

# PTC News and Notes

Spring 2019

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## President's Corner



Here in New York, we are welcoming signs of spring everywhere! This new season energizes so many of us, personally and professionally. This is a great time to refocus on our goals and seek out the opportunities that will help us achieve them. The PTC team is here to help you with the information and services you need to grow your programs and support your certificants' professional journeys.

-Vicki Gremelsbacker, President

## STANDARD SETTING: How to Build a Panel of Subject Matter Experts

BY VITA GRECO

One of the most critical parts of the examination development process is setting an appropriate and defensible standard (also referred to as a passing point or cut score) on a credentialing exam.

NCCA defines standard setting as a "systematic method for determining the passing score on an examination based on the characteristics of the examination, particularly its level of difficulty. The result of the process is a pass/fail cut score that represents the lowest level of acceptable performance in the content area being assessed by an examination." Though there are many methodologies that could be used for standard setting, most involve a subject matter expert judgement-based approach that is based on the concept of a "just qualified/minimally competent/borderline candidate."

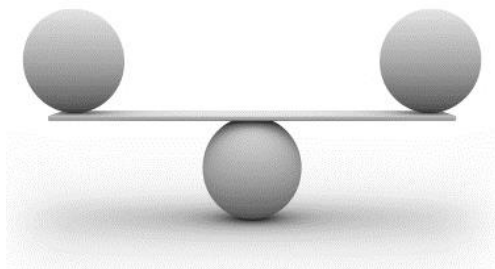
Since the goal of a credentialing exam is to categorize candidates into two groups: those that pass the exam (and are awarded the credential) and those who fail the exam

(and are not awarded the credential), the passing score is expected to be achieved by a candidate whose knowledge and skills are right on the borderline.

Identifying the distinction in the level of knowledge and expertise that bumps a "borderline" candidate into the passing group compared to a "borderline" candidate that falls just below that level is a tedious process. Careful consideration should be given to the identification of subject matter experts to be selected for the panel to ensure that they are qualified to make these judgements.



Since the panel of judges must be well-versed in the examination content and must be familiar with the level of professional knowledge necessary for safe and effective practice measured by the exam, it is recommended that the panel is comprised of certified individuals. Judges who supervise or train certificants on the job should also be targeted. Inclusion of a few judges that are recently certified (within the last 3-5 years) is also recommended because they have fairly recent experience with the certification process, as compared to those who have been certified for a longer period of time, and they will have a more realistic and accurate perception of the “borderline” candidate.



Deciding the number of judges to include in the panel is also very important. With too few judges, the greater the results of the standard setting study will be impacted by one or two judges with either too high or too low standards. However, too many judges may be a wasteful use of resources, too expensive, more difficult to achieve a healthy dynamic during group discussions, and increases the exposure to the confidential examination items.

Though research has identified anywhere from as few as 5 to as much as 20+ judges, there are several factors that should be taken into consideration that can affect the number of judges necessary. For example, the panel of judges should be representative of the key demographics of

the certified population (i.e., geographic location, practice area, workplace setting, gender, age, race, and other key demographics or interest groups that define the population of certificants).

The key is to ensure the composition of the panel is sufficiently balanced and neither underrepresented nor overrepresented by any demographic or special interest group to reduce the potential for unwanted bias and undue influence. Most organizations find that they can find a fair balance with about 10 participants.

It is important for organizations to have confidence that the panel selected is the best for the task at hand because the results of the study becomes a recommendation to the certification board and weighs in heavily into their decision for selecting the passing point for the examination. If the passing point is set in the wrong place, there are potential consequences that can put the integrity and value of the credential at jeopardy. For example, if the passing point is set too low, unqualified candidates will pass the examination and be awarded the credential. If those certificants go on to make serious job performance errors in practice, it would demean the value of the credential and would put the public (who the certification program seeks to protect) at risk. Conversely, if the passing point is set too high, qualified candidates would be denied the credential calling into question the fairness and validity of the credential. It would also discourage other qualified practitioners from seeking the credential.

