



EDUCATION REIMAGINED: EY BADGES AND DEGREES

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Abstract:

"EY Badges and Degrees can be seen as a contemporary 'symphony' of perpetual curiosity, where each 'note' represents a valuable lesson, and every day of a program is a new movement in one's career path. Lifelong learning is the art of staying young at heart and sharp of mind. It's the thrill of diving into uncharted oceans of knowledge, unearthing gems from the depths of wisdom. Like a chameleon, we adapt and evolve, painting our minds with the vibrant hues of experience. Similarly, organizations follow the same path. With each lesson learned, we weave a richer 'tapestry' of existence. In this boundless classroom, age is just a number, and the thirst for knowledge becomes the elixir of everlasting youth and constant improvement and change, reminding us that the journey is as precious as the destination. This is a story about an organization that enables people to grow, explore, and stay relevant for today and tomorrow. And it does so in a unique way."

Keywords:

EY Badges, EY Degrees, Life-long learning, Change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human nature thrives on curiosity, that relentless urge, drives us to unearth, absorb, and evolve. It is the catalyst that transforms mere existence into a journey of self-discovery and growth, enhancing both our lives and self-value. This pursuit of ideas and striving, whether personal or professional devotion, is the essence of our lasting endurance.

"The concept of lifelong learning serves as a sustainable and dynamic force that goes beyond the confines of traditional classrooms. It recognizes that our pursuit of knowledge extends beyond institutional boundaries and forms the foundation for mutual learning and the development of practical skills essential in a rapidly changing world (Güven, 2020). In reality, human aspirations extend far beyond formal education and job descriptions. We learn not for the benefit of others, but for our own personal fulfillment, driven by an innate thirst for knowledge. As Edwards Deming, the father of total quality management, once stated, 'People are born with intrinsic motivation, self-respect, dignity, curiosity to learn, and joy in learning.'" (Macht, 2016).

Drawing from Senge's timeless wisdom (1994), an ever-evolving organization with perpetual learning treats developed skills not just as mere individual possessions but tools that, when wielded, refashion the very core of the collective. He imagined a dynamic ecosystem where knowledge finds no stagnant pools, only a continuous flow that elevates all. "Organizations learn only through individuals who learn." In this narrative, Senge's legacy is a vibrant thread weaving business success tapestry.

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"Elevating this very concept, the multinational company Ernst & Young (EY) introduced the global initiative: EY Badges. A harmonious 'tapestry' connects the threads of exploration, growth, and fulfillment. Each EY employee holds the key to delving into the realms of personal advancement. Diving deep into subjects like curiosity, adaptability, an expansive mindset, mindfulness, and inclusion is enabled by the Leadership Pillar of EY Badges. Those eager to delve into cutting-edge technological solutions are encouraged to explore the Technology Pillar. This dynamic guide leads through the intricate realms of data science, data integration, the wonders of artificial intelligence (AI), the security expertise of blockchain, the digital fortress of cybersecurity, quantum computing, and a treasure trove of solutions from industry titans like SAP, IBM, ServiceNow, Microsoft, and much more."

"Finally, there is a business pillar – a captivating pathway that unlocks the enigmatic realms of business acumen, financial wizardry, the artistry of marketing, and the challenges of supply chain dynamics, with an array of over 25 specific industry sectors (from agribusiness and manufacturing to insurance, banking, telecommunications, oil & gas, to name just a few)."

EY Badges allow people to immerse themselves in meticulously selected e-learning resources from EY, Udemy, Skillsoft, Coursera, SAP, TED Talks, Get Abstract, and more, provoking new ideas and rethinking the future. Learning something new requires us to leave the comfort zone of our stable cognitive structure through mental re-examination and possible changes in our basic assumptions that guide our behaviour (Schein, 2016). Therefore, with each step, EY employees are not just learning; they are earning the emblem of knowledge, the Learning Badge, which represents a unique certificate of personal achievement, much like learning criteria used by academia to evaluate what knowledge and skills the trainee or student is able to demonstrate after completing a course (Spector, 2021). To go one step further and earn one of four available levels of badges, such as Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum, learners are encouraged to implement what they have learned and demonstrate their knowledge and experience in the given area.

With a total of 16 badges, people unlock the door to the prestigious EY Tech MBA certificate. Alternatively, they can seize 12 badges, paving the way to the coveted Master in Business Analytics (MBAN) or Master in Sustainability (MSuS) offered in collaboration with the esteemed Hult International Business School, which holds the triple crown of accreditations. This groundbreaking initiative marks the first instance of an organization of this magnitude extending such an opportunity across its entire ecosystem.

