



The Importance of Being Professionally Recognised

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An Industry Employee's Perspective

By **Maxine Naidoo**

International Imports Manager - Skynet Worldwide Express

My professional journey began in 2010 when I joined SAPO (South African Post Office) as an in-house booking clerk for Crossroads Distribution, a logistics company. Following significant organisational changes at SAPO, the loss of our contract led me to seek new opportunities in the industry.

In 2012, I commenced my career at SkyNet Worldwide Express as a night shift data capturer. Driven by curiosity and a desire to grow, I have since advanced to the position of Imports Manager.

Despite accumulating valuable on-the-job experience, I faced challenges in gaining recognition within the industry. The lack of a formal professional designation often hindered the acknowledgment of my skills and capabilities, and I struggled to establish credibility in a highly competitive and traditionally male-dominated field.

This is why obtaining the ICFF Professional designation holds immense significance for me. As a young woman in the clearing and forwarding industry, this credential represents a mark of credibility, expertise, and dedication to our profession. It will help establish my authority and demonstrate that I possess the essential, industry-recognised skills and knowledge. Moreover, it challenges stereotypes and helps break down gender barriers in a sector that has historically been male dominated.

Furthermore, the designation will strengthen relationships with regulatory bodies such as SARS, which has become increasingly stringent in its internal learning and development requirements, as highlighted by Mr. Beyers Theron at the TETA Summit addressing the Skills Gaps of the industry. It also has the potential to open new doors for career growth, foster greater confidence and trust between employers and employees, and elevate the industry's perception of freight forwarders and customs clearance agents beyond mere “agents.”

Most importantly, I aspire to inspire other young women to pursue careers within the logistics, customs clearance, and freight forwarding industries. Earning the ICFF designation would enable SMEs to stand out professionally. The designation assists me personally in earning the respect I deserve and would ultimately advance my career with a sense of credibility and pride.

Beyond personal achievement, I am committed to giving back by providing skills training and leadership opportunities to other women who face similar challenges especially in an industry where mentorship and knowledge-sharing are often lacking. My belief in “lifting others as I climb” underscores my desire to support and empower women in our field. Through sharing my journey and experiences, I hope to inspire more women to succeed and thrive in the customs clearance and freight forwarding industry.



Maxine Naidoo

*International Imports Manager -
Skynet Worldwide Express*

Eliminating the Fear of Being Evaluated

Why Employees should embrace lifelong learning and professionalisation as the new norm

By Ingrid du Buisson, CEO – ICFF



Over the last few months, I have had the opportunity to meet with several Employers to discuss the importance of assisting their employees in obtaining professional recognition for their years of experience and knowledge gained. Many of our industry employees do not have formal qualifications, and hence most do not have any recognition of their expertise and knowledge.

We currently find ourselves in a continuously changing environment from compliance to technology, which requires all employees to stay abreast of these changes and their personal development. Lifelong learning is a phenomenon which has become the norm across every economic sector, and globally. The changes in technologies, AI and 5IR, it becomes important for us all to stay connected and abreast of those changes, and when one addresses the customs compliance requirements within our environment it becomes clear that compliance is non-negotiable.

Globally, it is a prerequisite that entering the field of Freight Forwarding, Customs and Logistics, one must be formally qualified and certified. This is not the case in South Africa. The ICFF, a professional body, was established by industry to assist the industry employees to achieve recognition and professional designation against industry recognised standards. However, having interacted with several employees, there appears to be scepticism and fear of having an evaluation done within their specific field of work and experience towards recognition.

At the ICFF, we do not use the terms “pass” or “fail”. We evaluate the individual’s proficiency either in Customs or Freight Forwarding, so the outcomes can either be:

- Proficient
- Not Yet Proficient



If an employee is found to be “Not Yet Proficient”, we provide support and guidance on further training based on the outcome of the evaluation. The detailed evaluation report provides very specific detail on areas of strengths and weakness, which can only assist with focusing on individual areas identified either through mentoring and on the job training or formal skills programs in partnership with a recognised training provider. Employees can develop where required and develop their career paths with confidence.

Employers essentially can focus their training budgets more strategically (and as discussed in previous articles) which ensures return on investment and improvement on supply chain costs and efficiencies. It also minimises the risks associated with customs compliance and ensures money is returned to the economy.

Each employee is encouraged to embrace their individual development; ensure they stay abreast of industry changes, become a recognised professional and be the change they want to see.

The Importance of CPD in the Freight & Customs Industry

From the Chairperson's Desk

*By Yolandi Dercksen, Chairperson of the
Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF)*



In a rapidly evolving global trade environment, the need for continuous learning and adaptability has never been greater. At the Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF), we recognise that professional development is not a once-off achievement but a lifelong journey. That is why we strongly advocate for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a key driver in advancing individual careers and elevating the standard of excellence across our industry.

What is CPD?

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refers to the intentional, structured process by which professionals update and expand their knowledge, skills, and competencies throughout their working lives. It includes a variety of learning activities—such as formal training, online learning, practical workshops, mentorship, industry engagement, and self-directed study—that contribute to professional growth.

CPD is not unique to our industry. It is widely adopted across professions such as medicine, law, accounting, engineering, and education. It ensures that practitioners stay current with developments in their field, maintain their professional competence, and remain compliant with industry regulations and standards.

