

## DO PROFESSIONAL BODIES DRIVE PROFESSIONALISM?

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The Business Dictionary defines a 'professional body' as a; "Trade association of an organised profession that certifies successful completion of its requirements, and thereupon awards a license and bestows a recognised appellation (*designation*). Professional bodies usually prescribe a discretionary or mandatory code of conduct for their members." The question arises – do these associations add value for their members?

Mark Orpen, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of The Institute of People Development (IPD), believes that they do. "Professionalism is incredibly important in the skills development (SD) and learning and development (L&D) environment," says Orpen. "However, while the key to quality and efficiency is professionalism, it is the codes of conduct and ethical practices of an individual that define the profession. As such, the intervention of professional bodies builds the individual, in turn making the industry a more professional one."

In the SD and L&D sector, these bodies play a pivotal role in developing a proficient and more-than-adequately skilled labour force. "Professional bodies serve members by creating a platform for real, valuable, and practical value exchange. From knowledge sharing, to creating access to resources, benchmarking best practice, and creating communities of expert practice, their input is invaluable," confirms Orpen.

When considering membership to a relevant professional body - such as the Marketing Association of South Africa (MA[SA]), or the SA Board for People Practices (SABPP), two options are usually available; corporate membership and individual membership. "Individuals decide whether they will honour the profession by their accountability to exemplary practices," adds Orpen. "Companies that pledge commitment to these practices through corporate membership present themselves as an extension of either the professional body, or the individual; which roles need to be well defined. Often companies simply pay for their employees' professional membership fees."

The advantages of a membership include the resultant access to current knowledge and practices, through continuous professional development (CPD). "When the perceived value of the networking, information sharing and learning outcomes exceeds the cost to participate, membership is strengthened." As is the case with most membership platforms, some disadvantages do occur. "Most associations become tested as platforms where individuals influence others for their personal aims. The leadership of an association (or professional

body) remains the critical success factor - along with healthy communication, a commitment to quality and a culture of sharing and learning.”

When considering membership to a professional body, Orpen encourages potential members to check the professional body’s credentials. “The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) accredits professional bodies and measures their performance,” he concludes. “Successful professional bodies manage member records, implement online CPD and events that synchronise real time, provide cloud access to members to view their professional development and status, and deploy established and reliable technologies. They also ensure that learning is conducted through reputable institutions.”

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*Boilerplate:*

Founded in 1999, Workplace Skills Solutions t/a The Institute of People Development (IPD) strives to equip, prepare and certify practitioners to serve South Africa’s skills development strategy and facilitate the transformation of education and training. Over the years, IPD has become the preferred people development partner to most state owned and private enterprises in Southern Africa. IPD has assisted over 500 public and private training providers across most sectors of the economy to achieve or maintain accreditation through consulting, training and providing published guidelines. For more information, please contact IPD at [trainingenquiries@peopledev.co.za](mailto:trainingenquiries@peopledev.co.za) on (011) 315 2913 or visit [www.peopledevelopment.co.za](http://www.peopledevelopment.co.za).

Mark Orpen is the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of The Institute of People Development (IPD). With an undying entrepreneurial drive, Orpen founded IPD in 1999. He holds National Diplomas in Marketing and Sales, Learning and Development and a National Higher Certificate in Occupationally-Directed Education, Training and Development Practices. Orpen is represented on the board of more than ten companies and has the skills necessary to execute his duties as CEO of IPD. With a keen desire for the acquisition of knowledge, he has also completed many training courses in Human Resource Development, Marketing, Corporate Governance, Maritime Studies and Commercial Property Investments. Orpen can be contacted at [mark.orpen@peopledev.co.za](mailto:mark.orpen@peopledev.co.za).