

Ringling in the New Year

Building on the Success of 2014 – A Snapshot of Pivotal Recoveries

Denial Reversed: Sewage

This residential condominium association is located in downtown Miami, Florida. The Association experienced a loss when a sanitary line failed and backed up into their garage area. Quickly, the Association reported the loss to their Broker and hired a contractor to mitigate the damages. Soon after the Carrier inspected the loss, it denied the claim citing to a pollution exclusion in the policy. The Broker fought back, but eventually sided with the Carrier. Since the Association was familiar with the success and results of GlobalPro Recovery with other Association claims, it contacted GlobalPro and requested a review of their file. GlobalPro's team quickly determined that the loss was wrongfully denied. In less than three months, GlobalPro completed an extensive policy review, adjusted the loss, and successfully reopened the claim resulting in a more than \$200,000 payment to the Association for its damages.

Covered Loss: Falling Concrete

This exclusive residential condominium association is located Aventura, Florida. The Association's Building Engineer discovered cracking and displacement of concrete in the garage area. Upon further inspection it was found that portions of the concrete had separated and fallen. Based on the Association's prior success with GlobalPro Recovery on their side, the Association immediately notified GlobalPro of the loss. GlobalPro immediately reported the claim to the Association's Broker. Both the Broker and Property Carrier pushed back. GlobalPro was relentless in its efforts and with the assistance of Counsel, the Association recovered 100% of their costs to repair the damage.

Denial Reversed: Construction Defect

This mixed-use condominium association is located in Coral Gables, Florida. The Association first noticed water damages to drywall and finished areas in units and the common area on multiple floors. The Property Manager contacted the Broker, reported a claim, and started the claim process. Although, the Carrier initially issued a low-ball estimate of the damages, which was conveniently below the deductible, the Carrier denied the claim. GlobalPro Recovery was contacted by the Property Manager and informed of the damages and recent denial. GlobalPro's team inspected the property to determine the cause and origin of the damages and reviewed the policy for coverage. It was quickly determined that the ensuing water damage to the drywall and other finished areas as well as exterior paint and stucco were the result of a construction defect. After several weeks of diligent work, GlobalPro Recovery with the assistance of Counsel reversed the denial and the Carrier paid the Association more than \$500,000 for its damages.

Supplemental Payment: Storm Damage and Business Income

This business is located in Long Island, New York. Superstorm Sandy ravaged the North East and this business owner was not alone when his family business was nearly destroyed by the high winds, flooding, and dramatic loss of income. The Insured struggled to keep the doors open, but was determined to get back to business as usual. Like the great majority of policyholders devastated by the storm, the business owner filed a claim and soon experienced the harsh reality of the insurance claims industry following a large-scale disaster. The Carrier's Adjusters were overwhelmed and their offices were understaffed. Nearly a year went by before the Insured received its first low-ball payment, partial denial, and the grim realization that after two decades, his family's business may close forever. The Insured learned of GlobalPro's efforts in the area, quickly engage its services in the hopes for a better tomorrow. GlobalPro's team of Adjusters, Accountants, and Engineers properly assessed the extent of the loss, adjusted the claim and filed the appropriate documents with the Carrier. The Carrier sprung into action and in a matter of a few months the insured received a significant supplemental payment of more than \$250,000 for property damages and accrued loss of income as well as incremental payments for business extra expense. It's back to business as usual for this business owner.

THE ROLE OF A LOSS CONSULTANT

An Alternative to Going It Alone

If a Business Owner or an Association is not comfortable assigning a percentage of their loss to a Public Adjuster, consider the retention of a Loss Consultant. Typically, paid hourly or on a flat fee basis, these professionals with the right background and training can effectively and properly advise a business owner or an Association throughout the claim process.

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The services can range from simple advising to all of the services a Public Adjuster may provide. In States like Alabama where Public Adjusters are not prevalent due to laws restricting the practice, this may be a cost effective alternative to ensure policyholder rights are protected and that they adequately recover from a loss.

Also, consider that if a Lawyer does retain this professional they can act as an expert in any action against an Insurance Company or third party.

Proper representation from the onset of the loss is essential to ensuring a full financial recovery from any first or third party loss.

