

Building the Future of the Claims Industry through Continual Education

BY ROBERT J. CORMICAN

In light of the budget cuts of recent years, many companies have moved away from formalized training, viewing it as an expendable expenditure. However, in a field in which technology changes constantly, government regulations increase, and claims professionals become ever more specialized, training for adjusters has become more critical than ever.

Training is an integral part of any company's structure, bringing added value, as better training creates better employee performance. In the past, many companies shied away from it, believing they could survive with their own experienced adjusters. However, as the industry changes, organizations are finding themselves at a dead end.

Because of the value it brings, training should be one of the last programs to face the budgetary guillotine. In addition to creating higher-performing employees, formalized training assists in mitigating the adjuster shortage through increased recruitment. It can also be a helpful tool in a recent dilemma faced by many companies – managing a multi-generational workforce.

New Challenges

The industry faces a playing field far more complex than it was 20 or 30 years ago, and the trend is continuing. Technology offers great benefits to claim professionals; however, it also increases the learning curve. Now, adjusters are no longer required to simply learn their

jobs, but also to hone their technical skills.

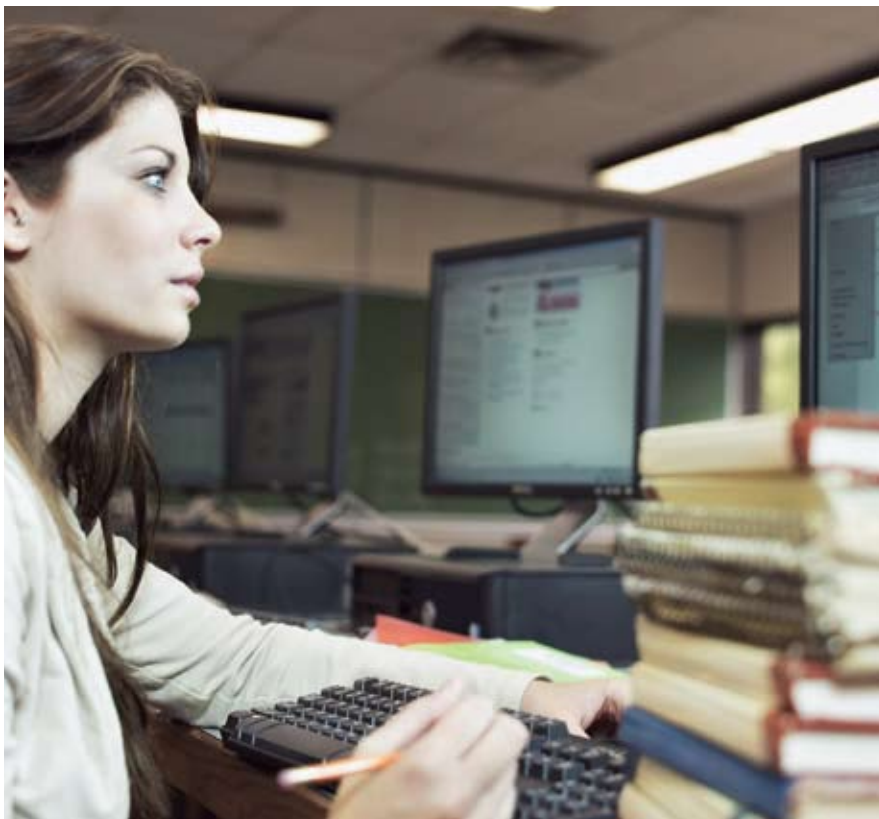
In addition to ever-changing technology, adjusters face new legal complexities. For example, if an adjuster does his or her job improperly, the risk of errors or omissions—and thus professional liability—dramatically increases. Companies face potential legal action which can be extremely costly.

Assuring Quality

One of the most important benefits of training is the higher quality it creates. When professionals are properly trained, their performance improves, creating a more efficient and accurate claim process.

However, companies can be shortsighted, preferring to slash training programs in favor of budget cuts. Such immediate measures often take their toll in the long view. As employee training is eliminated, job performance suffers, and in turn, clients do not receive the proper level of quality and may look elsewhere. For example, some companies choose not to provide formal training to newly hired employees, preferring the training to come from an immediate supervisor. However, in practice, as supervisors must also attend to their own job duties, “training” becomes the answering of an occasional question, rather than anything significant or ongoing. In such cases, the ramp up for the new hire is slow and may not be consistent with the corporate standard. As such, the company cannot ensure that clients will get a consistent level of quality service and turnover may increase.

Formal training mitigates procedural inconsistencies, allowing each new employee to learn standard operating





**You see
an ugly
duckling.**

*We see
a Swan.*

Inexperience can be a beautiful thing. With Crawford University's comprehensive claims adjusting training, new recruits quickly learn to navigate the insurance industry waters. With over six decades of claims experience, our expert trainers can turn even the ugliest ducklings into beautiful, smart swans.

