

# Louis-Martin Boulanger

## 2005 CO-OP and OYAP Employer Award Winner

*This Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) award recognizes the commitment from local employers who implement co-op and/or apprenticeship opportunities to high school students. It is part of OCRI's ongoing campaign to raise awareness about the important benefits that work experience provides both students and employers.*



### The Employer

Louis-Martin Boulanger is the service manager at Orleans Toyota on the outskirts of Ottawa. After discovering what was not to be his field, Boulanger discovered a niche in automotive sales for Nissan, becoming assistant sales manager and garnering a top sales award for Nissan in Quebec. 11 years ago he joined Toyota, shortly thereafter asking for the opportunity to try something fresh, by switching to service. "I'm a hands-on kind of guy"

he says, "and Toyota gave me the chance to start from the bottom and work my way up, becoming a service advisor and then master advisor."

What makes him a good manager? "Listening to people" says Boulanger, "working hand-in-hand with technicians, trusting their knowledge and opinions, and just being human."

### The Co-op Opportunity

Boulanger says he likes "giving high school students the opportunity to make sure that the automotive repair and service trades are for them". He sees many students who have absolutely no idea what this work involves. Giving them a chance to explore motive power repair and service trades at Orleans Toyota has benefits all around as far as Boulanger is concerned.

Technicians appreciate the fact that co-op students give them a hand and make themselves useful.

In five years of taking on two co-op students per term, Boulanger has only had to send two home. In part he credits his success to the agreement he comes to with every co-op student at the outset "if you are not happy with your placement, you leave, if we are not happy with the placement you leave." Provided students are willing to learn and work, they get the chance to "learn tire repair and installation, cleaning up brakes by getting rust off disc drums; in short they get a chance to get their hands dirty as much as possible, by trying a variety of tasks".

Teachers from area schools call year after year to ask to have students placed, knowing that Boulanger and Orleans Toyota will

give all students a chance, even those considered problems by some. "It is an opportunity for them to see what work looks like in real life, and to take as many opportunities as they can while they are here."

### What makes co-op work

Boulanger says he has had greatest success with co-op students and apprentices who are "starting fresh," without any prior experience or preconceived notions of how things should be done. The mark of a good coop student is one who "wants to learn, is open-minded, knows he's only beginning to learn, and is willing to learn from everybody." They have to appreciate that different techs have their own ways of doing things and are used to working on their own. Boulanger tells them "So it's up to you to make yourselves useful, to ask and listen and learn. Make sure you don't stand in their way, because that costs the technician money."

### What customers should know

While customers view the training of apprentices to be part of the mandate of dealerships and independent shops, they also tend to want to have their vehicles serviced only by fully licensed technicians. What they need to realize, in Boulanger's view, is that those apprentices and co-op students getting a chance to prove their worth could be their son or daughter. This is something that the co-op teachers, who find placements for their students, fully appreciate.

### Training

Boulanger would love to find an effective way for apprentices to complete their training. "There are tons of apprentices out there, but no technicians, because lots stop at the first or second level of apprenticeship. " Not only do apprentices need to complete their training in order to succeed as technicians in shops like Orleans Toyota, but they will be expected to continue learning. Toyota provides all employees a variety of ways to upgrade their skills, be they technicians or office staff. Most of the training is available online, on DVD or in class through the Toronto-based Toyota Academy and University. Based on availability of training and staff time, employees can train on company time or on their own.

Once technicians achieve their Toyota Master Technician certificate, they hold credentials recognized anywhere in the world. Technicians take the training of their own free will, knowing that they are eligible for higher pay as they increased skills. Once technicians have attained master technician status they have to work at maintaining it.



### Quick Tips For Co-op Students

**Be open-minded.  
Be willing to learn from everybody.  
Ask, listen,...LEARN**



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Service d'entretien et de réparation automobiles du Canada

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