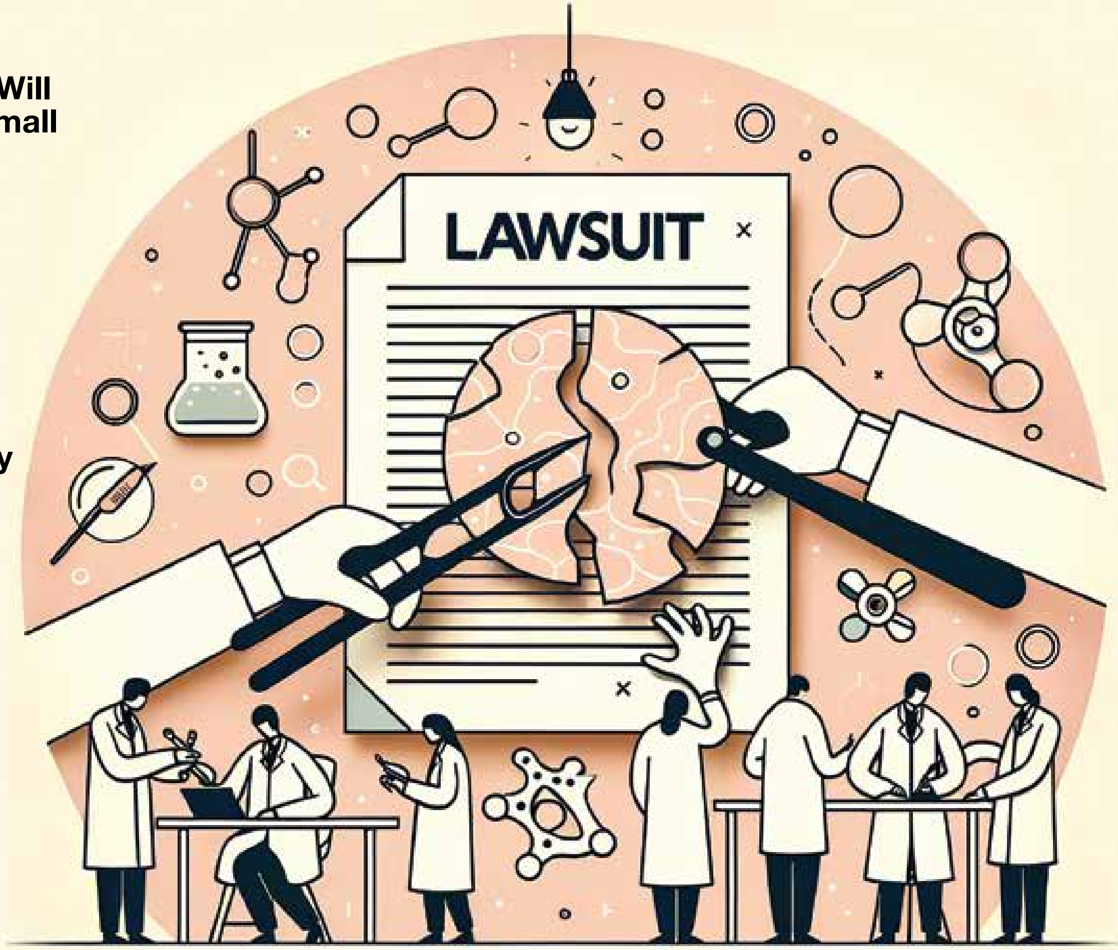
Spring 2024

Exclusive*focus*

An Official Publication of the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents, Inc.



Anatomy of a Lawsuit

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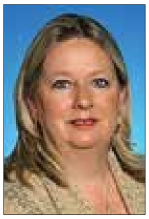


NAPAA Continues to Work for You

Claudia Gamache, NAPAA President, CPCU, ARM

NAPAA has been growing, and I am thankful to those of you who are members and support NAPAA. There is a lot more room in our tent for those who are thinking about joining or want to know more. As our numbers grow, we gain more credibility—which is important when we need to take action on your behalf. Think about other professionals and the representations they have to get things done. Some organizations have professional associations, others associate with labor unions. NAPAA can speak for agents when there is a need for the agent's voice. Your contract does not allow you to speak to outside media without permission. NAPAA can and has spoken on our behalf.

Allstate is a company in a transformation. Agents have requirements and expectations to keep their contracts and make money with many exceptions from the company. NAPAA has been helping agents understand how these changes are affected by the agency agreement. Communication has not been equal among the agents. The benefits of NAPAA include an organization that:

1) NAPAA has a history and understanding of the workings of the company, (refer to the NAPAA website and our "Bookshelf" loaded with history and information);

2) NAPAA is your advocate;

3) NAPAA is a resource for information for staffing, training, marketing, payroll processes, etc.;

4) NAPAA members receive immediate feedback and information with two Facebook blogs, the All Agents Page for current and past Allstate agents, and the Plan B for terminated and retiring agents to help with the transitions.; and

5) NAPAA produces three publications: *the Agent Informer*, *Direct Express* and *Exclusive Focus*.

If you have not seen these, call NAPAA membership services with your contact information. It is best to provide a personal email address. There is information that is exclusive to membership and other information available for all. Members can nominate other members for the board and have voting rights. Members can also be directors and then officers if you like.

Last year, we met with agents in various states. We intend to do four to six stops to meet with agents, answer questions, and take an opportunity to meet each other while enjoying a drink, snacks, and conversation. We are considering meet-and-greets in Indiana, California, Texas, and Pennsylvania. We have been to New York, North Carolina, Chicago and a few Texas locations. If you have a group of agents who would like to meet with us, let us know! It's possible we can figure out how to get representatives to you. We love meeting the agents and giving you an opportunity to see each other.

NAPAA is led by an executive director, Ted Paris. Ted has the background of owning multiple Allstate agencies and he has a background as a Farmer's agency manager. Ted is supported by a Board of Directors made up of current and past Allstate agents. We are elected and volunteers. We work on your behalf. Ted manages our association, including editors for our magazines and newsletters. He works with the vendors that help support our organization with their marketing dollars. Ted is also the liaison with our attorneys representing Allstate agents in our current lawsuit. This suit is not to hurt Allstate, but to make them follow the "agreement" on a consistent basis for all agents. Are all sales handled the same? Are terminations handled the same? Are there exceptions? Is there solid documentation? You need these processes to be consistent and predictable.

