



FOUNDATIONS FIRST

Learn the Foundations Early Compound the Returns for a Career

Every confident lender was once a new hire staring at a first credit file. What separates those who ramp fast and decide well from those who stall is rarely raw talent. It's whether they were given a **real foundation, early, in the right order**. For 26 years, Shockproof has trained more than 125,000 credit professionals across hundreds of banks and credit unions, from new hires to chief credit officers, specializing in team training backed by credit coaching and a broad curriculum. This paper draws on that experience to make the case for front-loading the fundamentals of accounting, finance, and commercial credit, and to show what expert-built, test-reinforced curriculum does for productivity, retention, and risk.

8–12_{mo}

Typical time for a new hire to reach full productivity across knowledge roles.

30–50%

Faster time-to-productivity when onboarding is structured rather than improvised.

61% vs 40%

Knowledge retained a week later: active testing vs. simply re-reading material.

1:33

Good loans whose margin a single charge-off can erase; why judgment is trained, not guessed.

Why The Foundation Matters, And Why Now

Commercial banks face a documented squeeze on lending talent. Industry observers describe an **acute shortage of skilled commercial and real estate lenders**, and roughly a third of finance and accounting employers already report succession pressure as experienced staff retire. Meanwhile, the formal credit-training programs that once developed young analysts have grown scarce, leaving many new hires to absorb the fundamentals by osmosis.

That gap is expensive. Because lending runs on thin net interest margins, a single charge-off can wipe out the earnings on **dozens of performing loans**. The lender's first job is to protect the bank, and that instinct has to be built deliberately.

The timing argument is simple: skills learned early are applied for the length of a career, and the order in which they're learned matters. An analyst who understands **why profit and cash diverge** before touching a credit memo reads every subsequent file more clearly. Front-loading the fundamentals isn't remedial; it's the highest-leverage investment an institution can make in a career it hopes will last decades.

The remaining question is one of **design**: not whether to teach the foundations, but how to teach them so they actually stick.

"Reported profit is an opinion; cash is a fact." The analysts who internalize that on day one are the ones you trust with a file on day ninety.

Shockproof Founder Rex Beach's Core Philosophy

+0.5–0.6 σ

The testing effect is one of the most replicated findings in learning science. Across dozens of studies, learners who retrieve material through quizzing outperform those who restudy by a half standard deviation or more, and the advantage **grows** over time. Built-in knowledge checks aren't overhead; they're what makes the training last.



Designed By Experts, Proven By Testing

Great curriculum isn't a stack of slides; it's a sequence engineered by people who've underwritten real deals, then pressure-tested on real learners. Four design choices separate training that transfers to the job from training that's merely completed.

1

Deliberate sequencing

Short 10–12 minute modules build in the order concepts depend on one another: vocabulary, then statements, then cash flow, then credit.

2

Running real cases

Two borrowers, Riverbend Metalworks and Cedar Row Properties, recur across both paths, so the same numbers evolve into a live credit file.

3

Knowledge checks

Every module ends with retrieval questions, every course with a comprehensive test. Active recall is what makes learning last.

4

Test-out & gating

An open on-ramp with test-out lets capable hires move fast; later paths gate on mastery, not seat-time.

The Two Foundational Learning Paths For Lenders

UNIVERSAL ON-RAMP

Accounting & Finance Foundations

5 courses · ~24 modules · open enrollment · test-out available

PREREQUISITE: **NONE** · BUILT FOR ZERO PRIOR ACCOUNTING BACKGROUND

- Accounting Fundamentals for Lenders**
The language of business; profit vs. cash
- The Three Financial Statements**
Income statement, balance sheet & cash flow
- Commercial Real Estate Financial Analysis**
Rent rolls, NOI & property value
- Analyzing Business Tax Returns**
1120, 1120-S, 1065, Schedule C & K-1
- Cash Flow Analysis for Lenders**
How cash moves; the metrics lenders watch

HOW CREDIT WORKS

Commercial Lending Fundamentals

6 courses · ~22 modules · ends with a guided first credit file

PREREQUISITE: **ACCOUNTING & FINANCE FOUNDATIONS (OR TEST-OUT)**

- Commercial Banking Fundamentals**
The language & economics of business banking
- The Five C's & Repayment Sources**
How lenders actually think about risk
- Commercial Loan Types & Structures**
Lines, term loans & CRE, the loan toolbox
- Collateral, Liens & Documentation**
Perfection, priority & the core papers
- The Commercial Credit Process**
The team, the memo, risk ratings & regulators
- Capstone: A Real Credit File**
A guided first pass at Riverbend's file

The Productivity Payoff

4–6 mo

Competence with structured training vs. 8–12 unaided

~70%

Higher new-hire productivity reported with strong onboarding programs

82%

Better first-year retention when onboarding is done well

\$40K+

Typical lost output per hire during an unmanaged ramp period

Let Shockproof's experts design a custom credit training program for your team

Reach out to learn more
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Sources & notes: Retention figures from Roediger & Karpicke (2006); testing-effect magnitude from meta-analyses by Rowland (2014) and Adesope et al. (2017). Time-to-productivity and onboarding-productivity figures from SHRM, Gallup, and Brandon Hall Group research as summarized in 2025–2026 industry reporting; onboarding productivity/retention improvements are widely cited SHRM/Glassdoor benchmarks. Lending-talent and succession points from Robert Half, Wolters Kluwer, American Banker, and Bank Director. The margin-to-loss ratio and case examples are drawn from Shockproof's foundational curriculum and vary by institution. Figures are directional and provided for general education, not as financial or investment advice.