

I N F O Bulletin

www.inalco.com

Information Bulletin for Group Insurance Plan Administrators and Benefit Advisors

INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE
INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.



Healthcare Plans **More Important Than Ever**

During uncertain economic times, employers often think about cutting expenses. However, any potential cutbacks to healthcare plans should be carefully considered. Employees greatly appreciate their plans, and the quality of the plan affects their performance at work.

According to the 2009 sanofi-aventis survey on healthcare, respondents who strongly agree with qualifying their plan as "excellent" or "very good" are more likely to have a favorable opinion about their employer than those who agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or strongly disagree. Again this year, the sanofi-aventis survey asked respondents if they would rather have their benefit plan or a cash payment of \$20,000. Members who judge the quality of their plan as "excellent" or "very good" choose their plan (54%) rather than \$20,000 (39%). By comparison, those who judge the quality of their plan as "bad" or "very bad" choose the \$20,000 (62%) rather than their plan (23%).

These responses show that by maintaining or improving the quality of a group healthcare plan, it's possible to improve employee commitment and productivity.

You can download the 2009 sanofi-aventis survey from their website at www.sanofi-aventis.ca

The 2009 sanofi-aventis survey was conducted among 2,090 Canadian group healthcare plan members to determine their opinion and their behaviour concerning their healthcare plan.



Go Green Contest Third Winner

On August 31, we had the pleasure of awarding a third DELL Inspiron™ 15 laptop computer to Mr. Yannick Dubois-Paré!

Continue to take part in the green movement and encourage your group insurance plan members to sign up for direct deposit and e-notification. By registering for both services, they'll be eligible for the last draw on November 30, 2009. Members who previously registered for direct deposit and e-notification are already entered in the contest.

For help in promoting this initiative, please contact our Client Service Department at 1 877 422-6487. We'll send you a poster that you can display in a place where your plan members will be sure to see it. We'll also provide you with a promotional email that you can send to your members.

Get your members to act now: there's only one draw to go!

For additional details, go to www.inalco.com/gogreencontest.



Daniel Belley (Senior Sales Director, province of Quebec, Group Insurance) with Yannick Dubois-Paré (third winner)



Professional development: an investment that pays off



September is the perfect time to begin professional development programs again. More essential than ever, they are an invaluable tool to keep up with the constant evolution of skills. "Research shows that the duration of acquired knowledge, from university studies for example, decreases at an alarming rate. In the medical profession, this duration has gone from about seven years in the 60s to less than two years today. In other words, half of what university graduates learn is no longer relevant after this period."¹ Moreover, the competitive environment in an organizational context pushes businesses to adapt to change rapidly. Globalization renders many business models obsolete and the relevance—if not the very survival—of a company often rests on the search for ever-more-qualified workers. And with the aging of the population, the pool of candidates is diminishing. To remedy this situation, employers must invest in continuing education of personnel already on the job.

Professional development

A complement to acquired knowledge, professional development includes activities, seminars and skill-upgrading workshops, as well as evening classes leading to an academic certificate or diploma. The goal

is to hone knowledge for the continual upgrading and improvement of vocational skills. It is designed for employees and managers, and can be conducted by a private educational service, a school board, a general and vocational college, business colleagues, in-house training instructors, etc.

Types of programs offered

Available training programs are quite diverse. In fact, traditional training programs are now paired with various forms of new learning programs. Here are a few examples:

Online education or e-learning relies on use of the Internet and other interactive electronic media (CDs, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, etc.). This approach adapts to everyone's schedule and learning style. Centered on the employee, it makes a variety of courses available to them, while reducing their travel time. The interactivity favours familiarization with multimedia tools and offers employers the possibility of observing the evolution of skill acquisition. However, it is highly recommended that online instruction be paired with traditional instruction, because e-learning generally requires a basic knowledge of computers.

The **buddy system** is practiced within a company. Experienced colleagues are responsible for transferring their knowledge to novices on an individual and structured basis. In addition to fostering support between co-workers, the buddy system has a significant impact on the transfer of knowledge, because it highlights the importance of new skills using concrete examples.

Co-development groups allow managers to develop their skills among peers, during meetings. This approach enables the transfer of expertise, and everyone benefits from the experience of others while discussing real life cases and finding solutions as a group. Co-development favours mutual cooperation, decreases competition and reinforces the feeling of belonging to a group by breaking the isolation in which managers often find themselves.

