowledge.

Our experience serving millions of credentials globally has enabled us to understand and meet the needs of organizations undergoing digital transformation. As one of the longest-serving digital credentialing platforms, our insight into the space is unique and unrivalled. We provide actionable guidance at every step from research and evaluation, through to launch, growth, and development. Our knowledge informs the best practices for organizations to start, scale, and succeed in digital credentialing.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for any organization looking to get started with digital credentials. We will provide explanations and examples of supporting materials for announcing a new digital credentialing program. The materials are intended to inform candidates what the digital credentials are, how they benefit recipients, how they can use their digital credentials, and help improve visibility for the issuer and the program.

How to use this guide

Use this guide to:

- Understand best practices for launching a new credentialing program
- Show recipients the power of their digital credentials
- Guide recipients to use their digital credentials effectively
- Improve visibility of a new credentialing program

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GETTING STARTED

The launch of a new brand, product, or service doesn't happen silently. It is supported by press releases, websites, social announcements, promotional content, and entire marketing strategies built for launch. The more noise that is created around the launch of a new offering, the more successful it will be. Equally, the more information provided, the greater the level of engagement.

Launching with digital credentials is just the same. It shouldn't happen quietly in the background. Plans are needed for supporting materials and both internal and external announcements. If the supporting materials fail to provide key information, recipients are less likely to engage with their new credential and won't understand how to use it effectively.

This guide is intended to cover launching with digital credentials for organizations that have already implemented digital credentials or are in the final stages. For more information around planning and signing off on the procurement process, please refer to our **Internal Sign Off and Planning Guide**.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Any materials, documents, or content that is created to support the launch of digital credentials falls under ‘supporting materials’. They may differ depending on the type of program being launched and the target audience. For example, organizations that are using digital credentials internally don’t need a page on their marketing website but instead will create resources in the staff area. Supporting materials are intended to inform and encourage engagement. The materials should explain what the digital credentials are, how they are gained, and how to use them. The effort put into supporting materials also helps to improve visibility for the organization and the credentialing program.

Central Resource Page

The central resource page should be hosted on the public-facing marketing website, or internally in the staff area or intranet. This page serves to teach recipients about their digital credential and it’s value. This page can be used to drive recipients to take certain actions with their digital credentials. For example, if the organization is trying to grow social traffic to their LinkedIn profile, provide clear step-by-step instructions showing recipients how to share to LinkedIn.

Page Content

The page should be engaging as well as informative to readers. If the page contains a wall of text, it’s going to have low engagement and recipients will be less inclined to take action with their credentials. Break content up into easily consumable sections using clear headings and include optimally sized images of the digital badges and/or digital certificates available to earn. Images should be optimally sized to prevent distortion or stretching and ensure they are easily viewable across popular devices.



SUPPORTING MATERIALS


The written content on this page should be ‘evergreen’. Evergreen content, like an evergreen tree, doesn’t change between seasons or overtime. It remains relevant and informative at the time of writing and into the future. This is specific to the core written content that provides detail about digital credentials. The types of topics that should be explained here include:

- Understand best practices for launching a new credentialing program
- Show recipients the power of their digital credentials
- Guide recipients to use their digital credentials effectively
- Improve visibility of a new credentialing program


To encourage credential engagement, we recommend adding recipient testimonials, screenshots of social engagement, and ‘feel good’ stories of success. As these are typically not available at launch, this should be revisited 3, 6, and 12 months after launch, and updated annually.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING


Stories from real recipients and customers

 **Doug Forman**

Accredible is probably one of the best decisions that we made as an organization. We found the platform very intuitive and easy to use.

 **Sarah Whyte**

Accredible allows us to end the learning experience on a positive note with a credible certificate that can be showcased and shared online.

 **Chris Moberly**

A platform that I never have to update, tinker with, or worry about at all was vital to us. At a startup, our most precious resource is time.

Accredible Knowledgebase

Accredible’s comprehensive Knowledgebase and blog provides answers to the most common questions and queries from issuers and recipients of digital credentials. We recommend utilizing the Knowledgebase to create content in the brand’s own tone-of-voice or to direct links to for guidance.

