

APPRENTICESHIP
IT WORKS

APPRENTISSAGE
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Daniel Gosselin



I live in Val d'Or and just finished my apprenticeship for being a plumber. I have been a journeyman since February 23, 2010. I am currently working with Plomberie Laroche, which is involved in renovating the court house.

Becoming an Apprentice

I was originally in the automotive industry as an auto parts manager. One day, my brother called and asked me: "Would you like to do some work to earn a bit more money?" I answered: "OK, when do I start?". So I started, and I loved it! I still remember the exact date: it was November 11, 2004. It was a very good choice. The route was difficult, but I like challenges. I am very positive and I think that there is always something to learn.

I took my training through the CCQ (Commission de la Construction du Québec). When you start an apprenticeship, you have to do at least one training session per year. In general, I did two training sessions per year; then I went looking for experience, to round it out. It was all paid for by the CCQ. Everything is included: your motel room and your board. The first course I took was the plumbing code; that lasted a month and a half. So that training helped me approach employers.

Some of the Challenges

I encountered tons of them! For example, when I was in 2nd year, the union called me to go to a generating station in the far north at Eastmain-1A. 42 days away and only 8 days off at home. I was new at the station; everything was huge. My family was not aware of that absence. Then after that, it went well for me. In the end, my perseverance paid off; you should never give up. I have very good memories from that experience.

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Finding an Employer

It wasn't obvious. It's always the same problem when you start out: you have to get yourself known, you have to set yourself apart. When you're new to the trade, you can't be afraid to speak up, to sell yourself: "to try me is to take me on" is what I kept saying. I went from place to place; I would go see the employer directly. In Val d'Or, my approach was to laugh and joke around, to have a relaxed attitude. I would chat a bit, I would show that I wanted to learn, that I could do anything. And then they would talk about my work experience.

The hardest thing is the first few years, when you have no experience in the trade. You need to keep saying that you want to learn. In fact, before the third year of apprenticeship, it's really hard.

What Worked and What Didn't

My age was not a weakness: I was 42 at the start of my training; you have a lifetime of experience behind you. In the end, that helped me; I have a family to support. Some young people are not as motivated, so that is a strength, but there are always employers who are reluctant to hire someone in their 40s.

My positive approach with employers did not always work. It's at those times when you think that you shouldn't give up; you feel it when the employer is hesitant. But I persevered; it's not the end of the world. You have to tell yourself that there are other employers. If you stop there, because an employer promises you a lot but never calls you, you will never get anywhere.

You have to like travelling, learning, to want to progress and learn from others. Some people tend to think they know everything because they went to school. Life on a job site is different; school is a base. When you have the chance on the site to meet people who have been at that trade for over 30 years, learn from them! Follow them! I am proud to say that my son has started his plumbing apprenticeship: he listens, he learns, he perseveres.

Trade: Plumber. Location: Val d'Or, Quebec. Apprenticeship year: Completed in February 2010

