



Bob Merryman teaches a group of Jr. Agents in 2017 at the Cleveland office.

# HOW OUR JUNIOR AGENT JOB TRAINING PROGRAM PROVIDES VALUE TO OUR CLIENTS

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Finding qualified workers in today's workforce is a critical concern facing employers throughout the nation. Recent surveys and industry experts are touting eminent worker shortages for available jobs. ORC has long recognized that quality employees are an invaluable commodity and that we can play an active role in their development and availability. In 2005 ORC began its Junior Agent training program in a proactive response to market conditions which indicated a looming shortage of qualified workers in the right of way profession. With a vision for growth and a passion for quality, we committed to recruit and train college graduates for a career in right of way and to equip them with the skills necessary to become industry leaders. Now, over a decade later, our Junior Agent training program remains a hallmark of our strategic staffing and recruiting plan and provides ORC with an unrivaled competitive advantage in staffing.

The investment has been sizable and there are always risks associated with training and retention; however, the successes have greatly outpaced the challenges. With more than 20% of our agents having been enrolled through the Junior Agent training program and 22% of our Project Managers having emerged from its ranks, we are convinced that the investment has been sound. This year we are announcing our first internship program, with a goal of hiring junior/senior level college students to intern with us over the summer. We believe that targeting key individuals with an early introduction to our business will only enhance our future talent pool.

## About the Program

ORC offers a structured training program that has a clearly detailed schedule, time frame, outline of activities, and assignment of responsibilities. It has well defined goals and consequences and offers

*inspiring confidence in progress...*

a clear career path. Having a structured training program typically leads to more success and employee development and engagement than an informal or unstructured one. Without clear structure, some companies cut corners or fail to complete training processes thoroughly.

Without a structured training program, employees have little awareness of training goals and strategies to accomplish them. Subsequently, your training may come across as less important to new hires or employees. In a structured program, expected training outcomes and strategies are heavily emphasized. These are important to the program and employee success, as they provide direction for specific steps taken and methods used by trainers to develop the skills of employees.

The structure of our training program increases our ability to provide a consistent and high-quality training experience for our employees. Our clearly outlined training curriculum offers a framework that managers can consistently implement with each employee. This ensures that each of our agents starts with a similar opportunity to learn the key facets of their job. This gives our employees an equally good start, and in team-oriented environments, colleagues will appreciate that they all received a similar training experience.

Structured internal training offers employers and employees advantages that are not found when you send an employee to an external training program or seminar. On-the-job training that enhances an employee's skills

**“American businesses can't find workers”**, *CNN, Jan. 17th 2018, money.cnn.com*

**“2018's challenge: Too many jobs, not enough workers”**, *Washington Post, Dec. 28, 2017, washingtonpost.com*

and ensures their readiness for the next promotion, is generally far superior to a public seminar.

Internal training reflects a solid knowledge of the organization's culture. Our training program incorporates real-life examples, problems, and challenges that our agents will encounter every day at work. Our successful internal training program promotes the primary skills and knowledge that our agents will need to succeed in their jobs. It also prepares our employees for success in their next job.

Internal training is presented in the language and terminology that our agents understand and can relate to. Internal training develops the skills of our employees and cements their own knowledge of the right of way topics being taught.

Here are some of the benefits that our agents receive by participating in our Junior Agent Training Program:

- **Increased job satisfaction and morale**
- **Increased employee motivation and**

**engagement**

- **Increased efficiencies in processes, resulting in financial gain**
- **Increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods**
- **Increased innovation in strategies and products**
- **Reduced employee turnover**
- **Enhanced company image (branding)**
- **Risk management, e.g., training about sexual harassment, diversity training**

The ORC Training Division creates customized right of way content for our agents and they can supplement the suggested first-year coursework with courses that may be required by the client. What is unique about our program is the number of courses – 208 hours of classroom instruction in the first year. Other companies that offer courses may only require 40 hours or less per year. Agents are exposed to a wide variety of information about the right of way industry, ensuring that they become well-rounded in their education. Additionally, it is highly encouraged that at the end of their first year, that

Junior Agents become members and take leadership roles in organizations. Examples include IRWA Officer, ASHE, IREM, other Real Estate and Engineering Organizations, NHI, FHWA, County Engineer Association, Planning Associations, AASHTO, State Level Chamber of Commerce, ASCE, WTS, ITE or MPO quarterly meetings, to name a few.

Here are the benefits of our ongoing employee development program:

- **Keep up with industry changes**  
The right of way industry is constantly changing which makes it important for ORC to develop relevant training material to comply with industry regulations and make sure that employee skills and knowledge are current.
- **Keep in touch with the latest technology developments**  
Regular training is offered to ensure that staff are using all the latest technology competently and to its full potential.
- **Stay ahead of the competition**  
By making sure our staff is constantly advancing, we continue to move forward and remain competitive within the market place.
- **Identify weaknesses and skill gaps**  
Our training program allows us to more easily identify any gaps in the market and skill gaps within the existing

workforce. By identifying these gaps early, there is time to train employees in these required areas so they can fulfill the role effectively.

- **Maintain knowledge and skill**  
ORC implements training schemes to help develop the skills of our agents throughout their job. To retain knowledge, skills need to be practiced and refreshed on a regular basis so elements aren't forgotten.
- **Advance employee skills**  
Once basic level skills have been taught, these can easily be built upon and improved to provide much more benefit to our organization. Staff that are more knowledgeable can offer more value to our clients, and our clients' businesses will realize the rewards.
- **Provide an incentive to learn**  
Our training is provided as part of a longer development pathway, so employees will have much more incentive to learn, participate in the session and put their new skills into practice.
- **Increase job satisfaction levels**  
Through ORC's investment in training, our employees have a much higher sense of job satisfaction, which can improve their motivation toward their work. This reduces employee turnover and increases productivity, which directly improves our business performance. It can also mitigate efforts from competitors to poach key

employees by offering them training incentives.

- **Provide internal promotion opportunities and a career path**  
Employing new staff involves high recruitment costs and hiring fees. However, with ongoing training, our existing staff can become more eligible for internal promotions (22% of our Project Managers successfully advanced through the Junior Agent Training Program). Unlike new staff, promoted employees have a complete knowledge of our business, the correct skill set and are people that we know and trust.
- **Attract new talent**  
ORC strives to have the best employees. With ongoing training, this will not only mean better staff retention, but our business may also attract better talent from the market place, as our reputation for training gives our business a positive image and is a key feature many people look for within their job search.

As outlined above, ongoing training is important not just to employee development, but it also affects the success of our business.

We hear companies in our industry say all the time that all the right of way companies are "fishing from the same pool to find agents." We counter that by saying, "We are creating our own pond!" ■