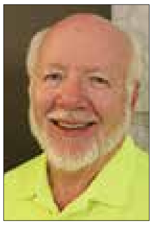
The NAPAA executive board just ended a meeting in Florida and had the prior NAPAA director visit us. We discussed the problems that were the biggest concern during their term. It stood out that we currently have a similar problem concerning agents. Those problems also had to do with expectations and terminations that can cost your contract. During their tenure it was life production, today it's ABO. Those activities then cause agents to need to sell or TPP their agency and the problems that surround that. This is where your association helps to define the rules and assist in sending you in the correct direction.

However, our communication has moved so much further ahead due to email, Facebook, and our experienced information team, including a very seasoned attorney guiding us for your benefit. Our success is only possible with a strong management team, board of directors, and support resources. I have been part of the board long enough to see talented, dedicated board members working for us all. My message is to be a member, use our resources, share with us if you and fellow agents might benefit from a local visit. Participate however you can. Call a board member or Ted if you would like to talk.

To your success!

Claudia Gamache retired in January of 2023 as an agent for Allstate Insurance, after having been an active agent from 2004 to 2022. She holds a broker's license and plans to continue her insurance education. Over the past years, she has served on various insurance and community Board of Directors. Claudia is currently the president of the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents. She has a CPCU, ARM, and AMIM designation, and her experience includes management at branch, regional, and national levels.

Her experience has been primarily in Property and Casualty, but she also has Life Insurance experience and passed the 6 & 63 exams. She has been on the company and aAgency side of the business, and some of her more interesting experiences have been working with the E&S market and the development of PEO.



Change is Inevitable

Agents should carefully document EVERYTHING as policies constantly shift

Ted Paris, NAPAA Executive Director

Being in the insurance industry these days is not for the faint of heart. The industry is a simple business—you know, you find people to talk to, you tell them what you are going to tell them, then you tell them, and finally you tell them what you told them. Then you ask them to give you money. Then you remind them why they should stay with you. Simple.

But simple is not easy. It's never been easy. But today, most companies have made your job even more difficult. The way companies want you to find clients is way too difficult. Way too many steps, hurdles, and requirements. Way too many government rules and regulations. Way too many company mandates. Everything is way too complicated.

Then, once you find the potential client, the Company now claims those names are their property and if you don't do a one and done sales approach, then later that day or shortly after, the company will try to sell them as their own. Fair? Of course not. But the contract allows for it. It's immoral in my mind but not illegal. But it is the environment in which we live. Accept it or not, agents need to learn how to deal with it. You can fight it, but you won't win the argument. My advice is not to be Don Quixote tilting at windmills. If you don't know of him, google it. It's about trying to right the wrongs of people in charge. Sort of like against all odds.

Included in this issue of the magazine is an article titled "The Anatomy of a Lawsuit." It is about the trials and tribulations of filing a lawsuit and the challenges of doing so. I get questions about the current lawsuit all the time. I get asked why we aren't suing for the Independent Contractor status. I get asked about suing for having quotas, and questions on ABO and more.

So why didn't we file a lawsuit about the above? Simply put, there is not an objective legal merit to those claims. The chance of winning a suit containing those arguments would not survive legal motions to dismiss. As I have told many of you, the wording of the contract is simply too well written in favor of Allstate that a judge would immediately agree with Allstate and summarily dismiss. Remember though, I am not an attorney.

I also get asked about Allstate misleading new agents during the recruitment process. Questions about Allstate changing commissions. Questions about Allstate stealing your clients and writing them after hours. And others.

NAPAA actually has three law firms that we deal with on a regular basis. NAPAA also has had discussions with numerous law firms throughout the country. We have good relations with all of them. Trust me, we monitor possible violations that Allstate might or may not be doing. We are monitoring changes to protect you.

My advice to you is to learn how to deal with change. Join NAPAA so we can continue to monitor what is happening to the agency force. Keep records of all communications with your sales leaders and Company management. You need to document everything. You need to track time and place. Remember that the local leaders, Sales Market Leaders, and the District Sales Leaders do not have the ability to approve or deny. They don't have that authority. So, when dealing with them, be polite, be respectful, and be professional. You should always start there, but don't stop there if you want an official answer.

If you are a member, I will give you all the information you need. If you are a nonmember, I am happy to have an initial discussion with you.

Ted began his 30-year career in insurance at Farmers Insurance. There, in his 18 years as a district manager, he personally recruited and trained over 50 scratch agencies. When Ted left Farmers in 2005, his district was the largest in the Indianapolis area and the third largest in the state of Indiana. He continued his insurance career at Allstate, where he purchased three agencies in west-central Indiana. While at Allstate, Ted served on the North Central Regional Advisory Board, and earned numerous awards including the Chairman's Award, the Leader's Club Award, the National Conference Award, and many Honor Rings. Ted was an Allstate agent starting in 2005 until he sold and retired in 2017. He has been the Executive Director for NAPAA since 2017. He can be contacted at ted.paris@napaausa.org.

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Anatomy of a Lawsuit

Ted Paris

Unless you have sued someone, you probably have little understanding as to the complexity of bringing a suit to fruition. Suing someone is hard. It's difficult. It's expensive. It's time-consuming.

Prior to even thinking about suing, many items must align. First, finding out if the opposing party—the one you are suing—violated your rights. To determine this, there needs to be a great deal of work in finding out if the actions of the opposing party occurred. Did those actions cause harm? Did those actions breach a contract you have with the other party? Or, are the actions allowed to happen under the contract? For example, we all know that Allstate's action of reducing renewal commissions resulted in a drop in your income. And that drop in the renewal commission caused your TPP to drop. Further, as a net result, the value of your agency also went down. But, while causing you financial harm, did Allstate's action violate the contract you have with them? The short answer is NO, it did not. The agreement you signed allows them to reduce commissions. There is no legal harm to you. Thus, no harm, no foul. No lawsuit.

Can We Sue?