Content should always be rewritten to prevent a duplicate content flag from search engines which can impact the visibility of the issuer site. If content is copy-pasted, a ‘canonical tag’ is required in the page HTML to identify Accredible as the ‘master copy’. This prevents duplicate content flags against the issuer.

[VISIT KNOWLEDGEBASE](#)

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

FAQ Page

Although FAQs can be included as a section on the central resource page, creating a separate FAQ page provides a ‘catch-all’ resource and contributes to increased visibility. This page can be used for details or instructions that aren’t necessarily a key focus. Such as sharing digital credentials to other social platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. This page can also store details relevant to the credentialing program, such as ‘will I earn a digital certificate for each completed course?’.

Page Content

The FAQ page should be frequently revisited and updated as recipients begin to receive and engage with their credentials. Use recipient feedback and queries to add relevant information to the FAQ page to ensure it is useful for future recipients. The more comprehensive the FAQ page, the easier it becomes to scale without monopolizing the time of administrators with recipient queries.

As with the central resource page, it’s important that FAQ pages are well-presented with clear headings and sections. This simplifies navigation through the page and helps recipients find the answer to their queries faster. Answers to FAQs should be concise and provide clear and relevant instructions where necessary. As the FAQ page is built over time, it may become tiresome for users to scroll through to find their question. Consider adding search functionality to prevent frustration.

Not all questions will be catered for on the page and some queries will require one-to-one support. Providing space for live support such as a chatbot, support email, contact number, or contact form assures recipients they can get the help they need. It also supports a positive user experience by preventing the need to navigate back to the homepage or find a contact page.

Optimizing Page Content for Search

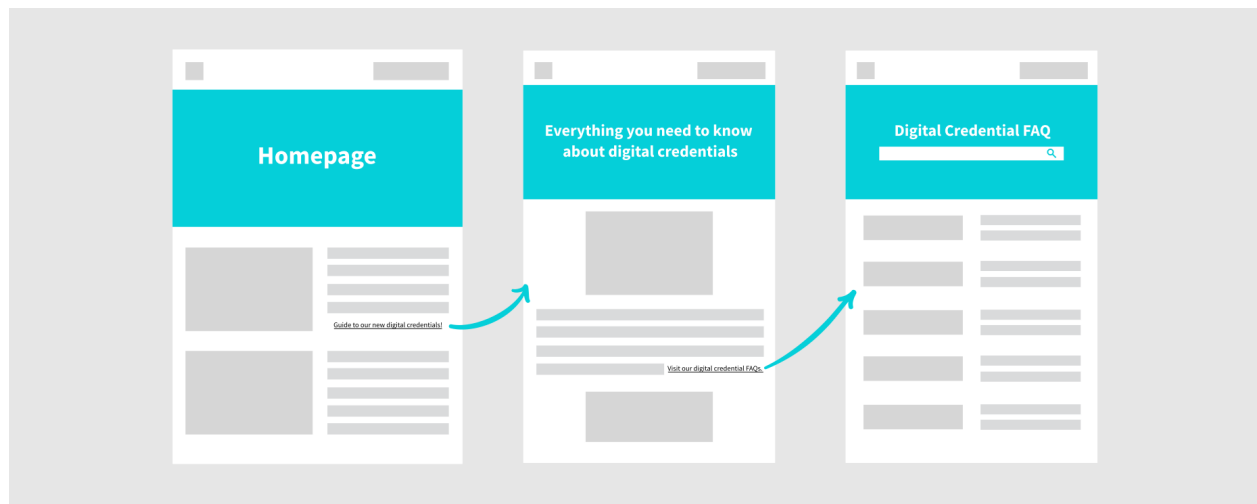
Search Engine Optimization or SEO is a series of best practices for building web pages to ensure they appear in search engine results. Marketing websites are built around SEO guidelines and all new pages should follow the same rules. This includes metadata such as page titles and page descriptions, as well as on-page SEO such as internal links, image tags, and use of heading tags (H1, H2, H3, etc). The H1 tag should be used once on the page to identify the page title. Additional titles or headings use remaining heading tags (H2, H3, etc) as required.

