

# How Do You Define Yourself?



By Frédéric P. Lebel, CFA

There are many ways to define yourself. It is a statement about what matters, what you deeply care about, and what has stood the test of time over the course of your life. Here are some words I often use to define myself: Swiss citizen, family man, keen investor, CFA charterholder. What words do you use to define yourself?

For many of us, “CFA charterholder” is a defining attribute. As obtaining and maintaining this very sought-after designation requires so much effort and commitment, it easily becomes a significant part of who you are. Being a CFA charterholder means you have made a significant commitment to your practice, putting investors first, and maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards. It means you have earned an unmatched level of trust and respect among your peers, employers, regulators, and clients.

At CFA Institute, we want you to feel proud and recognized for being a charterholder. We want you to be trusted and respected by your peers, employers, regulators, and clients. So how do we approach this objective? And why should you care about it?

## What does it take to serve members?

Knowing who you are serving is a good place to start. We certainly have quite a bit of information about you due to our initial relationship when you were a candidate. However, it is key that such information is kept up to date and fresh so we can interact and further build our relationship with you. Data alone does not tell us what you expect from CFA Institute. This is why member surveys are such a valuable tool for you to tell us how we can better serve you and how we can be a resource for you, as well as what you find useful and what you do not. Your feedback helps us reassess the allocation of significant yet limited resources to do just that: to serve you.

As a member of CFA Institute and your local society, you perform a major service by filling out such surveys, and we are grateful to you for doing so. This allows us to shape the services we provide, so please do not miss opportunities to speak out. We welcome feedback, suggestions, or proposals to help serve you better. Please reach out.

## What does it take to build a membership?

Connecting our members among themselves and with our various member society organizations is both a wonderful opportunity for you and an exciting challenge for us. It is through our ability to organize ourselves as a membership

and be recognized as such that we can exert influence and have impact, which leads to additional member value.

Networking with your fellow CFA charterholders also makes this organization so special. When traveling far away from home, upon meeting a fellow charterholder there is an immediately high degree of comfort and goodwill that comes from having so much in common. With members of CFA Institute, this connection is equally possible abroad and in one’s own hometown. While going strong towards 150,000 members, our membership is still limited to only a fraction of the profession. Please join and become an active member of CFA Institute and your local society and help your fellow CFA charterholders by connecting with them—wherever they are. The stronger this *esprit de corps* is, the more valuable your membership becomes.

## What does it take to lead the investment management profession?

If we want to be considered industry leaders, we must be pioneers open to blazing new trails. The financial services industry has gone through almost a decade of crisis and travails. This cannot go on forever; it is time to provide clarity to our most important stakeholders about the commitment of CFA Institute to ethical integrity. Our efforts in Standards & Advocacy deserve a much larger and more diverse audience, and we are making good progress there.

Leadership also means being daring. For a truly global and diverse organization such as ours, gender diversity may well be the next frontier. We need to strike a balance in our profession where men and women contribute their best thinking and talent to produce the best possible investor outcomes. Our Women in Investment Management (WIM) initiative is making great strides and providing inspiration for both women and men. The number of female CFA candidates has been inching up recently. Also, we have set an immediate goal of a 30% representation by women on our Board of Governors. This is a start, but we have a long way to go.

Members are the *raison d’être* of our organization—our lifeblood. Our goal is to ensure you are eager and proud to define yourself as a CFA charterholder now and throughout the span of your career. Tell us what you need from us to succeed and perform better for your clients. As chair, I urge you to get involved, connect with your fellow members, and help us to lead the way in building a stronger, more principled, more diverse investment profession.

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