

the Importance of Continuing Education



We are all lifelong learners, whether we realize it or not. It could be finding a faster route to work, fixing a lawn mower for the first time, learning a new app on your phone or new software at work; whatever it is, we are constantly learning. There are many benefits to continuous learning, perhaps even more in the insurance industry, where laws, underwriting risks, and the claim landscape are constantly changing.

Beyond direct knowledge benefits, Continuing Education (CE) is required as part of most agents and claim handlers' ability to work in any given state. Requirements vary – sometimes a little and sometimes a lot, which can make it challenging to keep track of each state's expectations – but there is usually a CE component to licensing to ensure they remain current.

Expectations vary by state. For claim handlers, some states require a fee and completing some basic forms to be licensed. Other states require taking a test and maintaining the license through CE, which the state Department of Insurance (DOI) must approve in order to count. Even then, it's not that simple. A number of states also have reciprocity with each other. For example, being a licensed underwriter in Texas may allow you to maintain licenses in other states without duplicating effort.

The process of putting together CE classes is rigorous. To present a class that qualifies for insurance continuing education credit, the provider, instructor, and curriculum each have to be approved by every state they want the credit to qualify for. Therefore, offering classes for agents from all 50 states could mean up to 150 approvals for each class. Having strict

guidelines on who, how, and what qualifies for CE credit is part of the value. But the benefits extend well beyond meeting maintenance requirements. Continuing your education, both formally and informally, offers so much more to one's career.

Greater Earnings

One of the biggest motivators for people to augment their education is to earn more money. [According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the higher your education, the more you earn. In general, education pays.

Greater Value

The more you know, the greater value you bring. This applies in general, but specifically to your job. Knowledge makes you better at your job, but also allows you to do more. Your employer doesn't want to hire three people to do three different things when you can do more than one. This ties back to money and positions you to negotiate a better salary.

Better At Your Job

Insurance is a knowledge industry. Knowing what and how much to quote, staying current on the latest regulations, and being aware of replacement costs and jury verdict trends lets underwriters write more business accurately with greater confidence. Conferences and conventions often include a CE component and many insurers offer educational courses for their agents. For example, Nautilus Insurance Group, a Berkley Company, created Nautilus University, providing live and on-demand webinars as well as self-paced resources and job aids for their agents. There is always something new to learn.

Continuing Education Leads To Better Networking

Both what you know and who you know matter. Participating in classes, even online, can lead to connecting with people you never would have met otherwise. Plus, study groups, professional organizations, and conferences, all provide chances to learn and network. Since you have similar interests, you could meet someone who can help with your business or may have an opportunity you were looking for.

Continuing Education Can Lead To A Better Job

As you learn, your skills increase, making you more marketable. Connect those skills to your expanded network, and it can lead to a better job. Or maybe as you continue to take classes, you find an area of interest you hadn't discovered before, sending you down a completely different career path.

Better Health

If increased pay, more job opportunities, and stronger work skills don't entice you to continually be learning, how about better health? A [study by Virginia Commonwealth University](#) found, "Americans with more education live longer, healthier lives than those with fewer years of schooling." Better education leads to better jobs – jobs that have better pay and are more likely to have health-promoting benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement.

In addition to the benefits listed above, Insurance offers many specific designations and certifications to enhance your value and strengthen your skills. Some of these include:

AAI, Accredited Adviser In Insurance

The AAI designation program is specifically for agency personnel. The program teaches practical, real-world skills that agency personnel need to gain a competitive edge in the property-casualty insurance market.

AIC, Associate In Claims

Claim professionals handle a wide variety of claims, including property, auto, workers' compensation, and bodily injury claims. Earning the Associate In Claims (AIC) designation can improve technical claim handling abilities as well as communication and negotiation skills.

AINS, Associate In General Insurance

The Associate in General Insurance (AINS) provides a solid foundation on which to build a career in insurance. Courses cover insurance principles, practices, and policies in depth. Completing the AINS program can enhance future career opportunities and help you do your current job better.

AIS, Associate In Insurance Services

The Associate in Insurance Services (AIS) designation signifies that an individual working in the field of insurance has attained comprehensive training in enhanced customer focus.

API, Associate In Personal Insurance

The Associate in Personal Insurance (API) designation is the one for you if your area of specialty is personal lines insurance.

ASLI, Associate In Surplus Lines Insurance

The Associate in Surplus Lines Insurance (ASLI) designation signifies that an individual working in the insurance field has comprehensive knowledge of insurance regulation, surplus lines insurance marketing, underwriting, ratemaking, the claim function, reinsurance, and various surplus lines insurance products.

CIC, Certified Insurance Counselor

The Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC) designation signifies that an individual working in the insurance field has attained comprehensive knowledge of agency management, commercial casualty, commercial property, life & health, and personal lines.

CPCU, Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter

The Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) designation signifies that an individual working in the field of property/casualty insurance has gained a broader understanding of property-casualty insurance, enhanced by a concentration in either commercial or personal risk management insurance.

Whether you are looking to increase your earnings, learn a new skill, get promoted, get a different job, or simply be better at your current job, it is important to continue your education. There are so many ways to do it – you just need to pick the one that's right for you.

References

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