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Cobus Fourie



Elevating Our Business Through Professionalization in Customs Compliance and Freight Forwarding

By Cobus Fourie - Managing Director: GEODIS

As a global leader in logistics, GEODIS is committed to delivering excellence and reliability across the supply chain. With operations in 166 countries and a workforce of nearly 50 000, we offer comprehensive solutions that span freight forwarding, global contract logistics, distribution, project logistics and supply chain management. Our success is built on a foundation of innovation, customer-centricity, and a deep commitment to professionalization within our industry.

In an industry as complex and dynamic as freight forwarding, professionalization is not just a strategic choice; it's a necessity. Our commitment to professionalization directly influences our ability to deliver exceptional value to our clients and maintain our competitive edge in the market.

Professionalization in customs compliance and freight forwarding signifies a dedication to excellence and adherence to industry standards. By supporting our employees in gaining Professional Designations, we align our business with the highest quality assurance benchmarks. These designations are more than just credentials; they reflect our dedication to maintaining a standard of excellence that our clients can trust.



Employees with professional designations bring specialized knowledge, skills, and expertise to their roles, which are invaluable assets to our business. Their advanced understanding of regulatory requirements, risk management, and logistics optimization empowers us to streamline operations and enhance service delivery. This expertise not only improves our internal processes but also translates to superior service for our clients, fostering stronger relationships and long-term loyalty.



In today's competitive landscape, customers increasingly seek organizations staffed by knowledgeable and competent professionals. By prioritizing professionalization, we demonstrate our commitment to meeting—and exceeding—customer expectations. Our clients can be assured of our capability to handle their logistics needs with the utmost professionalism and care.

The freight forwarding sector plays a pivotal role in the South African economy, acting as a vital conduit for international trade. Given South Africa's strategic position as a gateway to sub-Saharan Africa, efficient freight forwarding is essential for facilitating the seamless movement of goods into and out of the region. This sector supports economic growth by enabling exports, fostering import activities, and linking local businesses with global markets. The professionalization of freight forwarding in South Africa ensures compliance with international standards, helping to enhance the country's competitiveness and attractiveness as a trading partner. As such, GEODIS is committed to supporting the professional development of our employees in this region, ensuring they possess the expertise required to navigate complex regulatory environments and deliver optimal logistics solutions.

At GEODIS, we are fully supportive of professionalization in the industry. We believe that investing in our employees' growth is investing in the future of our business. By encouraging and facilitating the pursuit of Professional Designations, we empower our workforce to reach their full potential. This investment not only enhances individual career paths but also strengthens our organizational capabilities and reputation.



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Maxeen Naidoo Bharath

*International Imports Manager -
Skynet Worldwide Express*

ICFF Certified Freight Forwarding Senior Practitioner



Inspiring our Woman in the industry to Professionalize

By Maxeen Bharath Naidoo

Despite accumulating valuable on-the-job experience, many people can be faced with challenges in gaining recognition within the industry. The lack of a formal professional designation often hindered the acknowledgment of skills and capabilities, and they struggle 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, personally. 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-recognized 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 at the TETA Summit addressing the Skills Gap 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.

- Maxeen Naidoo Bharath



ICFF Language Guide

Dear ICFF Members and Valued Stakeholders,

At the ICFF it sometimes feels like we speak our own language... with our own jargon... and occasionally our own dictionary.

While that may make us sound very official in meetings, it is extremely important that we all use the *same* language, especially when working within SAQA compliance requirements and national quality assurance frameworks.

Terminology is not just semantics. It determines mandate, authority, and compliance. So, to ensure we are all speaking fluent “ICFF,” please familiarise yourself with the following:

1



We Do Not Assess:
We Evaluate

At the ICFF, we do not assess competency.

Competency assessment is the responsibility of accredited training providers under the QCTO and relevant SETAs.

The ICFF **evaluates** individuals against defined industry standards for professional designation purposes.

In short:

- Training Providers **assess competency**
- The ICFF **evaluates proficiency**

Different mandate. Different responsibility. Different language.

2



We Do Not Declare “Competent”:
We Determine Proficiency

Following an ICFF evaluation, we do not declare a professional “competent.”

Instead, the outcome is:

- **Proficient**, or
- **Not Yet Proficient**

Why? Because we are evaluating proficiency at an industry standard level — not occupational competence against a qualification.

It may seem like a small wording difference, but in regulatory terms, it is a very big one.

3



**We Do Not Accredit:
We Grant Recognition**

Accreditation is the statutory mandate of the QCTO and relevant SETAs.

The ICFF does not accredit training providers.