When NAPAA was asked by many members to sue Allstate, we had a few issues to contend with. First, if we were going to wage war with Allstate, we needed to be sure that our legal arguments had objective legal merit. By that, under the language of the contract, could we bring a legal argument that what Allstate was doing was in violation or a breach of the contract? To prove harm, we had to collect tons of information from many agency owners. Once armed with this information, we needed to start interviewing attorneys to see if they had an interest in pursuing a lawsuit against Allstate. One would be amazed by the number of attorneys who said no up front. They did not want to be a part of suing the monster-Allstate. Too hard, too much work, too long a time frame, not enough capacity to handle, or they had worked with/for Allstate in the past and it would be a conflict of interest. On and on.

Next in line of important obstacles was the question of how to pay for the lawsuit. Most agents wanted NAPAA to bring a class action suit against Allstate and assumed the attorneys would take the case on contingency. The general feeling was that we would prevail and make tons of money and make Allstate sorry for its actions against the agency force. But think again. While class action law firms thought the case might have merit, they were unwilling to do a contingent fee given the enormous time and expense involved. So, we approached the agency force and asked, "If NAPAA can find a way to sue Allstate that has objective legal merit, will you fund the lawsuit?" The agency owners came together, and we have raised a considerable amount of money to fund the case. We still have money, but we will need more.

NAPAA Chose Wisely

After a lot of due diligence, we found a nationally-known attorney, James Bopp, to take on the case. To prepare for the case, his firm studied the Allstate EA agreement, the EA Manual, the Agents Standards, the ever-changing R3001 Supplements. We interviewed and reviewed information from hundreds of agents before finally drafting out a legal complaint against Allstate. After 18 months of studying and preparing, the Bopp law firm filed complaints against Allstate in May 2021. And in many ways, this was just the start.

When we started these law proceedings against the Company, there were 10,800 agency operations and over 8,500 individual owners. Today there are fewer than 7,300 offices and fewer than 5,000 owners. Think about this for a moment. Over 3,500 agencies are gone. How many left Allstate to retire? How many terminated for ABO? How many terminated for "cause?" How many were "allowed" to sell? We can come back to this later.

Back to the "Anatomy of a Lawsuit"

When you file a case, you must decide which Court system, Federal or State, that you think is best for your case and which one has jurisdiction. Our attorney chose to start in the Federal court system as it is easier to deal with and most judges have law clerks, making movement of the case speed along a little quicker. Of course, Allstate immediately objected to the federal system. We don't know why, but they objected. We decided if Allstate wanted to use the State systems that we would refile in Cook County, State of Illinois. We hired an additional firm in Illinois to assist us. We refiled in August of 2021, the case was assigned to a judge in Cook County, and it was off to the races. But suing is like running the 300-meter, high hurdle race with many hurdles to jump over. If not prepared for the race, you certainly will wear out and not complete it.

Immediately after our filing, Allstate tried to get the entire case dismissed. They also tried to get each of the twelve individual complaints thrown out, as well as trying to get NAPAA removed from the case and arguing that Cook County, IL, was not the correct venue for the case to be filed. So, from the get-go, we must overcome 15 motions to dismiss. And we did overcome them, and the case was allowed to move forward. After several meetings with the judge and opposing counsel, the judge announced she was retiring, and the case was assigned to a new judge. We basically started over. Allstate objected to the wording of two of the complaints, and we revised the wording. And guess what? With the two revisions and a new judge presiding over the case, Allstate again filed motions to dismiss the cases, the individual complaints, and NAPAA's standing to sue on behalf of the agency force. After our attorneys responded to this round of motion dismissals, the new judge ruled the case could continue forward. That was in January 2022.

Allstate Begins Its Delay Tactics

The speed of the trial is in part determined by the judge and court schedule. So, we are at the mercy of both attorney firms being able to be available when the judge's calendar is open. If the opposing counsel is not available, the judge merely postpones until all parties are available. After the judge ruled the case was not going to be dismissed, the discovery process began. Each side must prepare Interrogatories—questions to which we want answers—and then we need to request discovery of documents. We have nine complaints against Allstate, so we must prepare numerous interrogatories and requests for discovery. Opposing counsel has the right to request to the judge that NAPAA does not need them, making us argue why we do. Allstate has the right to request from us similar information. This back-and-forth is both expensive and time consuming.

The judge rules for or against each objection. She issued an order to comply, and the opposing counsel is required to send us what we want. Well, sort of. They stall, send us part of the information, or claim the information is proprietary, not available, etc. This will cause the need for another hearing. For a novice such as myself, it drives me crazy. But it is just part of the system.

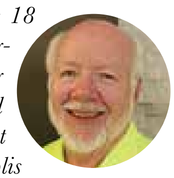
Going Strong

I get asked "What can you tell me about the lawsuit?" "What is going on?" "Is it ever going to be over?" "Do we have a chance to win?" All of these are great questions. Unfortunately, I don't have all the answers. But, NAPAA has three great law firms working on this case. We are not "outmatched." We are holding our own, and we are continuing to put pressure on opposing counsel to supply us with what we need. We are continuing to move forward. The next step is completing depositions where we are asking people under oath some very tough questions. Trust me, I have faith in our attorneys that we will prevail in the end.

We are much closer to the end than the start. Remember, the goal of our lawsuit is to make Allstate honor its agreement with you. If you ever want to sell your agency without inference, you should support our actions. You have the right to operate your agencies in a way that is consistent with Allstate's description of you as independent business owners. That also includes choosing your own phone system.

Final Note, but the Most Important One

At this moment, my biggest concern is related more to agency owners losing interest, accepting what Allstate gives them, and running out of money, as Allstate and opposing counsel are masterful at delay tactics. Clearly, NAPAA is in this to win. Our members and many non-members recognize the importance of our success and have contributed to this effort. But, we need more vocal support and, ultimately, more financial support. This is where EAs win or lose. This is the moment when each of you dig just a little deeper into your pockets and help put us over the finish line. Hold Allstate accountable for their actions and stop their interference in your Agency Operations.