Why is CPD Critical in Freight Forwarding & Customs?

The Freight and Customs industry is at the core of international trade, supply chain efficiency, and economic resilience. It is shaped by constantly changing regulatory requirements, technological advancements, global geopolitical shifts, and customer expectations. Professionals in this sector must therefore remain agile, informed, and compliant.

CPD enables individuals to:

- Stay informed on changing legislation and customs requirements
- Enhance operational and compliance excellence
- Develop leadership and problem-solving capabilities
- Increase career mobility and competitiveness in the global market
- Align their skills with international standards set by organisations such as FIATA and the WCO
- Gain and retain industry-recognised professional designations

ICFF's Commitment to Professional Growth

At the ICFF, our mission is to foster a culture of continuous learning and to create clear professional pathways through designations aligned with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Our CPD framework is tailored to support both individuals and organisations in ensuring that freight forwarders and customs practitioners remain competent and future-fit.

We support professionals by:

- Providing **structured CPD guidelines** linked to designation levels (junior to expert).
- Offering access to **industry-recognised training and development providers**.
- Facilitating evaluation **and recognition of prior learning (RPL)** to close skill gaps.
- Encouraging **industry participation, mentorship, and thought leadership**.

In Closing

CPD is not just a regulatory box to tick—it is a vital investment in your career, your relevance, and your ability to contribute meaningfully to the freight and customs sector. At ICFF, we are here to walk this journey with you, enabling your growth, recognising your achievements, and ensuring that together, we raise the standards of our industry.

Let us take ownership of our professional development, not because we have to - but because we are committed to being the best at what we do.

From The CEO's Desk

Introducing the Refreshed ICFF Logo

We are excited to reveal the updated logo of the Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF) - a modern reflection of our evolving identity and continued commitment to excellence in the industry.

This refreshed brandmark signifies progress, professionalism, and our vision to lead and support customs and freight forwarding professionals across Africa.

Launching of our new website

The ICFF has embarked on a new and refreshed website, that is informative, interactive and inspiring. We invite you all to visit our website www.icff.co.za



Welcoming new Members to the ICFF from:

- **ABSA**
- **CEVA Logistics**
- **Skynet Worldwide Express**
- **Maersk Shipping**
- **Transglobal Cargo**
- **Institute for Quality**
- **White Zulu Human Capital Management**
- **Wartsila South Africa**
- **Algul (Pty) Ltd**

We also want to wish our current members from **DHL Express** all the best with their remaining and upcoming evaluations on the Customs Professional Designations. **DHL Express** have certainly taken the lead on professionalising their entire Customs team. Well done!

Training Provider Recognition

It gives us great pleasure to announce that the following two training providers have achieved their Silver ICFF Training Provider Recognition:

- **Metro Minds**
- **School of Shipping**



Both training providers underwent a stringent evaluation process where their training material was evaluated against the industry standards, and most importantly the verification and evaluation of their respective training facilitators was also addressed. It is an important criterion that facilitators have the necessary qualifications and experience to facilitate training in this industry, quality is paramount.

Partnerships and Collaborations



The ICFF has developed an excellent partnership with ABSA bank, they have come onboard the ICFF as sponsors, as well as several employees from their Transport Logistics division have joined the ICFF as members. Welcome ABSA!



We are also in the process of facilitating a collaborative partnership of co-operation with SARS, this is a very strategic partnership that we are working towards, ensuring customs compliance competencies across our international supply chains, intra Africa and beyond.



We are currently also in discussions with CILTSA (The Chartered Institute of Transport Logistics SA), this will ensure an integrated approach towards professionalisation.

Reminders

- **Next Webinar** is scheduled for 9 July 2025 @12h30 to 13h30
- **Next Roadshow** is in Durban on 10 July 2025 @ 10h00



STAND OUT IN FREIGHT & CUSTOMS

Win a Professional
Designation and a 1-year
professional membership!

STAND A
CHANCE TO
WIN!
ADVANCE YOUR
CAREER
WITH ICFF

Are you working in Customs or Freight Forwarding?

Your expertise could earn you a professional
designation!

Two lucky industry professionals will win:

- ✓ A full competency assessment
- ✓ 1-year professional membership
- ✓ Official recognition in your field
- ✓ One award will go towards a Customs
Designation, and the other towards a
Freight Forwarding designation

Ts & Cs apply



**THE BODY FOR CUSTOMS
COMPLIANCE AND FREIGHT
FORWARDING PROFESSIONALS**

Minimum requirements for application:

- Submit a written motivation as to why a professional designation is so important to the applicant and the perceived benefits to their employer (if applicable)
- At least 5 years working experience in the industry
- Submit a comprehensive CV
- Submit copies of Qualifications/certificates attained
- Copy of ID Document
- Referral letter from your employer (if employed)

The closing date for submission is
30 July 2025.

Applications can be sent to
lmapheto@icff.co.za



ICFF ROADSHOW - DURBAN

Save the Date – Durban ICFF Roadshow 2025!

Mark your calendars for **Thursday, 10 July 2025**, for our next Roadshow in **Durban**!

Join us to hear the latest insights, industry trends, and expert commentary on what's ahead for freight forwarding and customs in South Africa. RSVP to Lerato to secure your spot.