Training and Education: The Keys to Success for Adjusters

GlobalPro Recovery's World Class Service and Support Continues to Improve

Without a doubt, education and training are the keys to becoming a productive and efficient adjuster. That's because insurance adjusting is a complex professional discipline that requires both in-depth specialized knowledge and broad communication skills.

Successful adjusters must have a clear understanding of the construction techniques, materials and labor practices in their markets. Since residential and commercial buildings are constructed differently in Florida, New England, the Southwest, and other parts of the country, an adjuster needs to be up to speed on local building codes and conditions.

Today's adjusters must also be able to use sophisticated software applications to manage the claims process, and one platform may be very different from another. Perhaps most importantly for long-term success, adjusters should continually develop their sales and negotiation skills when dealing with insureds in order to achieve best results.

Finally, this is a field with many moving parts. Construction material prices, local codes, and technology are some of the elements that are constantly changing, making continuing education a priority for everyone in our field.

To provide a real-world example of the importance of professional education and training, I asked August Forte, one of our claims adjusters, to talk about his different types of learning experiences with GlobalPro for this article. His comments illustrate these key themes.

Firsthand Construction Experience

One of the most valuable ways for adjusters to improve their knowledge and skill is to obtain firsthand construction experience. It provides an opportunity to learn about everything from the foundation on up to the roof. One of the most important takeaways is understanding how to scheduling each stage of a job, which is essential for estimating how long it will take from immediate mitigation to completion, so coverages can be estimated properly.

That experience also provides insights into actual construction costs rather than the figures in an adjuster's database. While the numbers in the computer may be updated monthly or quarterly, things happen to shift pricing quickly, and working on a job site is one of the best ways to see how that happens.

Finally, watching someone put a structure together – and perhaps lending a hand yourself – makes it much easier to visualize how the rebuilding process will take place after a loss. It also helps to ensure that all the necessary steps in the process are included. For example, a claims application might include a box to check off for painting a door, but not for removing the door – a necessary step in order to complete the painting of the hinge-side and bottom of the door.

Here's how Forte describes his construction learning process. "When I first became a licensed public adjuster, I realized that having experience in construction is essential, whether you're an advocate for the policyholder or the carrier. I thought I was going to either have to go back to school and take some class, or get a part-time job. Then, I was given an opportunity to be a project manager of a construction job with our sister company, MaxPro Builders. Although I was entering uncharted waters, I was up for the challenge."

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Forte says that before this construction job started, he had heard about many issues homeowners had experienced with other construction projects. "Since I had not experienced it myself, I didn't know what to expect," he adds. "Now that I have had firsthand experience with similar situations, I have started to see that all of those stories I heard were true."

Being a project manager has helped Forte to understand the problems that arise on a day-to-day basis. "Although an issue may have been minor, even just the smallest problems would add up to more expenses and more delays," he says. "While we did our best to keep control of everyday situations and supervise the job, the issues that arose were things we were unable to predict or prevent. On the construction site, I was able to build my personal skills and learned several new things a day. Some days were enjoyable, others no so much. Since I am used to working well under pressure, I tried my best to be more proactive than reactive."

Forte says that running into unexpected and unavoidable problems, was actually a good thing for him. He adds, "It gave me the opportunity to learn from them and determine the best possible resolution for the client and our companies. I was able to take what I learned in this construction job, and instantly apply it to handling claims. I immediately started to see a difference and was able to settle claims with more success and ease."

Throughout the job process, Forte interacted and communicated with all different subcontractors from electricians to plumbers to architects. "This was extremely beneficial, considering I write repair estimates on a daily basis and our entire estimates are broken down into the same trades I dealt with on the job site," he says. "I believe that having experience in construction helps not only to settle claims more successfully, but also helps when meeting potential clients."

Apprenticeship Program for Public Adjusters

In Florida, professionals seeking to become public adjusters must complete a mandatory apprenticeship program. Basically, candidates must shadow a public adjuster for a year and complete a series of tests to demonstrate their knowledge of the field.

This process allows adjusters – regardless of their individual career aspirations – to become more expert in fields such as construction, and perhaps qualify for additional licensing as contractors. In any case, completing an apprenticeship program adds to an adjusters credentials and credibility when quantifying damages or negotiating with insureds. Again, there is simply no substitute for hands-on experience in the field outside a classroom setting.

