

GUIDE FOR PROGRAMME OWNERS AND L&D LEADS

How to measure a digital badge programme and prove its value

Sooner or later someone will ask what the badges are actually achieving. This guide shows you which numbers to track from day one, how to connect them to outcomes, and how to report them in a way leadership will act on.

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Online version: <https://www.certify.one/guides/measuring-a-badge-programme>

THE SHORT ANSWER

Measure in three layers: activity (issued, claimed, shared, verified), engagement (completion, progression and re-enrolment), and outcomes (the business or learning results your programme exists for). Set a baseline before launch, tag every link so you can attribute traffic, and report three numbers and one story to leadership each quarter.

What should you measure in a badge programme?

Measure the path from issue to impact, in three layers. Activity numbers tell you whether badges are reaching and being used by learners. Engagement numbers tell you whether badges change learner behaviour. Outcome numbers tell you whether the programme is doing the job it was set up for.

Layer	Metric	How to calculate it
Activity	Claim rate	Badges claimed or viewed by the recipient, divided by badges issued
Activity	Share rate	Badges shared at least once, divided by badges issued
Activity	Verification views	Views of badge pages by people other than the recipient
Engagement	Completion rate	Learners completing the course, before and after badges were introduced
Engagement	Progression rate	Badge holders who start the next course or level within a set period
Engagement	Re-enrolment	Learners returning for further courses within a year

Layer	Metric	How to calculate it
Outcome	Referral traffic	Visits to your course or product pages from badge pages
Outcome	Programme-specific results	For example, compliance audit results, certified partner sales, internal promotions or membership renewals

You don't need every metric on day one. Pick the two or three that match your programme's goals, and make sure you can collect them reliably.

Why do you need a baseline before launch?

Because without one you can't show that badges changed anything. Record completion, progression and enrolment figures for the courses concerned before you introduce badges, or keep a comparable cohort without badges for a term. Then compare like with like.

A baseline doesn't need to be elaborate:

- Completion rates for the last two or three cohorts of each course.
- How many learners went on to a further course within six months.
- Current traffic to course pages, and where it comes from.
- For workplace programmes, the outcome measure leadership already uses, such as audit results or time to competence.

Write these figures down with their dates and sources. When you report later, you will be asked where the "before" number came from.

How do you know if badges are driving new learners?

Tag every link on your badge pages so your web analytics can tell which visits came from badges. When someone clicks through from a shared badge to your course page, you want that visit attributed to the badge, not lost as "direct" or "referral" traffic.

Practical steps:

- **Add UTM parameters** to the links on your badge pages and in delivery emails, for example `utm_source=badge&utm_medium=credential&utm_campaign=course-name`. Google Analytics 4 and most other tools will then report these visits separately.
- **Link to somewhere useful.** Badge pages should link to the course, the next level or an enquiry page, not just your homepage.
- **Ask new learners.** Add "a colleague's badge on LinkedIn" as an option in your "how did you hear about us?" question.
- **Connect to your CRM.** If your enquiries go into a CRM, keep the UTM values with the lead, so you can see which badges produced enquiries and sales.

Some sharing can't be tracked, for example a badge forwarded in a private message. Treat tracked referrals as a minimum, not the whole picture.

How often should you report, and to whom?

Look at activity numbers monthly, and report engagement and outcomes quarterly. Monthly figures help the programme team spot and fix problems quickly, such as a delivery issue or a badge nobody shares. Quarterly figures are the right rhythm for leadership, because outcomes take time to show.

A monthly one-page view for the programme team might include:

- Badges issued, claimed and shared this month, by course.
- Claim and share rates compared with the previous three months.
- The badges with the highest and lowest share rates.
- Tracked referral visits from badge pages.
- Any problems, such as bounced emails or correction requests.

How do you present badge results to leadership?

Lead with the outcome leadership cares about, support it with two or three numbers, and add one real example. Leaders rarely want a dashboard. They want to know whether the programme is working, what it costs, and what you plan to do next.

A simple structure for a quarterly update:

1. **The headline.** One sentence on what the programme achieved, in the terms of its goal. For example, more learners progressing to the advanced course.
2. **Three numbers.** A before-and-after comparison, a trend, and one activity figure that shows reach.
3. **One story.** A learner, manager or customer whose badge led somewhere: a new role, a partner sale, a completed pathway.
4. **Cost and effort.** What the programme cost this quarter, and roughly how much staff time.
5. **Next steps.** One or two changes you plan to make, and what you expect them to improve.

Which numbers should you be careful with?

Be careful with totals that only grow, comparisons between groups that aren't alike, and figures you can't explain. They look impressive in a report and fall apart under the first question.

- **Total badges issued** always goes up. On its own it says nothing about value. Pair it with claim and share rates.
- **Before and after comparisons** can mislead if something else changed at the same time, such as a new course design or a different intake. Say what else changed.

- **Industry benchmarks** published by vendors are usually drawn from their own customers and calculated in their own way. Use them for context, not as targets.
- **Share counts** don't show who saw the share. Verification views and tracked referrals are closer to real reach.

What should a measurement plan include?

A one-page measurement plan agreed before launch saves arguments later. It records what you will measure, where the data comes from, who collects it and when you will report.

Section	What to record
Goal	The programme's main goal, in one sentence
Key metrics	Two or three metrics that show progress towards the goal
Baseline	The current figure for each metric, with date and source
Data sources	Badge platform, web analytics, LMS, CRM or HR system
Tracking set-up	UTM conventions and where tags are applied
Owner	Who collects the data and prepares reports
Cadence	Monthly team view, quarterly leadership update
Review	When you will decide whether to change the programme

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Module 3 of the free Digital Badge Practitioner pathway covers measuring acceptance, shares and verifications as part of launching and growing a programme. Its practical task, a one-page launch plan, is a good place to set out your measures.

Take the free course → (<https://academy.certify.one/en/pathways/digital-badge-practitioner>)

Frequently asked questions

What is the most important metric for a badge programme?

The one closest to your programme's goal. For a programme meant to attract learners, that is usually tracked referral traffic and enrolments. For a compliance programme, it is the share of staff holding a current badge. Claim and share rates matter for every programme, because nothing else works if badges aren't reaching people.

How long before we can see results?

Activity numbers, such as claim and share rates, are visible within weeks of the first issue. Engagement and outcome numbers usually need at least one or two full cohorts, and often a few months, before a before-and-after comparison is meaningful. Set that expectation with leadership at the start.

Can we measure how employers use our badges?

Partly. Verification views show how often badge pages are opened by people other than the recipient, which includes employers checking them. For a fuller picture, survey learners a few months after they earn a badge and ask whether it came up in an application, interview or promotion.

Do we need a data analyst to measure a badge programme?

Not to start. A badge platform's own reports, tagged links and your existing web analytics are enough for most programmes. Analyst support becomes useful when you want to connect badge data with CRM, HR or student records to measure outcomes over time.