SEO helps search engines serve the right content to relevant queries, but it is a competitive space. For example, we recommend targeting specific keywords or keyphrases such as “organization name course name digital badge” or “organization name course name digital certificate”. Rather than trying to target “digital badge” or “digital certificate”, which have a much higher rate of competition. The same level of detail for keywords should also apply to image captions or alt-tags to improve overall search visibility.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

A key element of SEO is accessibility. The central resource page should be accessible across all devices and work with assistive technologies such as screen readers. Images should be appropriately tagged or captioned and videos should have subtitles available. Any links on the page should also be clear in their intentions. Rather than using “click here”, let the user know where the links lead, such as “how to share a digital credential to LinkedIn”. This is because many assisted users rely on keyboard interactions which typically tab through links on the page.

Internal linking is another important part of SEO. The central resource page should be navigable from elsewhere on the marketing site. This doesn’t need to be included in the main navigation bar but should be accessible from a core page. If there are no links pointing to this page, it is known as an ‘orphan page’ and won’t perform as well in search results. We recommend including links to the central resource page from the credential delivery email and custom marketing message on the digital credential page. This ensures recipients know what to do with their credential once it has been received and encourages them to take the preferred next steps.



The use of structured data for the FAQ page can contribute to eligibility for a rich result in Google search results. A rich result is the term given to the appearance of drop-down Q&A boxes on search results pages. Not only does this help results stand-out amongst competing websites but it encourages increased click-through rates (CTR).



Example of rich results in Google search results

GETTING NOTICED

Announcements for a new product or service launch are a great way to attract the attention of both existing and new candidates. Utilize marketing channels such as email, social media, and the brand website to ensure maximum visibility. The online world moves fast - more than 320 billion emails are sent everyday and 15 new users sign up to social media every second. A single announcement is at risk of getting lost in the noise so it's important to plan announcements in the lead up to the launch. Make sure employees are kept up-to-date on launch dates, particularly if they are going to be a point of contact for support.

Internal Announcements

Internal announcements are used to keep staff informed and should be planned in advance. Although every staff member should be made aware of upcoming launches, segmented messaging ensures departments with little involvement aren't overburdened with information. For instance, sales and support teams should be comprehensively trained on digital credentials, while developers should be aware but are unlikely to need in-depth training. Anyone closely involved with providing or supporting digital credentials should be able to explain the value and offer guidance on how to use them.

Encourage staff to get involved with Q&A sessions, dedicated channels within internal messaging platforms, and opportunities to earn their own digital credentials. Members of staff have their daily responsibilities to fulfil so it's important that key information is accessible.

Timing

Getting the timing right for an announcement helps to generate positive interest in the upcoming launch. Too far away from launch and readers begin to forget important details, too close to launch and involved parties soon feel under pressure and stressed. The day, time, and delivery method of an announcement also influences interest. A meeting first-thing on a Monday morning is going to be poorly received, while an email last thing on a Friday is likely to be missed. Frequency goes hand-in-hand with timing. Announcements should increase in frequency the closer to the launch date to generate interest and excitement.