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March 5, 2024

National Association of Professional Allstate Agents Board of Directors
Ted Paris, Executive Director 110 Horizon Drive, Suite 210 Raleigh, North Carolina 27615 877/627-2248
ted.paris@napaausa.org

Re: National Association of Professional Allstate Agents, et al. v. Allstate Insurance Company – Case Status

Dear Mr. Paris and NAPAA Board Members:
I am pleased to announce that we have made significant progress in the above-referenced case against Allstate Insurance Company. I write to you today to provide an overview of our latest accomplishments, as well as a general outlook on the case's progression.

As you may recall, NAPAA alleges four counts of breach of contract against Allstate based on Allstate's: (1) blanket policy to not consider existing Allstate agents for agency sales; (2) expansion of independent agents into EA territories; (3) "poaching" of policies from EAs through CCC/Internet; and (4) mandate of Allstate Agency Voice.

We also filed claims on behalf of four individual plaintiffs alleging varying claims of breach of contract for interference in the sale of agent's agencies, lack of good faith and fair dealing in denial of the sale of agent's agencies, and unjust termination for cause.

<u>Status of Pleadings</u>

Since the filing of the complaint, Allstate has brought a series of motions to oppose, dismiss, sever, and transfer the case. NAPAA has largely prevailed with regard to the rulings of those motions.

Allstate filed its first motion to dismiss the complaint on October 7, 2021. We opposed, and the court ultimately ruled in favor of NAPAA. Further, the court sided with NAPAA in Allstate's bid to split the case into separate lawsuits for each individual plaintiff and NAPAA, as well as a motion to transfer the case to a friendlier court. We opposed, and the court sided with us, denying both motions.

After amending our complaint, Allstate again filed a motion to dismiss, making the same arguments that it did in its October 2021 motion to dismiss. We again opposed, and the court again sided with us.

Status of Discovery

We began to exchange written discovery with Allstate at the beginning of 2022. NAPAA and the individual plaintiffs separately put forth sets of Interrogatories (written questions) and Requests for Production of Documents on Allstate, and Allstate put forth separate sets of the same on all plaintiffs.

As anticipated, Allstate has provided objections and incomplete responses to discovery responses. The court then required Allstate to provide supplemental information to a number of NAPAA's interrogatories. We are still conferencing with Allstate for supplemental document production.

Status of Relevant Allstate Policy

Concurrent with and perhaps a result of our efforts and proposals, Allstate has been making relevant changes to its policies on independent agent channels and AAV which directly relate to the claims NAPAA has brought against Allstate.

First, with regard to independent agent channels, Allstate announced it is converting Allstate branded independent agent and Encompass relationships to the National General platform. Once converted, these agents will not be able to write Allstate-branded products. This should provide relief to exclusive agents currently losing business via the expansion of independent agents. Allstate has stated it expects this change to be nationwide by the end of 2024.

Second, with regard to the forced implementation of AAV, Allstate has announced that beginning in 2024, agents will have the option between Avaya and a second service provider, which will provide additional capabilities to agents. Notably, many of these additional capabilities were among what we previously requested, including increased user-friendliness and support, unlimited call queue and rings, and a real-time self-service portal with ability to delegate access. Of course, Allstate is not bound to keep these positive changes, which is why we continue to pursue NAPAA's claims.

Outlook

It is my position the case is on track, remains strong, and is moving forward.

At this time, given occurrences to date and Allstate's counsel's representations in court, I do not anticipate that we will be able to settle any NAPAA claims in the immediate future, meaning we will be continuing to pursue litigation efforts while keeping the door open for resolution.

Thank you for allowing our firm to represent you in this matter. We will continue to apply our best efforts to your case and keep you informed.

Sincerely,

The Bopp Law Firm, PC

James Bopp, Jr. Cassandra R. Dougherty

About The Bopp Law Firm, PC

The Bopp Law Firm, PC was founded by James Bopp, Jr. to provide legal assistance to individuals, advocacy groups, candidates, and Political Action Committees ("PACs") navigating the ever-changing fields of not-for-profit tax law, Campaign Finance, Election Law, First Amendment and Constitutional Law, Strategic Planning, Supreme Court Practice.

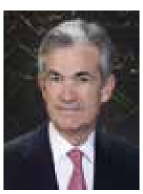
Visit the Bopp Law Firm PC Website

The 12 People Who Will Most Impact Your Small Business in 2024

Gene Marks

This article was previously published online at *The Hill*.

There are 12 people whose decisions will impact the profits and growth for many small businesses next year. Keep a close eye on them.

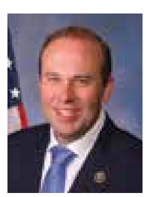


Jerome Powell
Chairman of the Federal Reserve
Honorable Mention: Janet Yellen, Treasury Secretary

As I write this, the national prime rate is now averaging about 8.5 percent, and many small-business owners like me are in the midst of refinancing loans that are coming due for working capital, property, and equipment. But remember that prime is for the best customers. The interest rates our banks will charge are, for most small companies, a few points above prime, and that will have a significant impact not only on our ability to service any new debt but also to raise capital for business growth. A cut in interest rates by the Federal Reserve will help to alleviate that problem. A new federal reserve ruling called the Basel III Framework, if enacted, may also have a significant impact on how banks lend to small businesses too.

Danny Werfel
Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service
Honorable Mention: Janet Yellen

As the IRS, which is part of the Treasury Department and under Secretary Janet Yellen's domain, begins to spend its $80 billion windfall from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, my clients—particularly "wealthier" business owners—are already bracing for more audits and an increased level of scrutiny on their business structures.

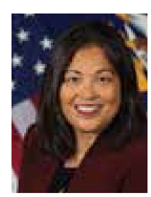


Jason Smith (R-Mo.)
Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee
Honorable Mention: House Speaker Michael Johnson (R-L.A.) and Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.)

Provisions from the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that impact small businesses have already begun to expire and more will come to an end after 2025, most significantly the Qualified Business Income Tax Deduction, which offers a tax deduction for small businesses that are "pass-through" entities such as S-corporations and partnerships. There's been an increasing call for "tax extenders" to push these expiration dates further back, and we can expect this issue to become a priority over the next 12-24 months.

Michael Johnson (R-L.A.)
House Speaker
Honorable Mention: Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.)

A government shutdown loomed in January 2023 and rested in the hands of House Republicans, and another one looms this spring. If no deal is reached and the shutdown persists for more than a few weeks, countless small businesses—from delicatessen owners who provide lunch to government workers to firms that contract with the government to business travelers seeking passports—will be impacted.