In today's market, experienced adjusters are expensive and hard to find. Isn't it time to stop looking and start training?

For a complete list of upcoming classes, visit our website at www.crawfordandcompany.com/cu or contact us at 404.300.1526.



FAILURE HAPPENS...



FALL 2007 OPEN SEMINARS

www.haageducation.com

Chicago	Sept 11 – 13
Austin	Sept 26 – 27
Tampa	Oct 9 – 11
New Orleans	Oct 23 – 25
St. Louis	Nov 6 – 8
Dallas	Nov 19 – 20
Los Angeles	Nov 27 – 28
Denver	Dec 4 – 5
Charlotte	Dec 11 – 12

Continuing Education Credits available on selected courses for:

- **Insurance Adjusters**
- **Home Inspectors**
- **Professional Engineers**
- **RCI Members**
(Roof Consulting Institute)

Failure and Damage Consultants since 1924



Visit www.haageducation.com today!

Register online at
www.haageducation.com
or call 800-527-0168.

- Commercial Roofs Damage Assessment
- Inspection & Evaluation of Residential Roofs Damage
- Siding Damage Assessment
- Wind Effects on Structures
- Lightning Damage To Residential & Commercial Equipment
- Composition Roof Damage Assessment
- Tile Roofs Damage Assessment
- Wood Roofs Damage Assessment
- NEW!** Metal Roofs Damage Assessment
- Wind Vs Wave Damage Assessment
- NEW!** Vehicle Damage Assessment
- NEW!** California Earthquake Accreditation Course
- Exterior Insulation & Finish Systems

Use code CLAIMSED to receive **15% OFF** ALL COURSES

See website for complete times, dates, and course descriptions.

procedures and keep client service levels high. If a company's standard operating procedures and expected level of service become engrained in employees from the beginning of their job tenures, performance will likewise be more streamlined. As a result, clients will experience greater satisfaction in their service, and thus, the company handling it.

Alleviating the Adjuster Shortage through Training

As demographics shift and baby boomers have begun to retire, the industry has been facing a shortage of adjusters. However, some companies may be reluctant to recruit entry-level adjusters, preferring to continue the search for more experienced professionals. Unfortunately, in looking long term, companies must begin to look at building the workforce with new members, and the industry must find other ways to compete beyond salary. Part of the adjuster shortage is due to the difficulty in attracting young people to the industry. However, training allows companies to actively recruit them. New hires often view training as a chance for a career path and advancement through technical skills, as well as management training. While some employees may desire a career path towards management, others truly enjoy an adjuster's work and have no desire to leave that for the management end. Training offers people options and different tracks, including the opportunity to become a high-end technical professional. Interestingly, not everyone who begins a new career as an adjuster is a recent college graduate, or a member of the so-called "Millennial" or "Generation Y" demographics. In fact, many new additions to the work force are Baby Boomers or Gen X'ers who have switched or retired from other careers. Such employees often create a new dynamic, as they bring previous work experience, but are also eager to advance in a new career.

Training Options

As the return on investment in substantial, companies can find ways to incorporate training programs while still being mindful of budget considerations.

Obviously, some companies choose to internalize training, perhaps creating a training department that develops programs and works with employees. However, for some companies, this option is not financially feasible, nor necessary because of their training needs.

In such cases, it is not necessary to internalize training. Many companies use third-party vendors to provide support and fill the void of a training department. Working with a third-party vendor is often one of the best options as companies of any size may purchase programs as needed. Such programs can also supplement any existing training programs that may have been initially scaled back.

Additionally, training has become quite multifaceted, with a variety of program options designed to work with employees' individual personalities while still remaining streamlined. This blended learning offers more depth and bandwidth, providing classical

technical training, but also soft skills training, such as dealing with disruptive employees and different management styles.

The variety of learning programs encourages companies to train its employees, as it is no longer necessary to send an adjuster away for training for a week at a time. However, it also addresses the various learning styles of multigenerational employees. Some employees may prefer to learn in a traditional classroom setting, while others choose to take classes online, which may be led by an instructor in a live, web-based setting. Other employees may work better at their own pace and choose an "asymmetrical" program that allows them to study pieces of the program in their own time.

Final Thoughts

Fortunately, many companies have begun to explore training options once again. However, it is crucial that all companies find ways to incorporate

training into the fabric of their organizations. By highlighting training, not only will individual companies enjoy success in their bottom line, but the industry as a whole will also benefit moving forward. Claims adjustment is an industry focused on people. As such, quality client service and organizational success can only come with continual education and investment in the professionals who serve those clients and comprise the organizations.



Robert J. Cormican is Senior Vice President of Compliance, Quality and Training for Crawford & Company (www.crawfordandcompany.com). He is responsible for Crawford University, managing quality auditors and the corporate quality system. He is also responsible for identify and tracking regulatory changes and developing, implementing and maintaining policies relating to corporate compliance.

