



From Affiliate to Chartered Fellow – a path to aspire to

Paul Beesley's career in the people profession began with a drive to develop his skills, connect with like-minded professionals and establish credibility in his chosen field of L&D. Over the years, his commitment to continuous learning and professional development has seen him rise from CIPD Affiliate to our highest level of membership – Chartered Fellow. His journey illustrates how progressing through the levels of CIPD membership can be a valuable companion throughout your career, opening doors to opportunities and long-term growth.

Early career and joining the CIPD

Paul began his career as a manager in the civil service and later moved into change management facilitation, before eventually transitioning into learning and development. Recognising the importance of professional support and industry benchmarking, he applied to become an Affiliate of the Institute of Training & Development (ITD) while studying for his ITD Certificate via distance learning. With no up-front fee to pay on a qualification or Experience Assessment, the overall cost was less expensive than professional membership, and the investment proved to be of great value – offering him access to networking, industry publications, job adverts and key resources that supported his early career development. The ITD later merged with the Institute

of Personnel Management (IPM) to become the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD), which would eventually become the CIPD.

Before our resources were available to members online, Paul relied on CIPD magazines, publications, conferences and exhibitions to expand his knowledge and stay updated with industry trends. His local CIPD branch in Central London became a useful outlet for networking, providing him with valuable professional connections that would support his career progression.

Career progression and the impact of CIPD membership

For Paul, CIPD membership was not just a badge of honour – it was a tool for career advancement. By gaining qualifications such as the Certificate in Training and Development and a postgraduate Diploma in Training Management, he was able to upgrade his membership to Associate, then Graduate, and eventually full Member status. As his career developed and his role grew in scope, he successfully applied to become a Chartered Fellow.

Networking played a crucial role in his journey. Moving from a London-based role to a position closer to home in Northamptonshire, Paul started engaging with the CIPD Northamptonshire branch, where he continued to build relationships and seek opportunities for professional development. This included creating

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the Training Network Group within the branch, making sure that L&D professionals had a voice and the opportunity to share best practice within the local HR community. Working for organisations that valued CIPD accreditation further reinforced the importance of membership as a key differentiator in his career.

A leader in the CIPD community

Paul's involvement in the CIPD community extended beyond membership – he took an active role in shaping it. When he became Chair of the CIPD Northampton Branch, he saw an opportunity to modernise and invigorate its approach. Under his leadership, the branch introduced annual conferences and established special interest groups, creating more opportunities for engagement and professional growth among members.

Reflecting on this experience, Paul credits his CIPD leadership roles with enhancing his own skills, particularly in leadership and change management. "It's hard work and often thankless," he admits, "but with a good team around you, it's amazing what you can achieve – and at the same time, you're giving something back to the profession."

His advice to others considering active involvement in their local CIPD branch is simple: do it. The experience, while challenging, is highly rewarding and provides an excellent platform for networking, skill development and contributing to the HR and L&D community.

The value of CIPD membership today

Even after 20 years as a Chartered Fellow, Paul continues to benefit from CIPD membership. In the early stages of his career, becoming an Affiliate gave him access to practical resources, networking opportunities and qualifications that laid the foundations for his professional development. Making the most of these benefits helped him work his way

up through the membership grades, ultimately reaching Chartered Fellow. Today, membership supports him as a business owner – offering professional credibility and practical benefits such as insurance discounts.

What sets the CIPD apart from other professional bodies, in Paul's view, is its objective commentary and opinion on key industry issues. He values the organisation's role in setting professional standards and driving the people profession forward.

Advice for aspiring people professionals

Paul is a strong advocate for CIPD membership at all stages of a career. For those just starting out, his message is clear: "Do it – and use it. Treat it like a gym membership. If you don't make the most of it, you're wasting your time, energy and money." Paul adds, "And when you at the gym you need someone to show you how to use the equipment. The same goes for your CIPD membership, so buddy up with an existing member to find out how to maximise your membership".

He firmly believes that CIPD membership helps people professionals navigate industry challenges and progress in their careers. While he acknowledges that the journey from Affiliate to Chartered Fellow is one of a number of options you can take with the CIPD, he knows first-hand the benefits it can bring.

"I've had a successful and rewarding career in HR," he says, "and CIPD membership has been integral to that journey. I am proud to be part of the CIPD."

Paul's story is testament to the power of professional accreditation, networking and continuous development. For those looking to formalise their career experience and take the next step in the people profession, CIPD membership offers the resources, connections and credibility to help them succeed.

"The CIPD sets the professional standard and helps drive the people profession forward."



Thinking about your next step? Becoming a CIPD Affiliate gives you instant access to resources that can power your career.

Find out more at: cipd.org/whyaffiliate