What are micro-credentials and how can they benefit you?
Upskilling and Re-skilling in the work-place

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Micro-credentialing is the next major disruptive force for upskilling and reskilling[1] in the work-place, and everyone from schools[2], non-profits and businesses are using them.

What is micro-credentialing and why should you explore the value and benefits of micro-credentialing?

What is micro-credentialing?

Micro-**credentialing** is the process of earning a **micro**-**credential**, which are like mini-degrees or certifications in a specific topic. Micro-credentials are qualifications that demonstrate skills, knowledge, and/or experience in a given subject area or capability.

Micro-credentials are also known as nanodegrees or short-courses or electives, but regardless of your label they (micro-credentials) tend to be narrower in range than traditional qualifications like diplomas or degrees and take a shorter period of time to complete.

They can either be broad, such as a 'Blockchain Certificate Program' or more specific, like 'Introduction to Blockchain Networks'.

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Soft and hard skills

Micro-credentials can be awarded for [soft skills](3) and [hard skills](4) Examples of topic areas include self-management, teamwork, digital marketing and data analytics. The subject areas are unlimited, and depending on the needs of the individual a micro-credential can be earned for anything ranging from customer service and email etiquette to blockchain development.

Growing interest

The [growing interest](5) in micro-credentialing is now widely accepted because the skills (needs) within the work-place are constantly changing and people who want to stay in the work-place or people wanting to get in the work-place must keep up in order to remain competitive. Micro-credentialing provides a way to map these career paths and quantify any type of skill, which can further enhance a person's employability.

How it works

Earning a micro-credential can involve completing activities, assessments, passing an exam or completing a capstone project. You can receive a digital certificate or badge as evidence of attaining this new credential. The micro-credential could be a one-off qualification, or it could be part of an employer-mandated training pathway leading to a final overall qualification.

Earning and assessing micro-credentials

Earning a micro-credential can take anywhere from a few weeks or a few months. The training and assessment pathway varies depending on the desired outcome or qualification

- Assignments **–** You might be asked to complete quizzes, assignments and projects at the initial stage, perhaps to demonstrate theoretical knowledge.

- Lectures and seminars – The micro-credentialing process could include a lecture and/or seminar component that gives you the opportunity to interact with Subject Matter Experts and other learners.

- Present portfolio – You might present a portfolio of your work in the area, to demonstrate your understanding.

- Assessments **–** An assessment component, such as an exam or practical exercises, are a valuable feature of the micro-credential process.·

- Demonstrate skills in work setting **–** Finally, you could be asked to demonstrate your skills in this area, by making a presentation.

The 8 Benefits of micro-credentials

Micro-credentials offer numerous benefits for you, your employer and organizations of all types and in all industries. When micro-credential courses/programs are well-designed they are flexible, portable, more focused, up-to-date and cost-effective.

1. Personalization for you

Micro-credentials provides you the opportunity to focus on an area of interest or an area that is of value to your employment (current or future). This allows you to personalize your training path with ease. Rather than investing in a broad, uniform long program you can tailor clusters of micro-credentials to suit your career goals and responsibilities. This allows you the freedom to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills you need or desire that align with your lifestyle in a shorter period of time, providing value sooner.

2. Recognition

It is a challenge to quantify and qualify the skills and knowledge you have gained on the job. A micro-credential (for example in conflict resolution) will provide the proof and add a deeper level of creditability to your acquired on the job experience/knowledge.

3. Structured approach to learning on the job

Micro-credentialing offers you a structured approach to training and learning. Often the skills developed on the job or as a volunteer are not formally recognized or recorded, and thus they cannot be included on the your Curriculum Vitae (CV) or résumé. The flexibility and incremental nature of micro-credentials means you have a tool to give you a greater measurement (proof) of skills and knowledge you have accumulated in your employment or in your role as a volunteer.

4. Gain soft and hard skills

Micro-credentials can be developed to train you in both soft and hard skills. While traditional qualifications tend to focus on hard skills, soft skills like leadership, problem solving and communication are equally vital in the work-place. By taking micro-credentialing courses for both hard and soft skills you will be able to provide proof that you have the capabilities that organizations desire in their employees.

5. Flexible learning

Online Micro-credentialing courses are the way for you to update your skills (hard and soft) in order to keep up-to-date in the changing work-place. They allow you to take a course on your schedule and when you are in need of knowledge (skill) in a shorter period of time.

Online Micro-credentialing courses ensure you learn what employers want and develop skill sets they need. This is relevant for your current employment or for future employment. It helps you stay even or ahead of the competition.

6. Scalability and Affordability

Micro-credentialing is a highly scalable approach to training. You can undertake training programs on an incremental basis instead of committing to a longer term educational program. You can minimize immediate costs, stop and assess the effectiveness of each micro-credential and then refine your approach with additional micro-credentials.

Additionally, this approach to training will end up being more effective for upskilling than a longer program, because the information presented will be up-to-date and related to your employment opportunities.

7. Training in emerging areas

In a dynamic business environment, the ability to train yourself quickly to fill new, emerging skill requirements can be invaluable.

Whether it is driven by a new market opportunity, technology, product strategy or re-structing, you might need to acquire a new skillset not currently in your skills portfolio, just to stay employed.

Micro-credentialing offers a way to train yourself in specific areas rapidly, so you can take advantage of emerging market opportunities or respond in a timely way to technology trends.

8. Competitiveness

Staying ahead of the competition requires that you to stay competent, engaged, productive and of value to your employer. Scalable training programs like micro-credentialing offer a cost-effective way for your to maintain competitiveness and to capitalize on changing market demands.

Whether it's industry-wide trends like the IT revolution and digitalization, or market-specific changes you need to respond to, being able to scale up your training according to the needs of industry is an great and rewarding way to outpace the competition.

Conclusion: Bring new life to your skill sets with micro-credentialing

Micro-credentials offers you an exciting, cost and time effective way to continually obtain skills that enhance your employability.

Whether you are seeking ways to supplement traditional credentials, train yourself in soft skills, or take highly individualized courses/programs to meet unique skill gaps, micro-credentialing is a valuable option when it comes to choosing the right training approach.

Explore: www.blocksedu.com
Scroll down on the home page to find OUR PARTNERS
that provide Micro-Credential courses.

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References

1. Micro-credentialing next major disruptive force for upskilling and reskilling in the work-place
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_case_for_social_innovation_micro_credentials

2. Schools
Refers to high school, and post-secondary, universities and colleges

3. What are Soft Skills?
Soft skills are the skills that enable you to fit in at a work-place. They include your personality, attitude, flexibility, motivation, and manners. Soft skills are so important that they are often the reason employers decide whether to keep or promote an employe. Some Examples are:

Listening	Negotiations	Conflict Resolution	Writing skills
Time Management	Net Working	Presentation	Verbal & Visual communication
Teamwork	Creative thinking	Public speaking	Problem Solving

4. What are Hard skills?
Hard skills are teachable abilities or skill sets that are easy to quantify. Typically, you'll learn hard skills in the classroom, through books or other training materials, or on the job. These hard skills are often listed in your cover letter and on your resume and are easy for an employer or recruiter to recognize.

Some Examples are:

Project Management	Computer skills	Specialized technologies skills (blockchain, Ethereum, Hyperledger. Cloud Computing, Data Analysis)	Heavy duty truck driver
Certification in specialized areas	Electrician	Plumber	Carpenter

(Insurance, Finance, Marketing, Sales, Business Development, HR)			

5. Growing Interest

https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2016-01-22/what-employers-think-of-badges-nanodegrees-from-online-programs