Careful consideration in selecting the right subject matter experts to serve as judges is a tedious process, but it is worth the effort since the panel chosen sets the foundation for a successful, credible, and defensible standard.

## EVENT CALENDAR



Save the date and we'll see you in San Diego!

### 2019 ICE Exchange

Monday, November 18 - Thursday, November 21, 2019

[Hilton San Diego Bayfront](#)  
San Diego, CA

# CONTENT THAT CLICKS:

## Build Your Strategic Content Marketing Plan

By Kristin Clarke



(Sergey Nivens/Shutterstock)

Members and prospects often complain that associations push marketing messages to them without thinking about whether they're relevant. Organizations have plenty of content to share, but knowing its purpose, place, and intended audience can help shape a strategic content marketing plan that helps you deliver on member needs and build deeper relationships.

“*BuildOn, a nonprofit that supports volunteerism by at-risk youth, has fueled its growth with a strategic content marketing plan that emphasizes storytelling in blogs, video, and social media.*”

The marketing team at BuildOn knew they had a compelling story to tell. A nonprofit that empowers at-risk U.S. youth to volunteer both in their local communities and abroad, BuildOn saw that conversations between donors and villagers benefiting from the teenagers' newly built schools in developing nations were deeply moving and intimate. Only a video series would do as the story medium.

Supporters loved them.

“Connecting at that personal level is powerful,” says BuildOn Chief Marketing Officer Carrie Pena. “But if you're trying to build a movement to get many more people involved in an idea... there has to be enough content to spread. With content marketing, it must be very intentional. Make sure every [staffer] understands content is a priority, but most important are its authenticity and that you understand yourself and your audience.”

That requires a deep understanding of the organization's story and what makes it unique. It also means that association communicators need to get comfortable with the idea of shutting off the content fire hose. While associations are rolling around in content, seemingly ideally positioned to leverage it, many organizations have yet to strategically integrate content marketing into their traditional renew-now-register-today barrage of messages to members.

BuildOn has seen the shift in strategy payoff: The \$18 million nonprofit credits much of its 20 percent annual growth to its strategic content placement on a blog, in videos, and on social media. It also uses an extensive, segmented email marketing strategy and a full-time storyteller to capture and engagingly communicate stories of members, donors, and partners working together for the mission.

In addition, the entire 150-member staff has been trained by podcasting superstar Kevin Allison on how to identify and share content compellingly—a competency evaluated in annual reviews. Critical to that process is BuildOn's use of a social-media monitoring and aggregating app that allows staff to collect field interviews and content, upload them for approvals and editing, and then post them for relevant communities.

BuildOn's approach perfectly illustrates strategic, high-return content marketing—knowing its purpose, place, process, and potential. It's a power player if handled right, but it takes skill and commitment to do it well.

### WHAT EXACTLY IS CONTENT MARKETING?

According to the Content Marketing Association's “2015 Content Marketing and Data Intelligence Report,” the industry is worth more than \$4 billion, claiming nearly one of every four marketing dollars and growing 25 percent annually. Facebook alone—prime real estate for content marketers—shares 30 billion pieces of content each month, reports Kiss Metrics.

The Content Marketing Institute says, “Content marketing's purpose is to attract and retain customers by consistently

creating and curating relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior.” Recent CMI research reveals more than half of content marketing consumers believe it improves purchase decisions, and 61 percent say it generates positive attitudes toward brands.

Still, in associations, “a lot of people don’t know what content marketing is about,” says Beth Bush, chief membership officer at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). “There’s a lot of misunderstandings and misperceptions about what it can and should do and how to use it. In our case, we have solid examples and success numbers that show uplifts because of our content marketing approach.”

However, success isn’t assured for all content marketing campaigns. Bush’s previous association found the strategy wasn’t useful for acquisition but did strengthen retention, engagement, and relationships. She is now focused on improving retention rates and is pleased with feedback on AAAS webinars and a career-transition publication developed with content marketing goals.

