

Re-Energize Your Career Through Training & Education

BY KEN BOHN, MBA, AIC, SENIOR EDITOR

Think back to the time when you were interviewing for your current job. Can you recall how excited you were when you found out you got it? The news seemed to open up endless possibilities. It was the payoff and recognition for all your hard work and efforts.

Now fast forward to today. Do you still have the same enthusiasm you had about your job as when it was first offered to you? Do you still look forward to getting up and going to work each morning? Are you eagerly seeking opportunities to improve your skills and abilities to leverage this job into a “career”?

There is no dispute that a career in insurance claims can be a challenging one. You are constantly under time constraints and having to multi-task to the nth degree. You must balance the importance of customer service with the demands of a heavy workload. But to truly exceed, or to even gain a comfort level as a claim professional, it is essential to grow and cultivate your technical abilities. These technical abilities may include everything from discussing legal intricacies with a sharp-witted plaintiff attorney to discussing the medical necessity of a surgery with a neurologist.

While some people may tremble at the mere thought of having a job as diverse as yours, you thrive on it! Well...at least you used to. Have you lost that loving feeling?

Before you go out and do anything drastic, here is some great news. There is a relatively straightforward way to get back that loving feeling. The road to your second honeymoon follows a simple five-step process:

- 1 Identify what you already enjoy about your job.

- 2 Specialize in the areas you enjoy.
- 3 Identify the least favorite aspects of your job.
- 4 Tackle your demons head-on.
- 5 Get off the beach.

Through this article, we will explore ways to allow you to find and specialize in the aspects of your job that you still find exciting. We will also help you to identify the areas of your job that cause you displeasure and discuss ways of minimizing the adverse impact those areas have on both you and your career. With a little bit of effort on your part, you may well find that through these straightforward techniques, you will be able to regain the spark to reignite your passion.

Step 1: Identify what you already enjoy about your job.

Think about everything you do at your job and try to identify the top three areas you truly enjoy doing and/or feel you do exceptionally well. Next, take a moment to analyze what exactly it is about these given areas that make you enjoy them more than other aspects of your job. The reason why you enjoy doing something may be just as important as what it is you enjoy doing.

Let me give you an example. In my first position as a claim manager, I had an employee that was a bodily injury claim representative. He was definitely not my best employee, but it was obvious that he was not afraid of a little hard work. While he was always professional and courteous, he was just never happy. I constantly challenged myself to find new ways to motivate him.

Finally one day, I asked him to complete a simple exercise, to answer a single question typed on top of a piece

of paper. The question was, “*What do I most enjoy about my job?*” When sitting down with him to review his response, he gave me something equally as simple. It said, “*Getting out of the office.*” He said he really enjoyed the claims that allowed him to get out of the office and meet with the claimants and attorneys in person. He said he felt much more effective in person and really felt so much better about his job when he was able to work outside of the office.

Based on this, I agreed to switch him, on a trial basis, to a bodily injury role that dealt exclusively with injury claims that required in-person contacts. The result? It was amazing how much his attitude improved. To this day, he still is not interested in moving into management, but truly enjoys doing the same BI job, as long as it is out in the field rather than sitting behind a desk.

If you are still having difficulty identifying why you enjoy certain areas of your job, try asking yourself the following questions:

- Am I technically proficient in this area and subsequently feel very comfortable?
- Do I receive recognition from peers or managers in this area of claim handling?
- Do I have a great sense of pride when I accomplish tasks in this area?
- What initial training or assistance did I receive to become proficient in this area?

Step 2: Specialize in the areas you enjoy.

Once you have identified the segments or tasks within your current job that

you prefer over all others, along with the reasons why you enjoy those areas, your goal will be to maximize your involvement in those areas.

If your manager sees a certain area as your strength, he may be more likely to focus your job around those strengths. In the example of my employee preferring to handle injury claims in person, there were very few other claim reps that wanted to do this job. In identifying his job enjoyment, I was able to satisfy both his request and an office need.

Step 3: Identify the least favorite aspects of your job.

It is essential that you take an honest and introspective look at the “unpleasant” aspects of your job. You may do this by asking yourself, *“If I could eliminate one thing from my job that would make it more enjoyable, what would that one thing be?”*

It is relatively intuitive that the areas of your job you like the least are most

often those you feel least comfortable in performing. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I comfortable with the technical subject matter?
- Do I agree with my company’s process and guidelines on handling this task?
- Am I proficient in handling this type of task?
- Am I overwhelmed by this task and, therefore, likely to procrastinate?
- Do I feel the task is a waste of time since it is often ignored or re-worked?

