



## Certified Professionals bring knowledge, skills and creativity to their workplaces



*In 2008, Canada welcomed 50 individuals who successfully passed the certification examinations for the designations of Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC) and Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP). They represented a cross-section of industries from various regions of the country. The next three issues of the Bulletin will take a look at how these professionals and their workplaces are benefiting from certification, as a new group prepares to write the international examinations in May 2009.*

### BC newsprint producer recognizes advantages of in-house CDMP

Reesa Rutherford, CDMP, Human Resources Coordinator, Ability Management for Howe Sound Pulp and Paper in Port Mellon, BC loves her job and is full of ideas on how to make it better. She's been with Howe Sound Pulp and Paper – a world producer of newsprint and kraft pulp – for 10 years and has been in her current role for the last four. She handles all aspects of return to work and the company's ability management area, as well as assisting with employee recruitment.

Her current role evolved gradually. She was put into a position of doing return to work part-time when the company was working with an outside consultant. "People were coming to me. They felt harassed when someone from the outside firm would call and they didn't know the person. It was not a human approach."

Her boss encouraged her to take the NIDMAR course. Initially, the training allowed her to put herself between the return to work consultant and the employees. "After the course, we were able to bring the entire program in-house," she says.

Along the way, her own motivations changed. "Originally I took the course, because if I wasn't familiar with duty to accommodate, and if I had to go to arbitration, I could ensure I covered all the bases. Instead I fell in love with the whole process. I originally wanted to be a counsellor and this tied right in."

She continues, "The biggest thing I've learned is to maintain the human side of it. It's not the physical injury that is the main part, it's their work identity. If someone is off, I call him and I



**crtwc**™ certified  
return to work  
coordinator



**cdmp**™ certified disability  
management  
professional



encourage the supervisor and crews to call him, and do things like keep him in the hockey pool, so when he is ready to return, it is not a huge daunting thing, after a month off, to pack a lunch and go back to work. The employee is still attached. He knows about any crew changes, and all the gossip.”

Trust is a big factor in her job. “We’re a small town, so we all know each other. I call and chat them up and ask, ‘how are you, how are you feeling, is there anything we can do?’ I make sure there are no money issues and see if we can set up any counselling.”

Her credentials have given her the background and confidence to come up with creative solutions. A physiotherapist comes to the mill twice a week. Injured workers who are off are encouraged to take the sessions. “It works to get them into the mill and then they can go for coffee with the crew,” explains Rutherford. “It keeps them attached.”

She is thrilled to work with a wonderful, supportive employer and says, “They totally back all my crazy ideas.” She gives the example of a problem the mill had with a loader job. “We had four guys off, two with WCB claims for back injuries. We tracked their work activity with a physio and learned the workers would stay on the loader for four to five hours at a time, no breaks, in order to do a good job. They would then rest and sit.”

She came in with the physiotherapist and a personal trainer and they instituted stretches, breaks, changes in the seat set-up and gave the employees a task diary to record things like activity, pain scale and change in function. They then prescribed one hour of work and 15 minutes of walking. “Get up and move was the idea. We listened to the Chinese proverb, ‘It is solved by walking.’”

Rutherford now advises, “The four guys who were off are all back and fully functioning. We reduced back injury claims in that area to zero so far.” She adds that for her, “The fun now is to stop putting out fires and move to using my education to be proactive and find solutions.”

The mill is now conducting a cost benefit analysis comparing lost time during the term of the outside consultants to today. Rutherford says some things are already evident. “If we could look at one worker on WCB for six months and compare costs to the company in that time with the cost of bringing in a physio twice a week, the program is already paid for by that one worker.”



## Manitoba manufacturer supports designation

While many companies are struggling in the current economy, New Flyer Industries of Winnipeg is a success story at a time when the new ethic is to go green, drive less and embrace transit. New Flyer, a major heavy-duty transit bus manufacturer in the U.S. and Canada received new orders in 2008 totalling \$2.78 billion U.S., a significant increase over the previous year. The company employs 1,400 at its Winnipeg headquarters and another 1,000 at its U.S. facilities.

Ryan Harder, CRTWC, Occupational Health & Safety Specialist, has been with the company since 2003, handling all aspects of occupational and non-occupational return to work in a unionized environment. According to Harder, a big part of his job is figuring out placements with restrictions. "Finding a job to match means sometimes having to get creative. My Certified Return to Work Coordinator skills help with facilitating between the parties."

The idea to pursue the CRTWC designation was brought to him by his employer, who was fully supportive. "NIDMAR accreditation is a business, labour and multi-stakeholder collaboration, so it was a good match. Seeing the certificate on the wall gives the feeling that I'm a registered professional, and you're treated differently."

Just as importantly, Harder says he also sees things differently. "The importance of cooperation of all parties really came to light. The company can drive things, but without buy-in, there will be conflict. The skills I've gained help facilitate the buy-in." He now gets the union involved sooner, right at the step one stage.

He's also seen an increase in employee trust. "They know I am trying to keep them at full pay. Now they'll come to me if they're injured and say, 'what do you have for me?'"

The benefits are personal as well. "I came away with a feeling that I am not alone, in what can be a negative position, where you are sometimes making people do what they don't want to do, in encouraging return to work. Through the courses and networking, it's nice to know there are others like me out there."

Even prior to taking the designation, Harder and the staff at New Flyer were already involved in doing cost benefit analyses to measure their return to work efforts. "Claim costs are down. Absenteeism is down. Premiums are down. It's all good," he says. Overall, he's seen a complete culture change in the company toward effective disability management practice. As for his future, "It's a very exciting career and designation. I'm glad to be part of it. You always need to be thinking and there's never a dull moment. I really enjoy that. And professional certification has given my ideas more backing."



## Alberta third party provider values certification

CompCall is a third party national disability management firm hired by companies to work with their employees with disabilities to ensure a safe and timely return to work. Proactive advocates of early intervention, CompCall states its goal is to “assist in the return of injured or disabled employees to their regular duties as quickly as possible, without jeopardizing their recovery.”

Janice Ewaskiw has been in her role as a return to work coordinator at CompCall for one year and prior to that was with ING as a bodily injury adjuster and at Alberta Health Care as a claims adjudicator. She is an experienced veteran in the claims field. Prior to earning the CRTWC last year, she spent five years taking evening courses to become a Chartered Insurance Professional (CIP) in which she still is an active member.

In writing the CRTWC examination, Ewaskiw confirmed her knowledge and abilities. “I’ve always been committed to the fairness and integrity of the processing of claims.”

On the other hand, she gained valuable new knowledge in working with unions, and on the legislation of the different provinces, and various human rights issues. “NIDMAR has documented very informative details, which I am able to apply to my present work,” she notes.

She also gained some “eye-opening” information, particularly in the area of graduated return to work. “Many insurance companies and employers do not agree to a scheduled graduated return to work, but will do modified work. We’re seeing an increase in graduated return to work, for example, employees doing four hours of work, then going to a physiotherapy appointment for continued work hardening. Some insurance companies only pay weekly indemnity for total disability and do not consider partial disability in which they would top up the weekly indemnity for the disabled employee.”

Overall, Ewaskiw says she thinks a little differently. “I realize now the cost to companies for WCB, LTD and STD. It’s a new era where companies must train employees to work safety, for example, on how to bend properly when picking up a large item from the floor, and having supervisors being proactive when employees are injured or call in sick.

“We keep in contact with all employees who are disabled and are not able to do their full duties at work. Returning a disabled employee back to work, gives me great satisfaction. NIDMAR helped me understand the different aspects of working with the employer, employee and health practitioner for successful return to work.”