

## Being certifiable

I treat all work done for a client as confidential, and I'm sure that all professional consultants do the same. In the last twenty years I can count the number of times that I've been given permission by a client to discuss externally any aspect of my work on the fingers of one hand. Even where I have been allowed to use such material the scope and detail have been constrained to ensure the detailed workings of the target organisation are not exposed. I don't think this is unusual, I am sure the same standard is followed by almost everyone providing external advice about data handling to any oil company.

When you engage a doctor, lawyer or accountant you don't ask to review their previous cases. If a member of one of those professions started to discuss a past case in detail you would avoid engaging them, imagining that the next instance being used to impress a potential customer would be yours. Yet every time I am given the opportunity to propose starting to work with an oil company they invite me to exhibit my experience by providing actual documented examples. Such a request can only lead to two outcomes, either I provide them, and hence demonstrate that you cannot trust me with your confidential data, or I don't, and get rejected because of lack of proven experience.

One might suspect that part of this is because the personnel in the oil company want to learn some key lessons before having to pay anything. However I'm sure the main real issue here is a lack of widely recognised professional qualifications. We trust the doctor, lawyer and accountant because they have a certificate that proves they have sufficient experience and knowledge to justify the exorbitant fees they demand. In contrast anyone can claim to be an expert in the management of E&P technical data, there is no professional body to chase those exaggerating their experience, no place to validate the claims made by potential collaborators and no examination that demonstrates competence. There are efforts underway to create such things, and the efforts being applied by PPDM, ECIM and CDA to move those labours forward should be supported, promoted and encouraged. But they're not widely trusted yet. In the meantime the community of data managers within the oil industry is fairly small, but it is too big for personal reputation to be a reliable indicator. When I attend a small event in Abu Dhabi there's a good chance that I could bump into an ex-colleague who is now working in Australia, for example, but the chances that I've ever worked with an ex-colleague of a random potential consultant are limited enough that other ways to demonstrate experience are needed.

So by all means look at the papers, articles and books that I've published over the years, they have lots of examples (with the original source obscured). If, however, you demand that I provide "real examples" without the approval of their owners, or that I reveal old clients, I will have to disappoint, just as I will never tell my future prospects what I find out about you.