Julie Su
acting Secretary of Labor
Honorable Mention: Lauren McFerran, Chairperson of the National Labor Relations Board

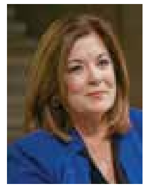
While not confirmed by the Senate, Su this year will oversee (and defend) the implementation of new rules governing overtime pay and worker classifications. These regulations, while sure to be contested by business groups, will increase our compensation costs and make it more difficult to use independent contractors in our business. Updated Joint Employer rules recently issued by the NLRB will also impact many small businesses that are in the franchising and construction industries.

Charlotte A. Burrows
Chairperson of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Honorable Mention: Doug Parker, assistant secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, and Michael Regan, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency

The EEOC will continue to be very active in 2024. And with an updated rule governing harassment expected to take effect early in the year, the agency will be further armed to go after employers of all sizes that it—and the employees who report them—alleges to be creating unsafe or risky workplaces for their workers. Both OSHA and the EPA have very aggressive agendas for 2024 that will likely create more regulations and costs for small businesses.

Isabella Guzman
Administrator of the Small Business Administration
Honorable Mention: Bridget Weston, CEO of SCORE, and Bruce Purdy, SBA associate administrator of the Office of Small Business Development Centers

A tireless promoter of small businesses, Isabella Guzman—who can mostly be found on the road—has been one of the best SBA administrators in recent memory. Her agency will continue to be an important resource for business who rely on their 7(a), 504 and other loan programs (particularly the ones that directly fund small businesses in federally declared disaster zones) for resources as well ashelping small businesses deal with the federal bureaucracy.



Suzanne P. Clark
CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Honorable Mention: Brad Close, president of the National Federation of Independent Businesses, and Nykia Wright, interim CEO of the National Association of Realtors

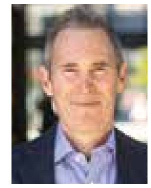
These are associations that represent the interests of millions of companies, and you can rely on their advocacy to fight the increasingly regulatory challenges that have been challenging small business both at the federal and state level. The challenges facing that nation's realtors—from commissions earned to housing woes—will both directly and indirectly impact countless small firms throughout the year.

Satya Nadella
CEO of Microsoft
Honorable Mention: Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google; Marc Benioff, CEO of Salesforce; and Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI

As artificial intelligence tools begin to proliferate in 2024, many of the mainstream business applications used by my company and my clients—from office collaboration to accounting to customer relationship management—will change the way companies do business in a very good way, at least for those companies who lean into this new technology and recognize it as a tool for increased productivity and efficiencies.

Sundar Pichai
CEO of Google

Online search and advertising are critical for many small businesses, and that monopoly is held by Google (which also owns YouTube). Small tweaks to Google's and YouTube's search parameters create huge changes for companies that rely on online ads for their livelihoods. 2024 will see the start of the Google's change in how "cookies" are downloaded to track browsing habits; this will likely create additional confusion and challenges.



Andy Jassy
CEO of Amazon
Honorable Mention: Josh Silverman, CEO of Etsy; Benji Shomair, vice president of Commerce Business at Facebook; and Tobias Lütke, CEO of Shopify

Most small businesses, particularly retailers, have realized the benefits of opening online channels to sell their goods, and Amazon remains the largest destination to find customers around the world. But Amazon isn't the only game in town. Etsy has proved to be an enormous benefit for providing additional side-gig income for artisans and creators, and e-commerce platforms like Shopify have made it easier for smaller companies to set up their own stores, both in and independent of the larger marketplaces.

Ryan Roslansky
CEO of LinkedIn
Honorable Mention: Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, and Elon Musk, CEO of X

Social media platforms will continue to be an important place for small businesses to engage their communities and sell their products. The leading business site continues to be LinkedIn, but both Facebook and Twitter will continue to grow their small-business members with opportunities to sell their products and build communities.

You may wonder why I'm not including President Biden or his presidential challengers; that's because 2024 is an election year and, excepting foreign policy decisions, I'm not expecting any big changes from these people that will impact businesses while they campaign. But whoever wins the White House in November certainly will be making changes. So let's worry about that in a year, OK?

Gene Marks is founder of The Marks Group, a small-business consulting firm. He frequently appears on CNBC, Fox Business and MSNBC.

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https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/4377576-the-12-people-who-will-most-impact-your-small-business-in-2024/

Unlock Your Agency's Full Potential

Troy Korsgaden and Michelle Hubert

The information era has transformed the dynamic in the insurance and financial services industry. Clients no longer need to come to you for the basics. They now control the purchasing process with access to more information than ever before. We still succeed by providing value to our clients, but how we provide that value has changed.

We are going to share with you a powerful approach to unlocking your agency's full potential. It employs a radically different practice management mindset that involves shifting your focus from sales to service and client relationships. In this model, building deep relationships with your clients by providing unrivaled service offers the greatest potential for consistent, long-term growth.

Think of other businesses often referred to as practices, such as medical clinics and law firms. We refer to them that way because they offer an expertise-based service that fulfills a specific set of needs. Like any business, they must generate a profit to survive. But we don't generally think of interactions with legal and medical practices as transactional. They provide value through the expertise and solutions they offer and generate profit through the relationships they build. The same is true for your insurance and financial services practice. To accelerate growth in your agency, you must first shift from a transactional to a relationship mindset, placing service over sales.

Become the Gateway

Your goal is to become the gateway to all your clients' insurance and financial services needs—even those you don't offer through your agency. When a client has questions about protecting their physical or financial assets, the first person they should think of is you. They should see you as a partner in helping them to manage risk protection and achieve their financial goals.

At Korsgaden International, we focus on five business-growth objectives for becoming the gateway:

1. Building a High-Performance Team
2. Maximizing the Sales Process
3. Deepening Client Relationships
4. Optimizing Operations
5. Leading with Purpose

Let's explore how each of these objectives works to transform your agency into an indispensable source of value to your clients.

Building a High-Performance Team

A high-performance team provides unrivaled, professional service and solutions to clients. They perform to high standards of excellence and are committed to a common vision, working together to achieve superior results.