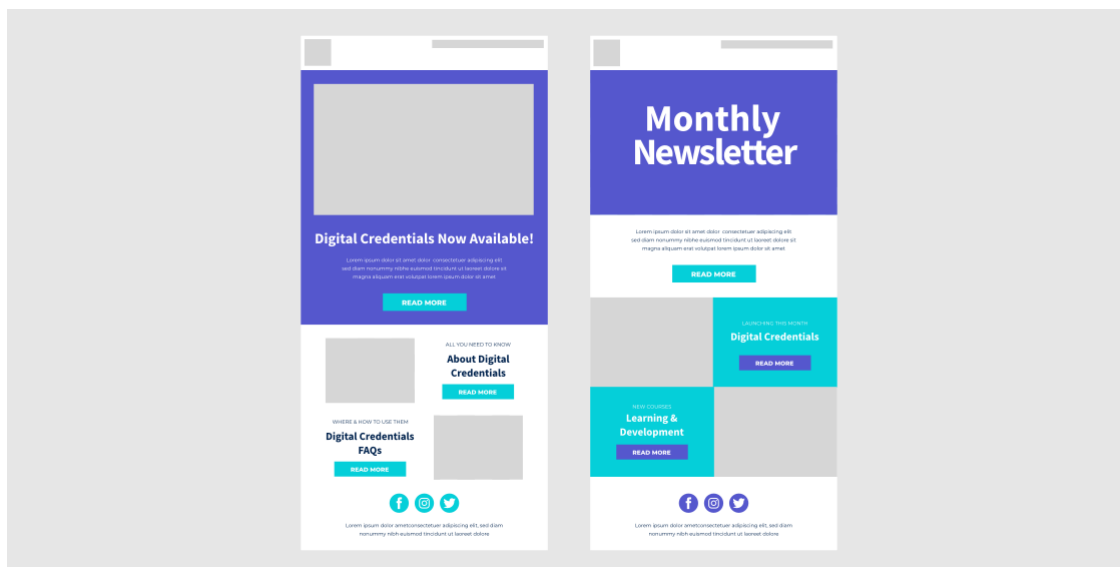
GETTING NOTICED

External Announcements

Once staff are aware and training has been carried out or scheduled, it's time to get customers excited about the upcoming launch. Plan which marketing channels are going to be used, what content will be published, and how often. It may be tempting to send the same announcement on social media or via email three times a day for six weeks leading up to a launch but this can quickly result in lost followers and unsubscribers. It's important to find a balance that effectively informs without overwhelming the target audience.

Email

Email serves as an excellent communication method for both internal and external use. Announcements can be sent as a standalone email or as part of a regular newsletter. Include an enticing subject line to encourage open rates and where necessary, segment email lists to ensure it gets to the right audience.



The frequency of announcement emails depends on the current strategy. If emails are only sent once a week, the frequency should only be increased to twice or three times a week. Emails that are sent too frequently from a company will cause readers to unsubscribe or worse - result in emails being reported as spam. Too many spam reports can lead to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) blocking the email. This affects all future emails sent to customers of the ISP, even if the intended recipient hasn't previously reported spam or wants to receive the email.

GETTING NOTICED

Social Media

A quality social media strategy involves posting different topics including internal updates, industry developments, and the latest company or industry news. Announcements can then be slotted into the strategy without boring or overwhelming the audience. The type of content posted on social media also influences the level of engagement. For example, images and short video clips achieve better engagement than text posts.

Hashtags are another useful social media tool that increase visibility for interested parties. Make sure to choose a few relevant hashtags such as '#digitalbadges', '#digitalcredentials', or '#microcredentials', depending on the type of credential to be offered. Industry hashtags are also used for increasing visibility but it's important not to include too many hashtags on each post - excluding Instagram. Between 2 to 5 hashtags depending on the length of the post are suitable for LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, whereas Instagram users are encouraged to use more.

Press Release

A press release is an official statement offered to news outlets to inform the public. The press release serves as a primary source of information and is often released in its entirety without editing by the publisher. In the modern world of technology, there are many avenues for submitting a press release but it should be relevant to the issuer and intended audience. For example, a company that offers training in Microsoft Office products won't get much interest if submitting a press release to a fashion news platform.

The press release should be concise, informative, and engaging. Avoid 'fluff' - filler text that doesn't add anything of importance to the article, and use clear titles and headings. Press releases work best as a few paragraphs. A reader should be able to discern the topic from just the first paragraph, with subsequent paragraphs offering further detail. An effective press release will provide answers to the following:

- *Who?* Who does the announcement affect, who is involved with the launch, and who will benefit?
- *What?* What is the press release about?
- *Why?* Why is this launch newsworthy or important?
- *Where?* Where should readers focus their attention?
- *When?* When should readers expect to hear more or anticipate the launch?
- *How?* How can readers learn more, how can readers get involved?