As Forte says, "Having the proper experience and knowledge goes along away. It makes it a lot easier to handling their claims so that the insured is fairly compensated. When dealing other qualified adjusters from the insurance company, having the know-how and understanding of how construction works is imperative. The saying, 'It's not what you know, it's what you can prove,' is only half right in my opinion. In this industry, 'It's what you know AND what you can prove,' and that only comes with thorough training along the way."

Sales Training

Every adjuster needs sales and communication skills in order to close new business, and achieve a settlement. Being able to listen carefully and understand the other's point of view is an essential part of the negotiation process. Of course, adjusters also need to be able to explain the facts of the situation to an insured, set their expectations at a realistic level, and present their own positions in clear and easily understood manner.

As a successful adjuster, Forte recognizes the importance of communication skills. "I used to be a manager and shift leader in the restaurant business where I would oversee over a dozen employees," he says. "As a project manager of the construction job, I was responsible for making sure all of the sub-contractors did their jobs properly and in a timely manner. I made sure to do so in a way as to not empower them or make them feel below me. Part of my role was to hold others accountable for their end results. I had to communicate daily and periodically to ensure that everything that was supposed to be done was, and that everyone was on the same page."

Forte also knows that "having a good sales pitch" is essential when signing up new clients. "GlobalPro has a good name and a good reputation, but that doesn't mean clients are going to come knocking at our door," he adds. "Most of my sales pitch is based on knowledge that I have obtained both professionally and personally. This is something that makes me stand out from other adjusters who try to use the power of persuasion to get clients to hire their firm."

Software Training and Support

Adjusters rely on software applications from companies like Xactimate and Simsol for database management and claims processing. At GlobalPro, our team also uses VisualsXpress, our company's proprietary solution for helping our adjusters better manage the process and a tool to better communicate with our clients by providing them access to up to date information.

Regardless of software platform, adjusters must develop the skills necessary to use this powerful software effectively. They also need hand-on practice in entering data, calling up information and tracking the process of a claim.

"I have noticed that a lot of adjusters have inadequate software skills," says Forte. "At GlobalPro, I went through an extensive training period, like our other adjusters. Learning the VisualsXpress platform as well as various estimating software applications in depth before I went into the field was very helpful to me in handling our clients' claims."

Continuing Education

Finally, adjusters need continuing education in order to stay at the forefront of our profession. From construction practices to market conditions to software updates, there is always something new to learn. The same is true with sales and communication skills, which can always use polishing and improvement.

To help our adjusters keep learning, we bring subcontractors into the office to teach classes on topics like drywall installation and removal, mitigation of water damage, and assessing the condition of a roof after a damaging windstorm.

Becoming an expert requires focus, consistency, discipline, and dedication, says Forte. "Even though I've been a public adjuster for nearly six years, I still learn something new every day," he says. "I believe you can never learn too much in this vast and expanding business, and I am thankful for everyone who has educated me and guided me in the right direction in my career."

PREFERRED CLIENT SERVICES™

Ready. Recover. Rebuild.™

Whether you are concerned about your home, business, or association, GlobalPro is on your side. It is this commitment that led to the creation of the Preferred Client Services™ program – a service from GlobalPro Recovery. As a leading insurance service provider, the goal is to protect the rights of the insurance policyholder, so that GlobalPro can maximize your recovery while assisting with filing your claim. However, the best way to utilize the GlobalPro professional services begins with advance planning and preparation, well before a loss occurs and a claim is filed. By joining Preferred Client Services™, you can receive assistance with that preparation process – as well as other benefits to help safeguard yourself, your business or association. So take advantage of the many benefits of membership and join today. Give your Association or Business piece of mind.

Risk Evaluations · Inventory Specialists · Alerts · Quick Response

About Globalpro Recovery, Inc.

24hr Support: 855-487-7475

GlobalPro Recovery, Inc. is multidisciplinary professional firm that helps clients manage the risks to a financial recovery following a loss caused by wind, water, fire, theft or other calamity. We assist with pre-loss planning and documentation, crisis management, the adjustment of insurance claims and coordinating the reconstruction process. Our family owned and operated international business has represented the interest of policyholders for over 25 years. **Visit us online, <http://www.getglobalpro.com> or email us at support@getglobalpro.com.**

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