

# DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A TRAINING SUPERVISOR?

A Responsibility that's Worth Taking Seriously

In the last issue of the *ChADPresse*, we looked at the legislative and regulatory provisions governing a trainee's probationary period within a firm. Now let's look at the main professional and personal qualities that a representative must have in order to provide excellent training.

## Who can supervise a trainee?

Pursuant to the legislation, any damage insurance representative may act as a training supervisor, provided he or she has held a certificate for at least 24 out of the past 36 months.

On March 1, 2010, a new condition was added: the representative must not have been the subject of a disciplinary sanction nor have been struck off the membership roll in the past five years.

Technically speaking, any representative who meets these requirements may oversee the training period of a new representative on probation. However, in reality, if a supervisor is to provide valuable training that will assist the new damage insurance professional in developing a flourishing career, he must have certain qualities that go beyond the mere legal requirements.

## Quality No.1: Be able to devote time to working with the trainee.

"Being available is the foremost quality you need when working with a trainee," states Jean-Sébastien Houle, an inspector at the Chamber who has himself acted as a training supervisor in a firm.

According to Mr. Houle, it is important to have senior management on board: they have to agree to release the supervisor from some of his regular responsibilities so that he may carry out his role as a supervisor with the utmost professionalism, no matter how busy the office may be!

Mr. Houle goes on to say that "during peak times, a manager may be tempted to ask a supervisor to devote less time to the trainee. However, this is a mistake since it prevents the trainee from receiving the feedback he needs to improve and contribute to the company's long-term development."

Furthermore, a trainee who receives little or poor supervision can easily become dissatisfied with his probationary period.

## Quality No.2: Have a Gift for Teaching

Of course, having solid experience in the field of insurance is a prerequisite for becoming a training supervisor. However, you also need to be able to successfully transmit your knowledge.

"The person best suited to supervise a trainee is not necessarily the company owner or a senior manager," explains Denis Moisan, an inspector at the Chamber. "You have to be ready to teach and be a role model," he adds. "It's rare for a firm to hire a trainee without planning to keep him on afterwards, but you also have to be there for him when he needs help."

The training supervisor must thus have a solid understanding of the material he will be teaching the trainee. Otherwise, the trainee will have trouble making progress and could find himself hitting roadblocks in his career.

## Quality No.3: Have a Desire to Share your Knowledge

In addition to being available and having a gift for teaching, a supervisor must be dedicated, patient and friendly towards his trainee. Rather than criticizing the trainee, he should act as his sponsor and guide.

"Being a training supervisor is almost a calling," suggests Jean-Sébastien Houle. "If a representative is tasked with supervising a trainee but has no interest in doing so, it will be a waste of time for both the supervisor and the trainee."

Once again, the insurer or the firm must release the supervisor during the training period so that he has enough time to fully devote himself to this task on a daily basis. "The supervisor's job is not to tell the trainee where to put the comma. Rather, his job is to explain to him why the comma goes there," Denis Moisan goes on to explain.

## Quality No.4: Gradually help the trainee to become accountable.

Although it is obvious that a trainee should not be given responsibility for an important file only a few weeks after his arrival, neither should he only be given simple, less important tasks.

"It is not always easy to get the pace of learning right, since the trainee himself wants to take on major files quickly," says Denis Moisan, who has himself acted as a supervisor.

Moisan gives the following example: "You have to make the trainee understand that young engineers are not asked to build bridges. The supervisor must start by teaching the trainee the basics, but he must also encourage him by gradually increasing his responsibilities. The trainee must feel useful and see the long-term opportunities that await him, otherwise he will give up."

## Preparing Properly for the Training Period

Finally, it is important to prepare for the arrival of a trainee in order to get the best value out of the probationary experience.

After all, the effort that a firm puts into preparing the training period is likely to yield significant benefits in the long run.