2. CHANGING THE NARRATIVE WITH EY BADGES AND DEGREES

"The process of organizational learning is based on an organization's ability to acquire, develop, and transfer new knowledge (through knowledge management methods) to enhance organizational performance. These interventions ultimately shift the organization's capabilities from simple day-to-day problem-solving to a process of continuous, ongoing improvement (Cummings and Worley, 2015). This is a long-term practice with a far-reaching impact on an 'intelligent organization'.

The EY Badges program serves as a dynamic bridge to change, thrusting individuals into a realm where learning is an adventurous voyage. This transformative journey cultivates a mindset of continuous growth while transforming the ever-changing tides of industries into opportunities for evolution. With EY Badges, change becomes a matter of personal and professional metamorphosis, turning every twist and turn in this journey into a milestone toward success.

Change is imperative. However, driving an organizational change is strongly influenced by internal and external factors. Key drivers of change, such as flexibility and creative action, are often impeded by strong internal barriers deeply rooted in the current mechanistic divisions within the organizational structure (Morgan, 1998), as well as an array of external forces that shape the modern workplace (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Within the Badges and Degrees program, change takes the spotlight, outshining traditional ranks, where the compass points toward continuous growth and innovation. The program blurs the lines between disciplines, allowing individuals to embark on an inspiring journey of transformation and boundless potential.

3. EY BADGES AND DEGREES: THE MINDSET AND SKILLSET

In the whirlwind of our rapidly evolving world, the EY Badges initiative has proved to be a navigational tool guiding employees toward the horizon of tomorrow's skills. It's a dynamic force that shapes talents, opening portals to transformative experiences, and etching unique paths forward. This resourceful program stands as a resilient link, connecting the dedicated EY community to the ever-shifting realms of the organization and the global job scape. However, it is not confined to the present, but extends into the future, ensuring EY employees remain steadfast while taking advantage of relevance.

Contemporary learning and development practices cannot be assessed in isolation, merely as a part of HRM function, but rather as a whole within the broader organizational context (Ford, 2021). However, no transforma-



tional change can occur without significant organizational learning and innovation. Employees must learn how to accept new behaviours and implement new strategic decisions. This typically involves a 'trial-and-error' approach, with employees undertaking new behaviours, assessing their aftermath effects in the workplace, and making adjustments if necessary. The learning process is likely to be a considerable effort with a lot of intrinsic rewinding in terms of perceiving, thinking, and behaving. Hence, it has to be governed by the organization's future vision with all the values and norms that support it, at all levels of the hierarchy, regardless of position (Cummings and Worley, 2015).

As part of NextWave's strategy, EY continues to invest in employees' skills and empower them to build the careers they want, in a way that suits them. That is why all EY employees can pursue EY Badges and EY Degrees. In the record of EY's innovation, 2017 marked the birth of EY Badges, a transformative journey of personal and professional growth that serves more as a star map, guiding participants toward the constellations of tomorrow's successes. Among these valuable achievements, EY Degrees have emerged, each holding a market value of over \$40,000. Within this prestigious collection lies the coveted EY Tech MBA, a constellation earned through 16 respective EY Badges. These badges span all three pillars, namely Technology, Leadership, and Business. Yet, the journey doesn't end there, it crescendos with the Capstone projects where mastery takes its final bow.

In the realm of opportunity, every employee is a potential protagonist, regardless of their position or rank. The EY Degrees beckon like a stage, where innovation and learning take the spotlight. To enter the program, there are two keys. The first is a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, paired with three years of professional experience. The second is a decade of professional adventures, either at EY or elsewhere.

However, this isn't just a journey for the academic elite. Seasoned employees can enter the program regardless of whether they have a university degree or not. This online qualification, awarded by Hult International Business School, is the first-ever fully accredited corporate MBA. This marks a 'first' not just for EY but for any large organization.

4. EY BADGES LEARNING OFFERING

EY Badges serve as a pledge of personal skills, always ready for further improvement. Badges are 'portable,' meaning that if a holder decides to pursue a different path from EY, they will accompany this person in whatever career they choose. Hence, a Badge is a testament to personal mastery. It is not just a token, but a declaration

that a holder has delved deeper, beyond the textbook, and truly grasped the essence of the subject. For this reason, the acquired knowledge is not merely theoretical; it represents real 'know-how'."

The potential is enormous. EY offers a dazzling collection of over 300 badges, covering diverse areas such as wellbeing and quantum computing - neatly categorized into the pillars of technology, leadership, and business. Their purpose is comprehensive. The technology pillar builds the future-focused skills that EY people need in emerging and adaptive technologies, enabling them to stay ahead of the curve with innovative solutions and a strategic perspective. The leadership pillar develops the transformative mindset that EY people need, in order to lead with purpose, to inspire, and to build effective teams, thus driving organizational success. The Business pillar explains how businesses work and develops the skills needed to innovate and transform the working world.