“Part of where I think [misconceptions arise] is that people assume that if we tell members we have content, that’s content marketing,” Bush says. “We need to give them content as evidence. The other issue is, once you get people to engage with the content, how do you do the next step? We often let it drop. We hold a webinar. Lots of people come—great! And that’s it.”

Another misconception BuildOn once had was to assume its content marketing strategy needed big-budget professional videography. “It was stilted, scripted, and made with a production company in LA,” says Pena. “We quickly moved away from that to personal storytelling and day-in-the-life content about what’s going on in our villages and schools, and it’s now mostly produced in-house.”

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Despite research showing the advantages of content marketing, the time and financial investment required to do it well can seem overwhelming for many associations. Marketing consultant Scott Oser suggests starting small by conducting a pilot with a single meeting or product.

“Develop a strategy, processes, and procedures that you can grow and enhance later,” he says. “Most associations

don’t typically do a lot of consistent, regular collaboration like what you’re going to need for content marketing.”

That’s the approach of the American Nurses Association. In May 2014, ANA developed a pilot content marketing strategy to boost its appeal to young nursing professionals and bridge the gap between college graduation and full licensing and registration.

According to Brezita Warrick, manager of membership marketing, its first tool was a virtual “Welcome to the Profession” kit, which includes articles, videos, podcasts, and other ANA resources. ANA markets it heavily to student groups, 50 components, and the National Association of Student Nurses.

**17K**

The number of registrants in 15 months who accessed the American Nurses Association’s “Welcome to the Profession” kit for new graduates, a piloted content marketing tool.

Access requires individual registration, and the most critical data captured by the simple form are the registrant’s graduation month and year. The association can then segment and schedule membership pitches properly, since professional members cannot be students.

“It’s a feeder into our new-graduate recruitment campaigns,” Warrick says. As

of September 2015, 17,000 people had registered, and early member conversion rates were encouraging.

ANA also developed an image-heavy social media strategy to support the kit, using quotes, statistics, infographics, and a registration “ask.” Posts often went viral, leading to “huge registration bumps,” Warrick says. “We’re sitting on this nice database of generation leads, but we have to keep these individuals engaged, because not all are eligible for membership yet. We send periodic emails as part of a ‘nurturing series’ to detail how they can still connect and benefit from us. While this all started as a pilot, it’s now rolled out as a regular marketing tactic to this particular audience.”

## MEETING CHALLENGES

ANA has the right idea. “The approach of content marketing is always attached to a business objective—driving more sales, saving costs, creating more loyal customers, et cetera, so first, we have to know the why,” says Joe Pulizzi,



founder of the Content Marketing Institute. “There are many ways to measure this, but perhaps the best is to understand the behavioral differences between subscribers to your content and nonsubscribers. Do they buy more? Close faster? Stay longer as customers? The building of a loyal audience that knows, likes, and trusts us generally leads to positive business outcomes.”

**25%**

The percentage of dollars spent on content marketing out of total marketing spend, according to the Content Marketing Association’s “2015 Content Marketing and Data Intelligence Report.”

But Pulizzi adds that it takes patience. “If you have short-term goals when it comes to content marketing, you should probably do something else,” he says. “It takes time to build content as an asset that can drive the organization.”

AAAS’s Bush admits it’s “a gradual build. That’s why I’m positioning this as measured through retention, not acquisition. Most people want

immediate returns and gratification. ... But it’s trusting that this is going to work.”

Another problem is that associations have content “hidden behind gates and forms, so it’s hard to generate new audiences when they can’t access [it],” Pulizzi says. Experts agree that a good audit of what content an organization has available and is willing to give away or repurpose is essential, as is a reality check of potential internal barriers.

Bush, for instance, worries about silos: “Our programming, publishing, and membership ... are not well-tied, so that affects how well we can execute a content marketing strategy.”

And then there’s cost, which is all over the place. According to industry watchers, investment in content marketing technology platforms grew 125 percent between 2013 and 2014, but only a small percentage of those platforms can track an individual’s evolution from curious observer to customer to full-on brand ambassador. The cost of “feeding the beast” also varies.