¹According to the Service Canada website



Management circles are composed of managers who receive instruction from outside trainers on subjects such as ethics or leadership. The knowledge is shared in workshops with practical exercises. Management circles allow managers to learn from each other by sharing their experience and managing techniques.

In addition to these new methods of learning, there are many one-day classes conducted at the workplace that help improve skills and introduce new management techniques. A wide variety of courses are offered, such as customer service, managing priorities, managing stress, how to create a PowerPoint presentation, etc.

Implementing favourable conditions

When selecting one or more professional development programs, it's essential to consider the individual's preferences, their professional objectives, their aptitudes and their family obligations. Since employee motivation and responsibility are important factors in all learning, you must clearly demonstrate the usefulness of such a process and its relation to company objectives. Is it to improve productivity? Increase creativity? Develop versatility (multi-skilling)? Upgrade skills? The advantages are numerous; you just need to inform employees about them. Before beginning any training program, you must evaluate what needs to be improved and then do a tally of acquired skills. Once the

training program is completed, it's a good idea to give the employee time to experiment and to put what they've learned into practice.

Despite the undeniable importance of professional development, it's not yet an integral part of most companies' operations. That is changing, however, because companies that don't invest in the development of human capital risk losing relevance to the emergence of a new type of economy: a knowledge economy.



Did you know?

One Canadian adult worker out of three took part in official job-related skill development activities in 2002.

It's been shown that education is closely linked to participation in professional development: the higher the level of education, the more a person is likely to participate in educational activities.

In 2002, more than half (52%) of workers with a university degree took part in official job-related skill development activities. The rate was still high (38%) for workers with a certificate or a diploma from a community college or a trade school, as well as with workers who did not finish their post-secondary studies. By contrast, the lowest rate of participation (18%) was among workers with the lowest level of education (secondary school diploma or less).

Source: Adult Education and Training Survey, Statistics Canada, in partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2003.

Points to ponder

In Quebec, if a company's total payroll exceeds \$1M, it is required to invest at least 1% of payroll expenditures in personnel training over the course of a year, under the terms of the Act to promote workforce skills development and recognition. If the company does not invest at least 1% of payroll, it must pay the non-invested portion to Revenu Québec, which will transfer the sum of money to the Fonds national de formation de la main-d'œuvre (a fund for employee continuing education).

In 2003, more than 55% of managers, professionals and executives had the opportunity to improve their skills, compared to 45% of sales and service personnel. Moreover, the executives and professionals received an average of five to seven more hours of instruction than their colleagues.

Public sector organizations, banks and credit unions are among the businesses that offer the most training to their employees. Wholesale and retail businesses, restaurants and transport companies are among those that offer the least.

Source: An Act to promote workforce skills development and recognition, 2000-2005 Five-Year Report, Direction du Fonds national de formation de la main-d'œuvre, 2005.



Ontario's New Health Care Website: *Your Health Care Options*

The *Your Health Care Options* website gives Ontarians the information they need to make appropriate health care choices from resources available in their community.

Through this website, Ontarians have access to:



Health Care Connect

Health Care Connect is a program that refers people without a regular family health care provider to physicians and nurse practitioners who are accepting new patients in their community. They can register online or by calling a representative at 1 800 445-1822.



Medical Services Directory

The Medical Services Directory is a user-friendly searchable database of walk-in and after-hour clinics, urgent care centres and family health care providers. Ontarians can search for information based on specifics such as street address, postal code or city.



Telehealth

Telehealth is a free, confidential telephone service to get health advice or general health information from a registered nurse.



Community Care Access Centres

Community Care Access Centres are local organizations that provide contact information for government-funded home and community services and long-term care homes.

The *Your Health Care Options* website can be accessed at www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions. For more information by phone, simply dial 1 866 330-6206.

About Industrial Alliance

Industrial Alliance is a life and health insurance company that offers a wide range of insurance and financial products. The fourth largest life and health insurance company in Canada, Industrial Alliance is at the head of a large financial group with operations across the country, as well as in the Western United States. Industrial Alliance contributes to the financial wellbeing of over three million Canadians and manages and administers over \$54 billion in assets.

The INFO Bulletin is presented to you by Industrial Alliance.