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Transition from a trainee to a certified residential appraiser

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Last year, I finally made the transition from a trainee to a certified residential appraiser. It was a long and somewhat arduous road to get the certification; thankfully, I had plenty of support from my colleagues and family. I came into this profession because it is a family business and wandering aimlessly through college surely wasn't paying the bills.

I have had many interesting experiences and learned valuable lessons and skills along the way. One of my favorite parts about being an appraiser is having the chance to meet a plethora of different people and to get a glimpse into their lives and lifestyles. It is a rare opportunity; I cannot think of many other jobs that would afford one access to such a cross-section of people. When I first started appraising about four years ago, I was definitely a more reticent person; I have unexpectedly become more socially-tuned as a necessary result of engaging with so many people.

I also enjoy the process of developing an opinion of value, because of the necessity of being able to defend said opinion. I majored in Philosophy in college because I loved learning how to form, defend, and critique arguments and positions. There is a certain overlap there with appraising; in appraising, there are appropriate methods of research, comparison, and analysis. One must be able to defend the choices made in forming an opinion of value, as there are not many correct ways to do so, and many ways to perform an error.

When it comes to education, I typically value hands-on experience much more than classroom time; becoming an appraiser was different. While experience in the field is obviously paramount to becoming an appraiser, the time I spent in classrooms learning from the instructors and classmates was invaluable. To me, the fundamentals of appraising are something that cannot be learned by appraising experience, due to the esoteric and lengthy process of developing an opinion of value.

There are several changes that have happened to the appraisal industry, even during my short tenure, whose merit I question. The transition to UAD-compliant reports certainly has its merits for clients and the secondary mortgage market, as it allows for easier analysis and comparison of large amounts of appraisal data. However, the Q quality and C condition rating systems are counterproductive to the ostensible goal of improving appraisal quality. Forcing appraisers to use absolute ratings in an analysis that, by definition and practice, is based on comparison, not only doesn't make sense, but leads to misleading data and results. The implementation of Collateral Underwriting has potential for further issues, but as yet is too new for comment.

While being an appraiser has its share of headaches (like any other profession), it is still a wonderful career path for the right type of person. My favorite part of being an appraiser is the flexibility; being able to set my own schedule and work during chosen hours is hugely advantageous. The necessity of maintaining a proper schedule in order to complete appraisals in a timely manner, yet balanced with seeing new properties, has greatly improved my organizational and time management skills.

Overall, I have enjoyed my time as an appraiser. It is an interesting career, with its own challenges

and rewards for those who seek them out.

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