



At right: AFLAC's new Paul S. Amos Campus in Columbus features such amenities as a fitness center, company store, cafe and daycare center.

Center: Three white Pekin ducks laze in the pond at the campus entrance.

Far right: AFLAC's corporate headquarters rises high above Columbus.



Ducks in a Row

AFLAC deems massive project a huge success

A Quick Start training program at AFLAC has helped the Georgia-based insurance company cope with a period of rapid sales growth and workforce expansion.

The growth, fueled in part by the popular AFLAC duck advertising campaign, created a need for customized training for 1,000 new workers in Columbus. AFLAC's training partnership with Quick Start later led to a company-wide job skills analysis for approximately 2,000 employees, as well as a new technical certificate of credit (TCC) program in pilot implementation.

Work began in 2000 when the firm expanded operations with a 250,000-sq.-ft. campus in Columbus to house a claims department, customer call center and client services. "We were hiring about 1,000 employees and needed to get them trained quickly," says Sharon Douglas, AFLAC VP and chief people officer.

Quick Start was asked to assess the situation and provide training in customer service and instructor development. "We were up and running in a matter of weeks," Douglas recalls. "After that success, we said, 'Can you help us over here?'"

"Over here" was the company's high-rise headquarters building in Columbus, where job roles needed to be redefined for hundreds of different positions. The goal was to determine what skill sets were necessary for an employee to be successful at AFLAC.



Sharon Douglas, VP and chief people officer

Over a period of two years, Quick Start conducted 158 focus groups with employees and managers at nearly every AFLAC division — including client services, support services, claims and marketing — and at

Communicorp, AFLAC's printing and design subsidiary. Detailed data were gathered on the functions of each position, with an eye toward mapping out skill-based career paths.

"The focus groups were intense," Douglas says. "It was taxing and time-consuming, and required a lot of give and take."

The effort resulted in new job profiles for more than 600 positions. In addition, the research yielded reams of analytical data — 180 reports in all. That information subsequently was used to devise new pre-employment tests, performance appraisal methods, interview guides for hiring managers, and job simulations for training and assessment purposes.

"What started out as a training analysis ended up serving many uses

for us," Douglas recalls. "Quick Start breeds successful programs."

The project not only improved business performance for AFLAC but also spawned a new educational opportunity for the citizens of Columbus and surrounding areas. A pilot TCC program in Certified Life & Health Insurance Specialist was developed by Quick Start in partnership with Columbus Technical College and AFLAC. Course topics include computer applications, insurance fundamentals, customer service skills and medical terminology.

Students who successfully complete the program will be qualified for employment in customer support operations within the life and health insurance sectors. "This is good not just for AFLAC but for the whole community," Douglas says, noting the recent company closures in the Columbus area.

Bob Jones, president of Columbus Technical College, affirms his school's commitment to developing a skilled workforce. "This program is an excellent example of one of the partnerships the college has formed with area businesses to address workforce training," he notes.



Bob Jones, president of Columbus Technical College

Says Douglas, "AFLAC has been blessed in this economy. We're in a growth mode and have jobs to fill. If we could get a steady stream of already-trained applicants, it would make our jobs a lot easier." ■