To build a high-performance team, you first define your desired organizational structure, focusing on roles rather than people. Then you assess the capabilities of your current team to identify opportunities and gaps. From this assessment, you can identify:

- Team members who require further development in their current roles.
- Team members who may advance into specialist roles.
- New team members you will need to hire to achieve your goals.
- Crucial conversations you must have with team members who are not performing to high standards.
- Partnerships you want to develop with experts outside of your organization who provide products or services you do not.
- Developing and executing this organizational structure and staffing plan is the first step in building a practice that provides your clients with unmatched expertise and unrivaled service.

Maximizing the Sales Process

Putting service over sales does not mean you ignore the sales process! It does mean, however, that you focus on building relationships throughout the sales process. When you consistently put clients first, the sales will follow. To accelerate agency growth, we recommend focusing on three areas: lead generation and management, appointment-setting, and conducting powerful client meetings.

Lead Generation and Management. People do business with people they know and trust. Focus your efforts on generating new leads through client referrals and centers of influence. Prospects will be more open to speaking with you when you are referred by someone they trust. You should also develop a plan for identifying leads within your existing book of business. We believe each household has up to 10 opportunities. One highly successful strategy we use is what we call a "retooling day," where we contact every client to update their information in our database. These conversations almost always uncover additional client needs.

Appointment-Setting. Appointments are the lifeblood of your agency. You must schedule enough appointments every day to ensure a consistent selling cycle. We recommend holding a minimum of 10 agency appointments every day.

Conducting Powerful Client Meetings. Every client meeting is an opportunity to deepen the relationship, learn more about them, and uncover additional needs. This five-step process will ensure consistent, powerful client meetings every time:

1. **Gather information.** Getting a 360-degree view of your clients is essential for building a comprehensive plan.

2. **Give information.** Use the meeting as an opportunity to remind your clients of the value you provide and explain what sets you apart from the competition.

3. **Provide recommendations.** Partner with clients to determine the best solutions for their family or business.

4. **Pivot.** Never try to sell your client anything other than what they came in for that day. Instead, pivot to identify next-focus topics for future appointments.

5. **Close.** One of two things must always happen at the close of any meeting (preferably both): Close the sale the client came in for and identify the next product or service to schedule a subsequent appointment.

Implementing a consistent meeting process provides value to your clients and can generate opportunities for additional business.

Deepening Client Relationships

Your book of business is one of the most powerful lead-generation tools you have. When working with agencies, we are often surprised at how infrequently they stay in touch with clients after the initial sale. Many only reach out to clients once a year at renewal time.

You must stay top of mind with clients to maintain the relationship and retain their business. We use a client engagement matrix to ensure we connect with clients at least seven times a year. We also recommend scheduling an annual review with every client every year. This annual review is not a sales meeting. In addition to ensuring your clients have adequate coverage, it reinforces your position as the gateway to all their insurance and financial services needs.

The experience your clients have with your agency is as important as the products and services you provide. At a minimum, clients expect a positive experience with every interaction and across every channel. Whether they are connecting with your business in person, online, over the phone, or via email or text, your clients expect convenient, friendly, and knowledgeable service. Take time to examine the client experience to remove pain points and identify opportunities to enhance service.

We often say that a value proposition is a promise to your clients—a promise to deliver superior service and provide quality products and services that they truly value and need. Make sure you are delivering on your promise with every client interaction.

Optimize Operations

In today's environment, agency leaders must think like business owners. Establish processes to regularly monitor key business metrics and financials and assess the ROI of different strategies. You should know industry averages and be able to justify each expense line item in your budget.

Providing unrivaled service while also managing expenses requires streamlined processes. Documenting processes and workflows will create consistency and make training team members more efficient. Another highly effective strategy for streamlining operations is creating talk paths for client interactions. Documented processes along with talk paths ensure every client receives the same information and level of service regardless of which team member they speak to.

Lead with Purpose

Streamlined systems and processes and team training and development are essential elements in a high-performance organization. However, the element that has the greatest influence on high performance is your agency's culture. What has the most influence on culture? You.

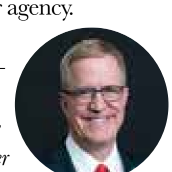
At Korsgaden International, we promote a serve-first culture. We believe that team engagement is the true measure of leadership. To create a serve-first culture, you must put a framework in place to build connections, create consistency, and foster collaboration.

I'm sure you are familiar with many of the tools used to provide direction and guidance for teams, such as vision and mission statements and core values. We recommend going a step further. Define team behaviors to emphasize that how the team works together is as important as the results they achieve. Implement weekly team meetings and scorecards to track key performance indicators. Develop conflict resolution guidelines for the inevitable disagreements that arise. Schedule one-on-one quarterly conversations to clarify expectations, make course corrections, and refocus on priorities.

We each own what happens in our business. Good or bad, it is always the leader. To create a high-performance, serve-first culture, you must first establish a framework for success, and then ask yourself each day: What am I doing to build connections, create consistency, and foster collaboration within my team?

Organizational Alignment

Focusing on these five business objectives creates alignment of purpose, people, and processes across your organization. Together, they provide direction and focus that increases team engagement, strengthens client retention, and unlocks the full potential of your agency.



Troy Korsgaden, president and principal of Korsgaden International, and Michelle Hubert, principal, are highly sought-after insurance carrier consultants and international speakers. They can be reached at troy@korsgaden.com and michelle@korsgaden.com.

Korsgaden International specializes in the seamless distribution ecosystem, global marketing, strategy and execution, agency building, and technology implementation for many of the world's largest insurance carriers and financial services companies. To learn more about Korsgaden International's Practice Management Program, contact support@korsgaden.com.

Incremental Income

Richard Pope

Everyone likes extra money—right? Extra money can pay bills, pay for vacations, college tuitions, and a bigger house or an extra car. Extra money can just make life a lot easier, but how do you get it? Well, you can invest—but then again, you must do your homework to determine the best investment for you. You don't want to invest in something that takes years to pay off. You don't want to invest in something that might be untried and unproven. You know the old saying, "if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is too good to be true."