CLAIMS TRAINER, INTERNATIONAL

Are you ready to join the top Claims Training Organization in the industry today?

International Insurance Institute, Inc. provides a variety of superior services dedicated to the enhancement of the insurance industry. Our goal is to assist the claims environment in its many highly technical and ever changing methods of operation via our analysis and educational processes.

SKILLS:

We are looking for an International Claims Trainer to join our organization. This exciting position will provide our claims training courses to clients wherever they are located in the U.S., Canada, Australia or the U.K.

Our instructors provide a fun, easy to learn atmosphere that enables the student to implement their newly learned skills immediately. Our reputation is measured on the instructor's success in the classroom. Personality is a key factor along with being a self-motivator and very organized.

The top candidates will possess the following skills and attributes:

- Five to ten years Property and Casualty or Workers Comp claims handling
- Five years of Claims Management experience
- Two years in a Claims training role
- Flexibility to travel up to four days per week at times
 - Ability to travel internationally
- Outgoing and enthusiastic personality



This opportunity can offer a wonderful flexible schedule, no daily commute to an office and extensive earning potential.

If you are highly motivated and would like to join our fast growing team send resume to leiannundunford@insuranceinstitute.com. Visit us on the web at www.insuranceinstitute.com

Apply on line at <http://www.insuranceinstitute.com/upload-resume.html>

ADJUSTER OF THE QUARTER

Experience with claims makes this professional an over-protective mother



Becky Lipham
Claim Adjuster
State Farm

Her job at State Farm is more than just employment to Becky Lipham. Being a claim adjuster represents

a way of life.

Just ask her kids.

Becky, and her husband Joe, have four children. The middle two—a 9-year-old daughter named Faith, and 8-year-old son, Cole—have an uncanny passion for motorcycles and motocross competition. Both have dominated the races entered. In fact, Cole captured a regional championship for his age division against 10 other riders last year in Louisiana at the tender age of 7.

The Lipham children are easy to identify when they ride. Becky requires them both to wear full gear, helmets, neck and chest

protector, boots, and any other protective gear their mother can find.

“Faith has wanted a motorcycle since before she was old enough to say ‘motorcycle.’ She learned to ride her bike without training wheels and was on a motorcycle by the time she was four.” Becky remembered. “Cole was devastated. He wanted his training wheels removed also. At three he quickly went from popping wheelies on his bike to mastering his Kawasaki 50. And the competition between the two has never ended! And little sister, Hallie, seems to be taking it all in.”

Becky knew from her years as field claim representative how traumatic motorcycle injuries could be, so she laid down the rules at an early age.

“My job has broadened my awareness of the everyday risks. Being in the claim department has made me an over-protective mother,” she admits. “Joe had to be the one to teach our oldest daughter, Macy, to drive. It is very difficult for a

claim person to put their child in the driver’s seat.”

Becky knew she wanted to work in insurance, and for State Farm, immediately after graduation from the University of North Texas in 1990. “I wanted a secure career and I wanted a job helping others. When I looked at buildings and vehicles, I saw opportunity. People will always need insurance!”

Her ability to listen and empathize with clients has given her an advantage in the claim department.

“There is no better place to work inside an insurance company than in claims,” she said. “Claim employees are there when customers need us the most. Many people are overwhelmed when they suffer a loss. The opportunity to help them through the process is very rewarding.”

After 17 years in the insurance industry, Becky enjoyed the perspective she gained

Adjuster of the Quarter see page 19

TRAINER OF THE SEASON

Empathy is more than just classroom jargon, it remains vital customer service



Patti Lark
Learning Consultant
Claim Department
CUNA Mutual

Patti Lark has always tried to look at her position in the Claim

Department at CUNA Mutual from the insured’s point of view. During the past two decades she has heard thousands of tales from insureds. Her perspective became intensely clear when she heard about the claims conference attended by one of her co-workers.

Lark recalls that important day in her professional life: “Just as class was set to begin, the speaker walked in from the rear of the room. He walked with great difficulty, hunched over and needing the assistance of a cane. The room was silent as the man slowly walked to the front of the room. When he finished his agonizingly long walk to the podium he straightened up, threw away his cane and began to talk to us about empathy.

“He told the audience, ‘Your claimants are not just a piece of paper that you process each day, they are real people with real illness.’ As claim reps we

have all heard victims talk about the pain they have suffered. But that story brought it home for me.”

Like many insurance professionals, there have been times Lark has been so overwhelmed with the amount of claims to process she did not remember the reasons for buying insurance and how much an individual claim rep can help victims recover from a traumatic event.

“After all, we are the experts,” she said with a smile. “Claim departments generally get hundreds of calls and claims each day, but we need to