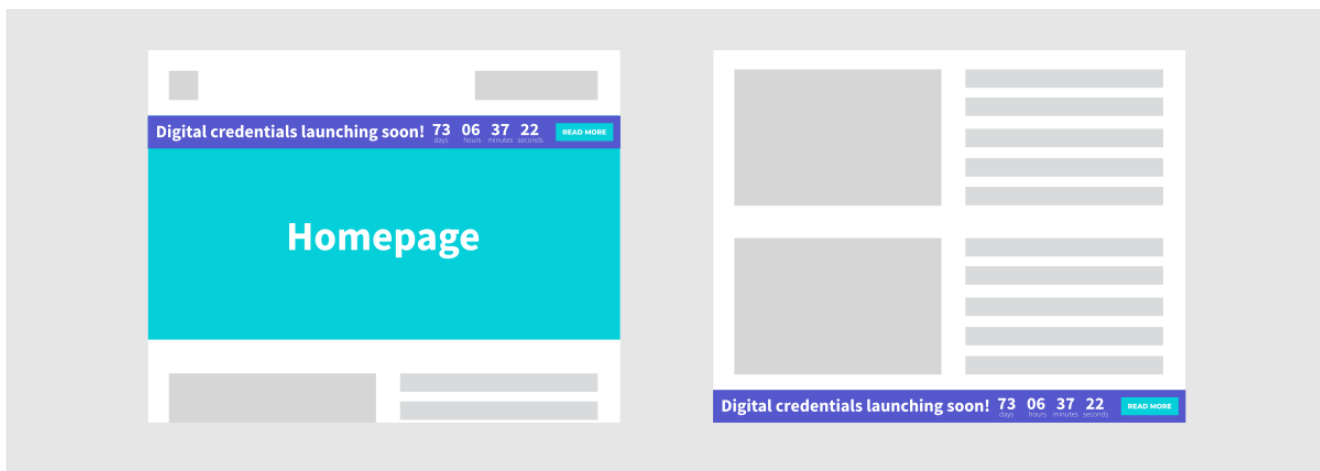
GETTING NOTICED

Website

The marketing website provides several opportunities for increasing visibility of an upcoming launch alongside the dedicated central resource and FAQ pages.

Banner

Banners are a popular delivery method and sit ‘pinned’ at the top or bottom of a webpage ensuring it remains visible while the user browses. The banner should be in a contrasting color to the webpage background. For example, if the website background is white, use a high-saturation, bright color such as red, green, or blue to attract attention. The banner can include a live countdown showing time until launch to encourage visitors to return. It should also contain a CTA to encourage engagement from visitors. The CTA can link to the central resource page allowing visitors to learn more about digital credentials, to a form that encourages visitors to sign up for notifications, or to a press release or blog about the upcoming launch.



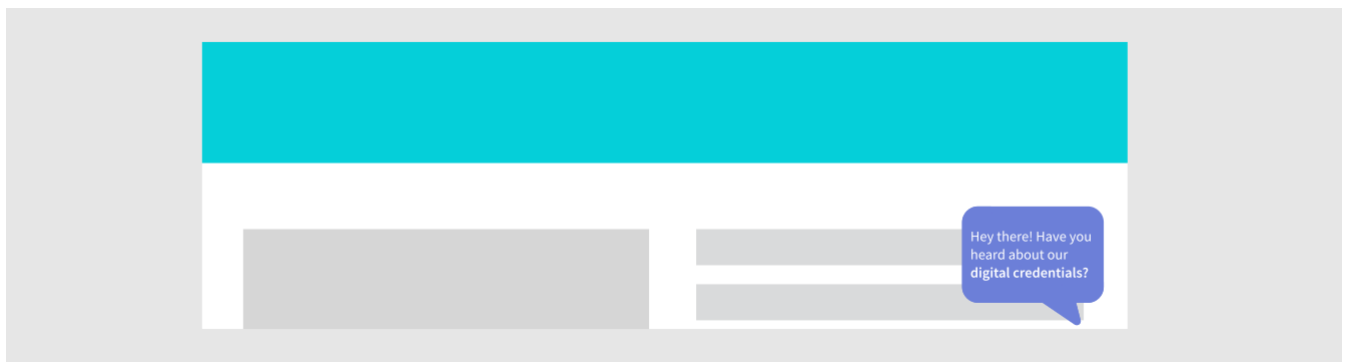
Blog

An onsite blog is an effective way of making an announcement and can be linked to via social media or email. The blog should be written to target the same questions as the press release but the tone used can be more ‘salesy’ to encourage more interest or sign-ups. A sales-driven tone is confident and focuses on how the product or service will benefit the potential customer. If a launch or preview video has been created for social media, this can also be posted in the blog to gain additional visibility.