Instead, we evaluate their programmes and may grant:

- **ICFF Recognition**

Recognition confirms alignment with ICFF industry standards — it does not replace or override statutory accreditation.

4



**We Do Not Certify:
We Award Professional Designations**

The ICFF does not issue qualification certificates.

Upon successful evaluation, the ICFF awards:

- **Professional Designations**

A professional designation signifies industry recognition, adherence to defined standards, and commitment to ethical and professional conduct.

5



**CPD - Continuing Professional Development:
We promote Continuing Professional Development**

The ICFF is a proud promoter of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

CPD is the structured, ongoing process through which professionals maintain and enhance their knowledge, skills, and ethical standards throughout their careers.

CPD ensures that:

- Professionals remain current with legislative and industry changes
- Skills evolve with technological and regulatory developments
- Ethical standards are upheld
- Industry credibility is strengthened

Professional designations are maintained through compliance with CPD requirements. Professionalisation is not a once-off event, it is a continuous journey.

Why This Language Matters

Using consistent ICFF terminology:

- Protects SAQA compliance
- Clarifies our mandate
- Strengthens governance
- Protects the integrity of our professional designations
- Differentiates the ICFF from statutory bodies

So yes, we may sometimes sound like we are speaking “ICFF.”

But when we all speak the same language, we protect the profession.

Let us continue setting standards, together.

Kind regards,

The Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF)

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By Ingrid Du Buisson, CEO – ICFF



Announcement: Strategic Partnership Between ICFF and Elea

The Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF) is proud to announce a groundbreaking strategic partnership with The Evalex Leadership Evolution and Accelerator (Elea) in South Africa.

This collaboration marks a significant step forward in advancing leadership development and professional excellence within the customs, freight forwarding and supply chain management industry. By combining ICFF's deep expertise in trade facilitation and logistics with Elea's cutting-edge leadership assessment and development solutions, the partnership aims to:

- Empower industry leaders with world-class leadership tools and training.
- Accelerate professional growth for customs, freight forwarding and supply chain practitioners.
- Strengthen organizational performance through evidence-based leadership development.
- Support transformation and innovation in the South African logistics sector.

Together, ICFF and Elea are committed to building a future-ready workforce equipped to navigate the complexities of global trade and supply chain management. This partnership underscores a shared vision: to elevate leadership capacity and drive sustainable growth across the industry.

Professionalisation 2.0:

Why the Freight Forwarding and Customs Clearing Sector needs evidence-based leadership diagnostics.

Professionalisation in the Freight Forwarding and Customs Compliance (FFCC) sector has, for many years, focused on technical skills such as tariff classification, customs compliance, Incoterms®, documentation accuracy, and regulatory adherence. These remain essential.

Yet the contemporary operating environment defined by digitalisation, regulatory complexity, geopolitical volatility, and AI-enabled supply chains requires more than just technical expertise. It calls for demonstrable leadership ability.

Research in sector skills planning consistently shows that qualifications alone do not ensure professional performance. Modern professional bodies are increasingly required to demonstrate not only membership growth but also depth of capability, behavioural maturity, and workforce intelligence aligned with national priorities (DHET, 2019; TETA, 2023). In this context, professionalisation must shift from title-based recognition to evidence-based assurance of capabilities.



Dr Juliette Fourie,
Elea Managing
Director

The Institute for Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF) plays a crucial role in shaping the sector's professional identity. By integrating evidence-based leadership diagnostics into its certification pathway, ICFF would make significant progress beyond hours-based CPD towards clear, measurable professional standards. This transition aligns with global best practice. The OECD (2021) and the World Economic Forum (2023) emphasise the importance of data-driven skills ecosystems, where aggregated capability insights inform policy, regulation, and sectoral growth. In such ecosystems, professional bodies act as intelligence centres rather than just membership custodians.

Why behavioural diagnostics matter.

Freight Forwarding and Customs Compliance are decision-intensive professions. Leaders routinely manage risk exposure, interpret regulations, handle financial liabilities, negotiate with clients, and respond to operational disruptions. Mistakes can be costly. Therefore, leadership maturity, judgment under pressure, ethical reasoning, and strategic thinking are not just "soft skills," but also key risk controls.

Traditional assessments often depend on self-report inventories or peer perception. While beneficial, they tend to capture intention more easily than actual behaviour. AI-enabled behavioural simulation diagnostics, unlike those developed by Elea, assess how leaders truly think, decide, and respond within structured scenarios. This aligns with modern assessment standards that emphasise validity, fairness, and observable behaviour over subjective opinion.