When looking for a safe place to invest, why not consider franchise business ownership? Franchises are regulated by the Federal Trade Commission, and they are usually simple and effective. The common reference used to describe a franchise business is that it is "A business in a box that comes complete with training and instructions." Internally, it is referred to as "plug and play." The point is—it's simple. Not only are franchises simple, but most of them are also quite successful. Of course, you can also validate the success of any franchise by talking with existing franchise owners and operators.

One of the biggest misnomers in franchising is "you need experience" to be successful. This is not true at all. Experience can't hurt, but most franchise companies would prefer you to have simple business savvy. If you can manage people and do simple math, you can be a successful franchise business owner. You don't need to be a doctor to run a hospital, you don't need to be a plumber to run a plumbing company and you don't need to be a mechanic to run an automotive repair shop. What you do need is a personality. You need to be able to talk and interact with people and you need the ability to hire, fire, and manage people.

Over my years in franchising, I have seen a banker become a successful, multi-unit automotive franchise owner. I have seen a gentleman who owned a movie theater become franchisee of the year as a franchise restaurant owner, and I have seen an insurance agent become a millionaire running a residential cleaning franchise. The one thing

that all these people had in common was business savvy. They looked at the business as a business—not a job.

Yes, you do need to spend money to make money. Franchises are not free. Each franchise company has minimum financial qualifications for you to qualify. Your personal financial situation is one of the biggest filters used by a franchise business consultant in identifying what type of franchise you are best suited for. As the old saying goes, "don't bite off more than you can chew." The beauty of this is that there are many different types of franchises at many different price points. On top of that, you will find that financing a franchise is easier than you thought it would be. Franchises are, as a rule, safe investments, and most banks and the SBA are willing to finance them.

So, I said that a franchise could produce "incremental income." Does that mean that I can have a franchise business on the side and keep my day job? The answer is "YES—absolutely." The common names given to this option are, "side hustle, semi-absentee ownership model and investor model." All are basically the same and require you as the owner/investor to hire someone to manage your business while your job is to manage the manager. Many times, a member of the family may choose to work for you and manage the business—this is great because it gives you a greater element of trust. Other options are to bring in a highly incentivized employee or a minority business partner. Since you will be keeping your day job, you will want to give the manager as much control as possible to keep your involvement to no more than 10 hours per week.

Over the years, I have seen many part time franchise owners become full time owners because their circumstances change. Their business is merged or bought out, and they find themselves out of work and decide to take over their side hustle for full-time employment. Many times, the part time franchise owner will scale his/her business and it becomes bigger than their job, so they quit the job and transition over. Whatever the case may be, it is always nice to have a safety net and/or an exit strategy. Franchise business ownership can be the perfect alternative.

Owning a franchise business, either as an investment, side hustle, or full-time occupation is also a great method for building wealth. Profitable businesses can be sold for a premium and there are many buyers out there who would prefer to buy an operational business as opposed to a start-up. Ownership transition occurs all the time as people retire and circumstances change but one thing that always holds true is the fact that you can sell a business, but you can't sell a job.

Most people feel stuck in a job. If you want more out of life, you must go out and get it. I can help you with that. Feel free to give me a call or just set up an appointment with me on my calendar link below.

Richard Pope is a career franchise business consultant who has been active in franchising for over 35 years and has helped thousands of people find their way through the process including his son and his daughter. Richard has worked at the highest levels of franchising for several corporate franchising giants and has traveled the world installing franchises. Richard is now self-employed and is affiliated with FranChoice, a franchise referral group. Richard lives in Scottsdale, AZ, and currently works with people from all fifty states. He would love to hear from you. Richard can be reached at rpope@franchoice.com or www.franchoice.com/RPope.

To book time with Richard, please use his Calendly link at https://calendly.com/rcpope.

Paying Producers and Support Staff: 1099 or W-2?

Dirk Beamer

Whether to service existing customers or to drive growth, most insurance agencies depend on staff members. Those staff members do not work for free. They depend on an hourly fee, a base salary, a commission, or some combination of these pay methods. The IRS requires the agency to report that income, and the Department of Labor (DOL) has its own set of rules for tracking and reporting employee payroll. Among other things, the DOL monitors the distinction between independent contractors (who receive IRS Form 1099) and employees (who receive IRS Form W-2). A new rule issued by DOL, which takes effect on March 11, 2024, arguably makes it more difficult to classify a worker as an independent contractor.

DOL oversees enforcement of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), an expansive piece of legislation that was part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal agenda. FLSA established a federal minimum wage as well as overtime requirements for hourly workers. It includes various record-keeping and workplace rules too. FLSA only applies to employees, not to independent contractors. So DOL has long been interested in discouraging (with fines and penalties if necessary) employee misclassification. The Trump administration simplified DOL's longstanding test for misclassification in 2021. The Biden administration argued the 2021 test deviated from established law and precedent, and on January 10, 2024, the DOL published its new rule.

The rule requires potential employers to balance six different factors derived from federal case law and reflecting "economic realities" before making a final determination of whether to classify someone as an independent contractor or as an employee. Specifically:

- **Opportunity for Profit or Loss Depending on Managerial Skill.** The greater the chance that a worker can impact the work to generate a personal profit (or risks a personal loss), the more this factor favors an independent contractor designation. A licensed sales producer who is free to spend as much or as little time as he chooses writing new business (and thus increasing his own profit) might fall in this category. By contrast, hourly support staff working a regular schedule have little ability to drive personal profit from their activities on behalf of the agency and thus are likely employees.
- **Investments by the Worker and the Potential Employer.** If the worker invests personally in tools, marketing, subcontracting, etc., she looks more like an independent contractor. Think, for example, of a true independent insurance agent who can choose to pursue multiple marketing channels and invest in her own support staff. If the expense of the work falls primarily with the hiring party, the factor favors an employee designation.
- **Degree of Permanence of the Work Relationship.** A long-term arrangement between the same worker and hiring party supports an employee designation. Multiple, flexible engagements among a range of hiring parties point toward independent contractor status.
- **Nature and Degree of Control.** The more control the potential employer has over how the worker does the job, the more likely the worker is an employee. Many Allstate agents have argued that they themselves should be classified as employees given Allstate's increased encroachment on how the agents go about their business.
- **Is the Work Integral to the Business?** Workers engaged at the core of a business' operation (e.g., licensed staff routinely selling insurance or servicing policyholders) will more likely be deemed employees than workers performing ancillary services (e.g., a digital marketing consultant or an IT provider for the same agency).
- **Skills and Initiative.** Workers who market and leverage their specialized skills

to initiate business opportunities resemble independent contractors. Again, think of the classic independent insurance agency owner who pursues appointments with multiple carriers and who may, simultaneously, pursue unrelated business ventures. Workers with the same specialized skills who apply them repetitively for the same enterprise are likely employees. An underwriter could use her expertise to develop her own business providing services on a contract basis; but if she uses them exclusively to service a single carrier, she probably falls into the employee bucket.