GETTING NOTICED

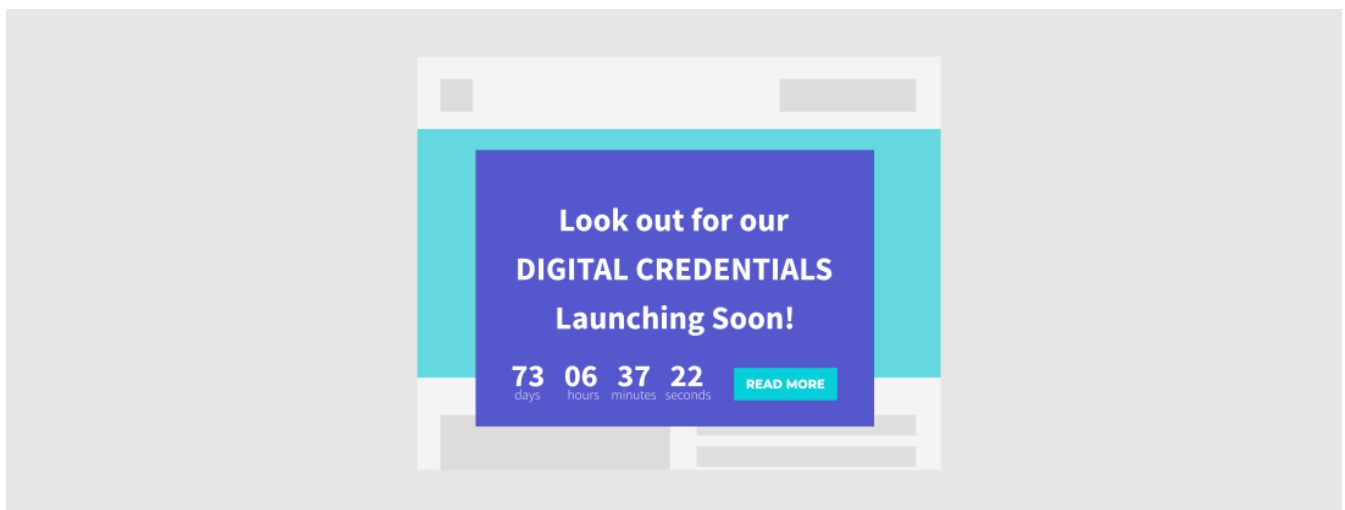
Chatbot

Chatbots are also used to generate interest in an announcement. Chatbots that pop-up when a user is browsing with a prompt can be customized with a message about the upcoming launch. ‘Have you heard our news?’ or ‘Have you signed-up to be the first to hear about our upcoming announcement?’ are good examples of prompts that encourage curious visitors to read more. A CTA can be provided that links to the blog, press release, or sign-up form, or it can be used to encourage live conversations with visitors.



Pop-Up

Pop-ups can be added to a website to grab attention as a user is browsing. Ensure the message is concise and clear. As a pop-up interrupts a user’s experience, it’s important that it’s to-the-point. Include a CTA that links to a page (blog, video, or press release) for more information or to a form that adds them to the mailing list. Pop-ups should only be used one-at-a-time, this prevents spamming the user and creating a negative experience while browsing.



PRE-LAUNCH CHECKLIST

Use the checklist below to help plan an announcement strategy for the upcoming launch of digital credentials.

Don't forget to liaise with the marketing team to identify which social media platforms are a current priority for the brand. The instructions for sharing to a preferred platform or platforms should be prioritized on the central resource page. Additional social platforms can be included on the FAQ page.