In the context of professionalisation, this matters profoundly. A designation that incorporates behavioural evidence sends a clear message to employers, regulators, and SETAs: this profession measures what it claims to value. Professional bodies worldwide face increasing scrutiny. Regulators and funders look for demonstrable benefits from skills development. Employers expect assurance that professional membership relates to performance impact.

An ICFF-ELEA partnership would:

- Strengthen ICFF's credibility as a thought leader to employers, regulators, and SETAs.
- Differentiate ICFF from bodies relying solely on attendance-based CPD accumulation.
- Provide sector-level insight into leadership risk patterns, strengths, and developmental gaps.
- Support evidence-informed submissions to TETA and DHET regarding sector skills priorities.

In effect, ICFF would become not only a custodian of professional standards but also a generator of sector intelligence.

Ultimately, professionalisation in FFCC is not just about prestige. It is about public trust. Customs compliance links with national revenue, border security, and trade facilitation. Leadership failures in this domain carry systemic consequences.

Integrating evidence-based behavioural diagnostics into professional designations enhances ethical standards, decision-making quality, and strategic foresight. It guarantees that sector leaders are not just qualified but also highly competent.

The next phase of professionalisation will not be marked by how many certificates are issued, but by how credible capability is measured. By incorporating AI-enabled behavioural diagnostics into its professional framework, ICFF has the chance to lead this change, positioning the sector as not just compliant but prepared for the future.



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By Ingrid Du Buisson, CEO – ICFF



Congratulations Team Rohlig Grindrod SA!

The ICFF wishes to congratulate Rohlig Grindrod Logistics SA on the successful designation of some of their team members. Petunia Mnguni (left) attained a designation as a Freight Forwarding Senior Practitioner (FFSP), Travis Edwards (centre) attained a designation as a Freight Forwarding Management Practitioner (FFMP), and Lauren Kaars (right) attained a designation as a Freight Forwarding Senior Practitioner (FFSP).

All the candidates undertook the ICFF proficiency evaluation against the industry Proficiency standards and met all the requirements for attaining their designations. This reaffirms industry's commitment to developing and maintaining their professionals and meeting industry proficiency and global standards.

Congratulations to Kuben Reddy (MD) and his team!

The Middle East War and Its Impact on International Trade and Professional Proficiency

By Ingrid Du Buisson – ICFF CEO

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has created significant turbulence in international trade. Strategic shipping routes such as the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz face heightened risks, forcing vessels to reroute and increasing transit times. Rising oil prices, surging insurance premiums, and unpredictable supply chains are reshaping the global logistics landscape.

For customs, freight forwarding and supply chain professionals, this is not just a geopolitical crisis—it is a direct challenge to the skills and proficiency that define our profession.

As the Professional Body for this sector, we analyse the impact of these disruptions on our Members' Professional Skills. We have identified a few that may be of interest and should be considered as part of their CPD development:

1. Adaptability and Crisis Management

- Members must demonstrate rapid problem-solving when shipments are delayed or rerouted.
- Skills in contingency planning and alternative routing are now essential to maintain service continuity.

2. Advanced Regulatory Knowledge

- With new sanctions, trade restrictions, and compliance requirements emerging daily, professionals must sharpen their customs expertise.
- Proficiency in interpreting complex regulations across multiple jurisdictions is critical.

3. Client Communication and Trust

- Transparent, proactive communication has become a hallmark of professionalism.
- Members must refine their ability to explain risks, costs, and timelines clearly to clients under pressure.

4. Risk and Financial Management

- Navigating volatile freight rates and insurance costs requires strong financial acumen.
- Members are increasingly called upon to advise clients on risk mitigation strategies.

5. Technological Proficiency

- Digital tools for real-time tracking, predictive analytics, and compliance automation are no longer optional—they are vital.
- Members must continuously upgrade their technical skills to remain competitive.



Strengthening Professional Proficiency

The ICFF recognizes that these challenges, while daunting, also highlight the resilience and expertise of our members. To support professional growth, we emphasize:

- Continuous training in international trade law and sanctions compliance.
- Workshops on crisis logistics management and alternative routing strategies.
- Technology adoption programs to enhance digital proficiency.
- Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing to build collective resilience.

The Middle East war has underscored the fragility of global trade systems, but it has also illuminated the indispensable role of customs, freight forwarding and supply chain professionals. Our members' ability to adapt, communicate, and innovate ensures that international commerce continues—even in times of profound uncertainty.

The ICFF remains committed to equipping our professionals with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to navigate this turbulent era and to uphold the integrity of global trade.

For further information contact us on:
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