

## *Do you know the difference?*

*Kathy Blanton, CMF*

In today's certification-crazy world, it is important for those of us certified through The Institute to understand the salient differences between certificates and certification. I hope this will help clarify any misunderstandings between the two and serve as an informative explanation that you can use to showcase your valuable credential.

A recent article of note published by The American Society for Training and Development (Knapp & Naughton) tackles the question "Aren't certificate programs and certification really the same thing?"

*According to Knapp & Naughton, in a word, no.*

A certificate is something earned from a learning event whose purpose is to provide instruction and training so that the learner may acquire specific knowledge, skills or competencies in a given area.

*Certification* on the other hand, is a credential awarded that validates that learning has already occurred. A completed certification program is issued by a recognized certifying body in a particular discipline and usually results in conferring of an acronym such as CMF, NCC or PMP in recognition of that achievement.

These distinctions are extremely important because the current professional landscape is flooded with many certificate and certification programs. This flood has muddied the waters considerably, confusing both the professional seekers and the constituencies they serve. Having achieved a certificate, say, in Neuro-Linguistic Programming in no way certifies the recipient in that discipline. It merely says that the individual has participated in a learning event about NLP. Likewise, receiving a certificate in Career Coaching in no way certifies one to be a Career Coach.

Certification in a particular discipline takes into consideration all of the learning, experience, skills and competencies acquired that meets a given standard. It says to all stakeholders that a professional has achieved a level of competency beyond a learning event---that they have moved beyond learning about that discipline to a much deeper knowledge, experience and skill base and adhere to standards prescribed in that given industry.

Such it is with certification through the Institute of Career Certification International. By being certified through the Institute, your prior learning, in-depth experience and competence in the career management profession is recognized and validated. Unlike learning programs where certificates are earned, ICC International certification cannot be bought.

Additionally, by being certified through The Institute, you have obtained an internationally-recognized certification that is the umbrella certification for the career management industry. This means you don't have to seek certification in every sub-area of the career management profession. Because ICC certification is experience and competency-based, demonstrated through a professional portfolio and assessed by leaders in the industry, your expertise in the field is recognized and validated.

You can be assured that you hold a distinguished and select credential with your certification from ICC International!