Supporting Materials

Yes/No/Comments

Write and proofread content for the central resource page

Write and proofread content for the FAQ page

Build and publish pages on the marketing website or intranet

Link both pages from the main navigation or core service page

Optimize images for display across popular devices

Check included images for alt-tags and captions

Schedule date for sending customer testimonial requests

Review central resource page and FAQ page for accessibility

Ensure all pages links have clear intentions

Embed relevant guidance videos

Double check all links and embeds for the correct URL

Schedule date to revisit and update FAQ page as necessary

PRE-LAUNCH CHECKLIST

Announcements - Internal

Yes/No/Comments

Identify and post in preferred staff communication channels

Plan and schedule staff training for necessary teams

Ensure supporting materials are accessible to staff

Offer and host a staff Q&A session

Announcements - External

Yes/No/Comments

Write and proofread announcement blog post

Publish blog post onto marketing website

Write and proofread press release announcement

Ensure the press release includes links to the central resource page and/or blog post

Include images of the digital credentials to be awarded in/with the press release

Send press release to relevant news platforms

Schedule date to follow up with platforms and make a record of live links

Identify preferred social media channels for target audience

PRE-LAUNCH CHECKLIST

	<i>Yes/No/Comments</i>
Write and proofread brand messaging for use in social announcements	
Create accompanying images or video snippets to include in social posts	
Plan a list of relevant links to include in social posts, to the blog post, central resource page, and FAQs	
Plan a list of relevant hashtags to use in social posts	
Plan frequency of social media posts	
Schedule social media posts	
Write and proofread email announcement	
Include optimized images and links to relevant supporting materials in email	
Segment email lists as necessary to prevent spamming customers	
Plan frequency of emails	
Schedule emails to be sent	
Create a simple banner to be hosted on the marketing website	
Include a CTA on the banner leading to supporting materials	
If using a countdown, schedule a date to remove the countdown/ banner	

PRE-LAUNCH CHECKLIST

Yes/No/Comments

Update chatbot messaging prompt to mention the upcoming launch

Schedule a date to revert the chatbot messaging prompt

Create a simple pop-up to be hosted on the marketing website

Include a CTA on the pop-up leading to supporting materials

Schedule a date to remove or replace pop-up

IN SUMMARY

Launching with digital credentials should be an exciting time for both the organization and their candidates. Issuers gain a powerful marketing tool that supports ease of scalability, increases visibility of programs, and ensures full control over validity. Candidates gain an easy to share, verifiable, and secure digital credential to add to their portfolios to improve their employability and promotion prospects.

Without supporting materials and visible announcements, issuers miss out on the opportunity to draw more learners to their programs at launch. They also risk recipients not understanding the value of their digital credential or not knowing what actions to take after they receive their credential. Clear, accessible instructions for using digital credentials empower recipients to utilize their digital award and enable issuers to harness the reach of their audience.

Learn more about the marketing power of digital credentials with our **Digital Credential Marketing Strategy Guide**. The guide includes a series of print-friendly checklists to help plan strategies across content marketing, email, social media, and event channels.

Get started with digital credentials and **sign up for a free Accredible issuer account** today. Design fantastic-looking digital certificates and badges, issue credentials to 20 recipients, and assess the suitability of the platform for your organization needs.

Request a demo from the Accredible team to learn more about additional features including our branding and premium white-labelling packages.



Accredible

Accredible is the industry-leading digital credentialing platform that securely issues, manages, tracks, and verifies millions of high-stakes credentials across the globe. Accredible integrates with leading learning software including Canvas, D2L Brightspace, Kajabi, Kryterion Webassessor, Moodle, Thinkific, and more. Over 1,900 leading universities, associations, and technology companies such as Google, Skillsoft, Slack, the Association of Corporate Treasurers, Chartered Banker Institute, University of Cambridge, AMPP, Hootsuite, IEEE, Cengage, MIT, Rutgers, INSEAD, IAPP, UC Berkeley, AMBA, and The Digital Marketing Institute rely on Accredible to create, deliver and manage digital certificates and open badges. Learn more at accredible.com

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