

## FINALLY, A FAST TRACK TO FIND YOUR WAY INTO E-DISCOVERY

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*Looking to jump start your legal technology career but don't know how? Jared Coseglia of TRU Staffing Partners writes a monthly column on certifications to know and training to acquire in the industry for Legaltech News. This month's piece takes a look at ACEDS' E-Discovery Executive Certificate (eDEX) training program.*

Despite increased consolidation and commoditization of the e-discovery industry, the demand for talent in this vertical of the legal technology ecosystem is constant and still expanding. While areas of discipline like security, privacy and governance have garnered the spotlight in 2018 with milestone moments like the GDPR and the continuing litany of corporate data breaches like at Equifax, e-discovery has remained an unwavering beacon of opportunity for professional reinvention and the potential for extreme profitability. Private equity and venture capital concerns continue to pour investment into e-discovery service providers, and the technical competency requirements for lawyers are increasing globally in scope.

People looking to participate in the e-discovery experience professionally may come from an array of backgrounds. Information technology professionals touching legal tangentially who seek to leverage their technical skill set or contract attorneys,

paralegals and legal assistants still looking for a means of mobility are common profiles of future e-discovery professionals. Data scientists or software developers finding themselves working in legal and, of course, investors considering or already embedded in e-discovery vendors and software providers may also desire a way to better communicate with stakeholders and decision-makers who have lived and breathed this business for decades.

ACEDS, the Association of Certified E-Discovery Specialists, a Bar-bri Professional Association and the world's most globally recognized foundational certification for e-discovery professionals, aims to bridge the education gap for new entrants to the industry by offering a power-packed certificate program that can give anyone the basics of the purpose and meaning of e-discovery. The new E-Discovery Executive Certificate (eDEX) training program helps an aspiring e-discovery professional "go from zero to 60 in a short time," says Mary Mack, ACEDS executive director. "For us, this is the foundational training, where someone can very quickly understand the vocabulary and functional requirements of the space," adds Mack.

The ACEDS eDEX is not to be confused with the CEDS certification. "A certificate is a knowledge-based



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designation that shows someone has completed an educational course and taken some form of an exam," says Mack, "where the certification is competency based and psychometrically tested." The rigor is certainly higher with pursuit of the CEDS certification, but the eDEX is designed to serve as a gateway to getting fully CEDS certified, so much so that ACEDS is planning to offer discounted pricing for CEDS certification training for anyone who has completed the eDEX.

The eDEX online program allows students to move at their own speed. All learning modules are static and available for registrants to watch and rewatch. Depending on where an individual starts in terms of existing knowledge bases, the course takes between 15 and 20 hours to complete. ACEDS provides 12-plus hours of interactive online training that count towards continuing legal education credits (CLE) in many states.

There are short quizzes along the way for each module, and at end there is a test to demonstrate competent completion.

While this course is most obviously for employable new e-discovery entries like law students, paralegals and legal IT staff, there does appear to be value for executives as well. “If you were an investor, for example, and you were not aware of the concept of proportionality, this course will teach you its impact on the industry,” says Mack. “[Proportionality] is a thing that caused our markets to shift and move,” adds Mack, pointing to how the eDEX program will certainly touch on how the law is affecting the business of e-discovery.

The eDEX course will also unquestionably give exposure to legal terms of art, EDRM terms of art and an understanding of the basics of e-discovery that every executive in the space should possess to speak intelligently about the business. “This will give them an understanding of the functional area they want to serve,” Mack confidently comments.

The eDEX is new. It was just released on Cyber Monday. Currently several dozen professionals who hail from all areas of the law and the world have taken the exam. “We have people all over the globe interested, from India-based LPO professionals to folks in forensics, attorneys, several paralegals, and more,” says Kaylee Walstad, vice president of client engagement at ACEDS.

All Barbri staff are slated to take and attain the eDEX, and both Walstad and Mack recommend individuals complete the eDEX program before endeavoring to undertake the full-stack CEDS certification program. “I would recommend eDEX as a first step before CEDS,” says Mack, “and

we are working out a way to discount the CEDS cost for those who do eDEX.” The current price for eDEX is \$795. Full CEDS certification usually costs just under \$2,000.

In addition to the new eDEX offering, ACEDS has added a third-party means of verification for both the eDEX and CEDS accreditations online. As part of a tidal wave of certification companies joining this initiative, CEDS now offers digital badges for their offerings. “Digital badging is a game-changer,” exclaims Walstad. Digital badges are an automated way to third-party validate that someone truly has a CEDS certification and/or is an eDEX certificate holder in real time. It shows publically when the badge was issued, when it expires, what skills were garnered from the education and what it took to earn the badge.

Issuing these digital badges was inspired less by the potential for individual false claims of accreditation and rather derived from client requests for automated authentication. “Fraud wasn’t our motivation,” states Mack. “Our purpose was to serve a business partner which wanted to be able to check 24/7 if someone has a certification [or certificate] from ACEDS.” Using the digital badge offering is not required, but it is free. “Not everyone necessarily wants the digital badge; it is totally discretionary,” adds Mack. The badges have a two-year renewal cycle. ACEDS hopes having digital badges visible on both LinkedIn (it will appear under the accomplishments section of a profile) and on the centralized Acclaim website (the third-party arbiter) will give talent a competitive advantage for job mobility by providing instant validation of certification.



In e-discovery, every subtle advantage helps in distinguishing oneself from one’s peers. Though the industry seems to have slowed its previously exponential year-over-year change in skill requirements and technology proficiencies, it has not slowed in demand for talent, particularly in the middle of the job market. The consistently high demand for project managers, analysts, data processors and consultants is extreme and only exacerbated by the exodus of many formerly exclusive ESI-focused pros who have since expanded their skills and desired competencies into rapid growth areas like security and privacy. ESI staffing in 2018 has also seen an unprecedented uptick in demand for contract talent in these middle-market roles, making the value of certain certification and educational validations the tipping point for winning lucrative job opportunities.

While having these and other certifications (and having them visible!) may not get you the job you desire, it will certainly give you a leg up over someone who does not have them.

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