In his new book, *Content Inc.*, Pulizzi notes that most startups and entrepreneurs spend little cash but lots of time and energy on content marketing. Others, such as Red Bull, are famous for lavish investments in content creation and distribution, generating large, measured payoffs.

For associations, though, “content marketing is not necessarily expensive,” says consultant Monica Bussolati. In her experience, while good technology takes money, associations often can eliminate other overlapping or dated in-house technologies in ways that save money and allow better execution of content marketing.

“What’s expensive is not having a plan,” she says. “It becomes very affordable when you’re able to be process-based, invest where you’ll get the biggest bang for your buck, and measure that it’s working. When it is, it’s paying for itself.”



**KRISTIN CLARKE**

Kristin Clarke is books editor for *Associations Now* and a business journalist and sustainability director for ASAE.

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## ASK THE EXPERTS!

Interested in what’s happening across the certification industry? Want to share your organization’s experiences? Curious about the latest trends in exam development and administration? Wondering what a specific term means?

Let our experts help! Submit your article ideas and questions – and we’ll provide the answers in future newsletters. Email: [ptcnynews@ptcny.com](mailto:ptcnynews@ptcny.com)

# Candidate Do's and Don'ts for Exam Security

PTC works hard to provide a safe and secure test experience for your candidates. We provide candidates with rules for the examination, which include what to bring as well as those items not allowed at the test center. This information appears both in the Candidate Handbook and in the candidate's Scheduling Authorization Notice email from PTC.

## DO bring valid ID.

All candidates **MUST** bring a valid photo ID to the test center. Valid forms of ID include:



- Current driver's license
- Current Non-driver state-issued ID
- Current Government-issued passport
- Current U.S. military ID

The ID must include the candidate's photo and be current (non-expired). The driver's license must be the candidate's permanent license, not a paper or temporary license or altered in any way.

## DON'T bring bulky clothing, electronic devices, or food/beverages.

The list of prohibited items not allowed at the test center includes:



- Bulky clothing, including sweatshirts with hoods, jackets, coats, and hats (except hats worn for religious reasons)
- All electronic devices such as phones, laptops, Bluetooth devices/headphones, cameras, i-Pod/music playing devices, and voice recorders
- ANY watch or Fitbit type device, as "smart" watches can look like analog watches
- Food and/or beverages, except for candidates who have been pre-approved by submitting a [Request for Special Accommodation](#) with their application

Any candidate who disregards these rules and brings any of these items with him/her risk not being allowed to test or having his/her exams declared void and the exam fees forfeited.

# WORD PLAY: Kuder-Richardson Formula-20

The **Kuder-Richardson Formula-20 (KR-20)** is an index of the internal consistency reliability of a measurement instrument. **KR-20** is applied to responses that are dichotomously scored, and it is one of most commonly used reliability indices in classical psychometric analysis. Mathematically, **KR-20** is equivalent to the formula for coefficient alpha.

The **KR-20** formula is:

$$KR_{20} = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k p_i q_i}{\sigma_{test}^2} \right)$$

$k$  = number of items in the test  
 $p_i$  = proportion of candidates who answered the item  $i$  correctly  
 $q_i$  = proportion of candidates who answered the item  $i$  incorrectly  
 $\sigma_{test}^2$  = the test score variance

The **KR20** may be affected by the difficulty of the test, the total number of questions on the test, the number of questions on the test that did not discriminate or negatively discriminated, and the spread in the candidate's scores. Values of **KR-20** generally range from 0.0 to 1.0, with higher values indicating a more internally consistent measurement. A rule-of-thumb commonly adopted is that 0.8 is an acceptable value. However, in very rare cases, values less than 0.0 can occur, typically with very small samples or very little variability in scores, which indicates an unreliable measurement.