5. EXPERIENCE PART: IMPLEMENTING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

"Once the e-learning modules (offered for each badge) are completed, employees are required to submit evidence of their experience in the chosen field by submitting the Experience Evidence Form. This is not just a mere testimony of achievement but a portal to reflect on candidates' accomplishments through a narrative that intertwines the scope of learning and experience as a reflection of personal discovery. This process of reflection, apart from the critical self-thinking necessary for the acquisition of knowledge, enables us to design personal patterns convenient for the next period dedicated to reflection. This is also the way organizations recognize the process of collective learning that constantly occurs in the workplace (Shaw, 2002).

In contrast, there are challenges that stand in the path of development. In this narrative, they become opportunities to showcase resilience and growth. Candidates are encouraged to discuss their mistakes and difficulties, coming from their initial attempts to implement what they have learned through internal or client projects. But the story doesn't end with the candidates' words. Upon entering the attester, a mentor on the grand stage of this path, confirms that the necessary experience has occurred, been recognized, and acknowledged."



6. EY DEGREES: PRE-REGISTRATION

By completing more than half of the required Badges, learners can pre-register their interest in becoming a part of the EY Degrees program and indicate which Tech MBA, MBAN, or MSuS cohort they would like to join. They also need to submit three attested Experience Evidence Forms (one for each pillar) for a quality check. The EY Masters team advises the learner of the outcome and provides feedback on the Quality Review, enabling the learner to replicate this quality standard across all their reflection papers.

Mastery of the English language is a necessary journey as learners undertake an English Language Assessment. This digital odyssey, designed for non-native English speakers, serves as a compass to ensure adeptness at the recommended English language level (defined as B2 within the EFSET test).

Once the submitted documents have been reviewed the Badges are confirmed to meet the requirements, and the Experience Evidence Forms are found to be written in an adequate business English language, learners will be formally invited via email to join the cohort."

7. STUDIES WITH HULT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL

Hult International Business School is renowned for its skill-focused approach to education and its commitment to practical learning. It is regularly ranked as one of the top business schools in the world by three prestigious international accrediting bodies, namely AACSB International, AMBA, and EQUIS (Hult International Business School, 2023). As a global hub for aspiring business leaders, it is connected to a multitude of industries, offering students the opportunity to engage with seasoned professionals, gain insights, and potentially launch their careers. The student body mirrors a microcosm of the business world itself fostering cross-cultural communication and the ability to navigate the nuances of global business. This has proved to be truly beneficial for EY employees worldwide, as human capital constitutes the most precious asset in the market value of contemporary organizations (Ocean Tomo, 2020).

The Pillar Insight Modules consist of three sets of live module sessions, each representing one of the pillars of the Tech MBA: Frontiers of Technology Impacting Business; Leading in the Digital Era; and a Competitive Business Simulation: Applying Core Concepts. Each set will include a series of six or seven synchronous sessions, with each session lasting three hours. Every learner in the program is expected to attend and participate in each module.

Each pillar module will feature integrative simulations and varied innovative assignments. Learners are expected to be on camera, participate in critical discussions and breakout sessions, draw on key concepts, and synthesize their learning at the end of each course. The combination of the modules will help learners propose enhanced, or potentially new ways of working, further integrating their knowledge into practice.

"The capstone group challenge is the final task that EY Degrees candidates will complete under the guidance of the Hult International Business School. Candidates will work as a team to develop either an EY NextWave strategy initiative or an EY Ripples initiative, using all the combined learning and experiences from across the three pillars. The Capstone Challenge is a 10–12-week program where candidates work virtually in teams of three to five. Candidates attend a series of mandatory, virtual workshops delivered by Hult International Business School."

8. CONCLUSION

EY Badges and Degrees represent a modern education program, embraced by a visionary global entity. In a world where change is the only constant and the horizon of knowledge keeps shifting, the EY learning program stands as a beacon that defies convention and ushers in an era of lifelong learning like no other. It is a genuine perpetual evolution with no boundaries worldwide. Amidst the bustling realm of business, EY recognizes its most precious asset - human capital. It encourages people to step beyond their comfort zone, in order to explore uncharted realms of learning. And what is the reward for this bold journey? It is knowledge, a badge of honour, and a globally recognized testament to the dedication to professional and personal growth. It is a narrative where an organization does not just provide a service but nurtures personal aspirations, fuels career ambitions, and weaves success stories. Navigating the world of EY Badges and Degrees is a genuine partnership, a journey where EY doesn't just guide but propels. It is a world where investment is in minds, vision, and consequently, in the future of its participants.



9. LITERATURE

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