



Catherine Emmerson, a former manager of training at Intact and Adrian Osti's mentor, feared his energy and enthusiasm for the job might lead to burnout.

Head of the class

Toronto's Adrian Osti, 35, is the manager of learning and development with Northbridge Financial Corporation and an educator at the Insurance Institute of Ontario, where he was named its Instructor of the Year in 2008, 2010 and 2012. Last year the CIP Society recognized his energy and enthusiasm by presenting him with its Emerging Leader Award. **By Keith Norbury**

Contestant: "I'll take Insurance Industry Education for \$600, Alex."

Alex: "He won the CIP Society's Emerging Leadership Award for 2014 and was previously the Insurance Institute's Instructor of the Year in 2008, 2010, and 2012."

Contestant: "Adrian Osti."

Alex: "I'm sorry, you didn't phrase that in the form of a question."

Contestant: "OK, who is Adrian Osti?"

By day he works as the manager of learning and development with Northbridge Finan-

cial Corporation in Toronto, where his achievements have included creating a series of online courses. In his spare time, though, he also teaches programs for the Insurance Institute of Ontario. That includes paid gigs as an instructor – he helped launch the Institute's Understanding Serious Injury program – as well as volunteering his time to revise textbooks and help develop the CIP Instructor Certification program.

Osti, who turned 35 in April, is also a pop culture fanatic, something he often puts to work in his teaching. That includes playing a clone of Alex Trebek, the former host of the long-running TV trivia quiz show "Jeopardy!", to inject some fun into learning the fundamentals and nuances of the insurance business.

Nancy Rivera, a colleague at the Insurance Institute, has often observed Osti in class.

"He brings up the Jeopardy! game and one of the rows is pop culture," she says. "It gets everybody a little bit more relaxed because most people were expecting something very boring and questions related to the content. So he always adds his own little personal touch to everything. He knows a lot about many little things."

Osti, who grew up in Brampton, confesses that he's not really a big "Jeopardy!" fan.

"I'm more a Trivial Pursuit kind of guy. I'm a fan of some of the more obscure movies and TV shows. I have this database of useless knowledge."

For example, one of his favourite movies as a child was "Westworld", which was not only written by *Jurassic Park* author Michael Crichton, but was directed by him as well, Osti adds.

That he knows those kinds of details helps him connect with older students in his classes, Rivera says. "There are some things he will know that someone of my generation or even his won't know."

Both of his parents were also educators: dad Gino was a school principal and mom JoAnn was a teacher. However, when Osti went to Toronto's Ryerson University, it was to study accounting with a minor in finance. Teaching wasn't on his mind at the time, and neither was insurance.

"When I graduated I knew I didn't want to work in accounting, so I was open to almost any job possibility."

A friend referred him to a gig at an Aviva Canada call centre to sell the President's Choice brand of insurance products. After about a year he moved to customer service. But from the begin-

ning, as he started his training, he found he enjoyed learning the business and sharing information about it.

"So I started putting together tip sheets, job aids and other resources. I'd show them to people around me, and I started to realize I was passionate about it."

Within a couple of years of entering the industry he earned his CIP, FCIP and CRM designations. He was ready to shift to training, so he began looking for an opportunity. He found it with ING Insurance (now Intact), where he was hired as a broker training consultant.

"Sometimes I think of Adrian as the Energizer Bunny," says Catherine Emmerson, who worked with Osti at Intact before her retirement three years ago and whom Osti regards as his mentor. "There's no stopping him. He's a great educator; that's really his niche."

When they met she was manager of training and audits for the insurer's personal lines, and he was in the sales and business development department.

"I think Adrian recognized there

would be more opportunity for training in the corporate team," she says. "So we chatted one day, and maybe I stole him."

His work ethic, energy and enthusiasm were so strong that Emmerson sometimes feared Osti might burn out.

"He was a joy to work with, and he made the rest of us look good," she says.

Osti says he was also influenced by the work habits of his parents, recalling that his father spent hours in his study at home every evening to prepare for the next school day. It's an approach Osti applies to his work, which his colleagues have also noticed.

"He's always available to help a student, whether it's reaching out to them by phone or email," Rivera

says. "After class, when everyone's gone, you'll sometimes see Adrian answering a student's questions."

Osti is also a source of inspiration for longtime friend Xuan Nguyen, who followed him into a career at Northbridge. They attended Ryerson together. Even back then, Nguyen recalls, Osti was always available to provide support from

both an academic and personal standpoint.

"He was a great advisor to me," Nguyen says, "but always as a peer. I knew the support and advice were coming from him as a friend."

Osti advised his friend to consider a career in insurance. Nguyen didn't take him up on that right away, deciding to go into banking instead. But after the two reconnected a few years later while taking adult education courses at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Nguyen made the switch to insurance and is now a learning specialist at Northbridge, working toward his CIP designation.

In his own teaching, Nguyen says he tries to emulate Osti's style, which he describes as "very detailed" and well-planned, but also "very fluid."

It also contains a good dose of humour. That not only avoids turning a lecture into a data dump, but it also helps break any unease a student might have in approaching the instructor.

Osti's ability to form connections extends well outside the classroom, though.

"Everyone loves him at work, and I think his humour and willingness to help others are the reasons why," Nguyen says.

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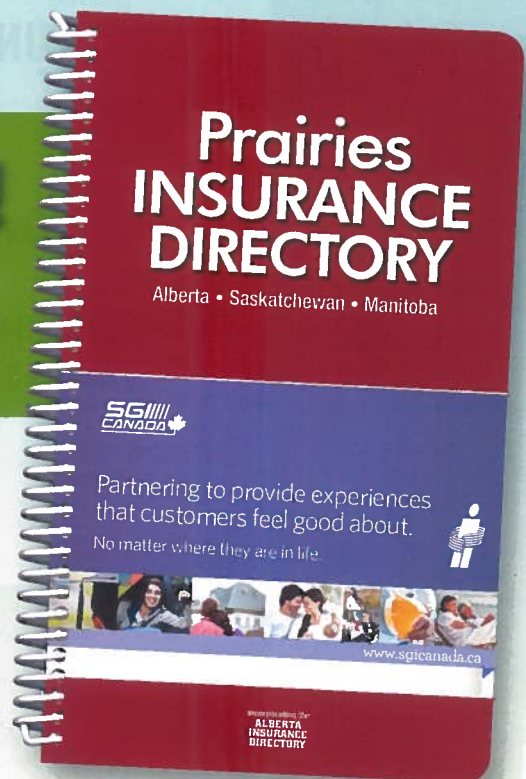


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