# PSI Updates to Better Serve Your Candidates

In response to PTC's advocacy on behalf of your candidates, our test facility vendor, PSI, is improving its customer service to offer a dedicated toll-free number for PTC candidates and an automated ticketing system for PTC's customer service team.



The dedicated toll-free number will eliminate issues with the IVR prompt navigation. The old system required candidates to key in information before being placed in the PTC queue. Unfortunately, many candidates were not selecting the right options when prompted and experienced longer hold times as a result. With the new dedicated number, candidates will immediately be transitioned into the PTC phone queue, reducing wait times and providing a better candidate experience.

PSI's new online support ticketing system will provide PTC's customer service team with a direct email address. With this address, tickets are immediately created in the PSI tracking platform, allowing PSI team members to better track and respond to PTC concerns and requests.

To help their staff make the best use of these new tools, PSI is cross-training their staff members to ensure better communication and improved response times. We at PTC are excited to bring these improved customer support features to our clients and your candidates.

## CLIENT MILESTONES



PTC values the relationships it forms with its clients, many of which have been part of the PTC family for decades, and we are glad to have assisted these certification organizations to grow and thrive.

### 5-Year Anniversary

Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS)



### 30-Year Anniversary

Certification Board for Myofascial Trigger Point Therapists (CBMTPT)



### What Our Clients Say...

*"...Everything went well at the NANT meeting. Thank you (Alexandra Ellis) for all of your help in getting us registered, the booth furniture, and the boxes of supplies."*

**- Jo-Ann Maltais, PhD, National Nephrology Certification Organization (NNCO)**



# PTC NEWS

## PTC Launched Its New Web Site!

Earlier this year, PTC launched its new web site ([www.ptcny.com](http://www.ptcny.com)). The redesign makes it easier for both clients and candidates to find the information they need. The most important candidate-centric features are now front and center!

The new web site offers:

- ✓ Simple navigation
- ✓ Mobile responsive design
- ✓ A Candidate Corner with answers to frequently asked questions



If you haven't already, we encourage you to explore our new site and see all the services that PTC has available for you, your candidates, and your certificants.



## PTC Welcomes IgNS



The Immunoglobulin National Society selected PTC to guide the organization through its Job Analysis Study and develop and administer its certification exam. IgNS is a professional organization dedicated to the advancement of Ig Therapy practice, across clinical indications and areas of practice.

IgNS provides assessment, validation and documentation of the knowledge, skills, and overall clinical competence of nurses managing and administering Ig therapy through its Ig Certified Nurse (IgCN<sup>®</sup>) credential. Working with PTC, IgNS is expanding its credentialing program to include a new certification for pharmacists in 2020.

## PTC Employees Support Toys for Tots



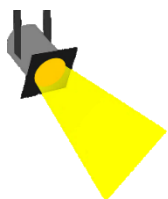
As 2018 drew to a close, PTC employees joined other tenants in our building to support the Toys for Tots program in New York City.

"The joy of a child who receives a gift during the holiday season is priceless. We are always happy to participate in this annual tradition.", said Michelle Lee, Testing Services/Recertification Administrator.



The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program collects new, unwrapped toys during the holiday season and distributes them as gifts to less fortunate children in the community.

## PTC EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### Karen Sturges-Vera, Associate Director of Psychometric Services

Karen has been with PTC for eight years, working with a variety of clients on exam development and job task analysis studies. She manages the translation of client exams into dozens of languages from around the world.

Karen recently completed the ICE Certificate Program for the Credentialing Specialist. The certificate program explored the key areas of developing and administering credentialing exams, including needs assessment, accreditation standards, certification administration, certification program operations, key psychometric concepts, exam development, governance, and legal considerations. With the successful completion of her Credentialing Specialist certificate, Karen has the additional knowledge and skills necessary to ensure that PTC's clients are adhering to best practices in the credentialing industry.



Karen holds a BA in Environmental Studies from Middlebury College and an MA in International Relations from George Washington University. She lives in Westchester County, outside of New York City, participates in two book clubs and enjoys visiting family in upstate NY, southern CA, Hawaii, and France.