Step 4: Tackle your demons head-on.

Once you have identified why a task is unpleasant for you, the next step is to address the issue or “demons” head-on. Depending on your answers to the above questions, it may well be a situation where something as simple as training is the answer. Training

may help you with everything from the technical aspects of the job, all the way to dealing with your procrastination and the reasons why you may be procrastinating (i.e., failing to break large tasks into bite-size pieces).

The answers to the above questions may also provide some insight into potential skill deficiencies. For example, you may discover that you should have a higher skill or proficiency level in a given area than what you actually do.

I have seen countless times where a tenured claim adjuster wasn’t technically proficient on a relatively basic skill they should have learned within the first year or two of their insurance career. Is it their fault? Not necessarily. It is possible training wasn’t offered in that area at the time they needed to learn it. The answer may likely be, again, to aggressively and proactively seek improvement in these areas.

When I conduct training classes, I never make assumptions or put anyone on the spot with an expectation that they should have specific knowledge, given their experience level. This may be the difference between a claim professional who has five years’ experience vs. an employee who has one year’s experience five times.

Regardless of the opportunity area, it is incumbent upon you, the employee, to seek out whatever it takes to give you the increased comfort level and proficiency in this area. You not only owe it to your employer and your customers, but also to yourself and your well-being. Don’t leave it up to your manager to identify this deficiency and come to you with a suggestion for training.

Now that you identified some of the reasons, causes and areas that may be limiting your enjoyment of your job, let’s explore some options for improving it. While the following are only some of the options that you may try, I would recommend that you implement as many as possible:

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International Insurance Institute, Inc.
2112 Belle Chasse Hwy. #11-319,
Gretna, LA 70056
(888) 414-8811

Carl Van
Owner, President & CEO
CarlVan@InsuranceInstitute.com

LeiAnn Dunford
Executive Vice President
leianndunford@insuranceinstitute.com

Dave Vanderpan
Director of Claims Training
DVanderpan@InsuranceInstitute.com

Co-Publishers
Carl Van
President & CEO
CarlVan@InsuranceInstitute.com

Harry Rosenthal
Publisher Claims Magazine
HRosenthal@nuco.com

Editorial
Senior Editor
Ken Bohn, AIC, MBA
Assistant Vice President
KenBohn@InsuranceInstitute.com

Kevin M. Quinley, CPCU, ARM
KQuinley@medmarc.com

Assistant Editor
Layne Stackhouse
LStackhouse@InsuranceInstitute.com

Art Director
Jason T. Williams

Advertising Sales
Harry Rosenthal
Claims Magazine
Publisher
800-544-0622, ext. 2129
hrosenthal@nuco.com

Bryan Pifer
Claims Magazine
Advertising Sales Manager
800-544-0622, ext. 2308
bpifer@nuco.com

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Read to your need. There is so much material available, whether through books, training manuals, research papers, or even the Internet. Regardless of your starting point, make sure the material is up-to-date and credible.

Peer pressure, without the pressure. Seek the help of a peer or coworker. Find someone you know who is very skilled in your opportunity area and ask them if they would be willing to work with you on this specific topic.

Give your manager an opportunity to manage. Schedule a meeting with your manager or supervisor to discuss and seek their assistance in your opportunity areas. Let them know ahead of time what it is regarding so the appropriate time can be allotted and they can ensure the appropriate meeting place for this conversation. Your manager will welcome the opportunity to improve and strengthen a member of his or her team.

Training, training, training. Seek out specific targeted training. No one will question your intent to want to improve your skills. And you will undoubtedly benefit from not only the questions you ask in class, but also the questions the other students ask. Targeted training can help you increase your technical proficiency on almost any topic. Targeted training can help you provide the best possible customer service so your customers are working with you, rather than against you. And targeted training can even help you with your time-management skills.

Step 5: Get off the beach.

There is a great quote that says, "You can't cross the ocean by staring at the water." I can think of no better way to inspire you to begin your quest for true job enjoyment. If you make a concerted effort to capitalize on the areas of your job you already enjoy, and seek training in those areas you like the least, you may actually find yourself enjoying your job once again. All it takes is that first step. Come on in — the water is fine.



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