It is important to remember that classification cannot be determined simply as a matter of contract between the parties. In other words, the fact that both the worker and the person paying for the work prefer an independent contractor arrangement will not trump a determination by a court of law that the worker has been misclassified. When determining the proper classification, potential employers should be aware of a large body of existing case law in which classifications for certain jobs have already been made. If an agency's determination that a worker is an independent contractor stands at odds with prior determinations made by DOL or a court of law under a similar fact pattern, the agency will be wise to reconsider the question.

Given the time and resources devoted by DOL to develop a new rule, it is reasonable to expect renewed focus and vigilance from the department in weeding out what it sees as worker misclassification. Prudent insurance agency owners will sit down with their professional advisors (CPAs, lawyers, HR professionals) to perform a careful review of each worker's job duties in relation to the six-factor test. This analysis may cause the agency to reconsider how it classifies workers, or it may result in a reshaping of job duties so that the position aligns more cleanly with either an independent contractor or an employee designation.

Dirk Beamer has served the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents ("NAPAA") as General Counsel since 1999. In that capacity, he has successfully defended NAPAA against a federal internet trespass case brought by Allstate. He also sued Allstate on behalf of NAPAA and its members in a highly publicized federal lawsuit challenging Allstate's treatment of its agents. In addition to litigation matters, Dirk regularly counsels NAPAA concerning its ongoing business affairs including contract negotiations, management and employment issues, and member concerns. Dirk provides similar services as General Counsel to The United Farmers Agents Association ("UFAA"). Dirk regularly works with captive insurance agents from across the country, as well as their local attorneys, to handle business issues including purchasing and selling books of business, investigations and disciplinary proceedings with the carrier, employment law and contract litigation. Dirk graduated from the University of Michigan Law School with honors in 1993. He is licensed to practice in Michigan and Ohio, and he is a member of the State of Michigan Bar Foundation—an honor reserved for less than 5% of the practicing bar in the state. In 2014, Super Lawyers magazine named Dirk one of the Top 50 business lawyers in the state of Michigan. He is a past recipient of the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents President's Award. Dirk can be reached at dbeamer@wrightbeamer.com or visit his website at www.wrightbeamer.com/.

"PGI has the framework, the tools, and the support. They give you more than what you asked for. The thing that separates PGI is the relationships, the people. Man, I'm so glad I chose PGI!"

FIND OUT MORE

LISTEN TO TOM'S STORY

FIND OUT MORE

HEAR FROM OUR AGENTS

PGI grows as a team. Over 65 agency owners gather from across the US to learn and share. With PGI, top Carriers, and this network of successful agency owners by your side, the sky is truly the limit.

So You're Thinking of Joining an Agency Network... Ask These Questions FIRST!

Carol Drake, Senior Vice President, Personal Lines – Smart Choice

When you're considering joining an agency network, choosing one is a decision that requires thorough due diligence. Your choice can determine how much you earn, what type of policies you can sell, and what resources are available to you. In fact, the success of your agency can hinge on this single decision.

While every network strives to make itself appealing to potential members, there are always positives and negatives because what works well for some agencies maybe just isn't the right fit for you. Don't rush into a decision based on a sales pitch. Dig deeper by asking the right questions.

1) How Many Agencies Are Part of the Network?

When it comes to carrier relationships, size matters.

It's a well-known fact that many independent agents struggle to get appointed with carriers because the carriers demand a big book of business, large volume requirements that can be difficult to meet, and experience that many agents don't have yet. Even if you are able to place clients with them, you might not receive an attractive commission structure at first. In fact, this is why many agents decide to partner with a network in the first place.

However, joining a network won't necessarily give you the carrier access and leverage you're looking for. It all depends on the network in question and how powerful their connections are. The bigger the network, the more leverage it will have with carriers, and that translates to better access and commission structures for you. This is why you need to ask any network you're considering about the number of agencies in the network.

Keep in mind that there are more than 410,000 brokerages and agencies in the U.S. as of 2023, according to data from IBISWorld. That's an average of 8,200 brokerages and agencies per state.

To the owner of a small-to-midsized independent insurance agency, a network of a few hundred agencies might sound significant enough, but it won't from a carrier's perspective. A network of this size may be able to provide carrier access, but it may not have enough sway to secure the most lucrative compensation and bonus structures.

2) Is it Difficult to Part Ways with the Network?

Though it may seem pessimistic to think about leaving the network before you've even joined, knowing your options for parting ways, should things not work out, is important. Even if you research the network thoroughly, there's a possibility it may not work out the way you were anticipating.

For example:

- **Fees that seemed reasonable on paper may add up to more** than you realized when all combined. None of them alone are deal-breakers, but you're getting nickel-and-dimed to death.

> "When exploring networking partnerships, it is important to consider the number of agencies under contract because business volume often translates into an agency's improved compensation structure with carriers. It is also a strong indicator of buyer preference by agencies that conduct due diligence and complete competitive contract reviews."
>
> – Ashley Wingate, Smart Choice senior VP of sales

• **Your needs or situation might change.** Perhaps you were only selling one line of coverage to customers in one state when you joined the network. As you've grown, expanding into other regions and lines, you realize your network no longer meets your agency's needs.

• **The network's terms may change.** Mergers and acquisitions are common in the insurance industry. If your network is merged with another, it will be bigger, but it might also undergo policy changes that you find unacceptable.

When you join a network, you hope it will work out for the long haul, but if it doesn't, you need a way out. Unfortunately, some networks make it hard for you to leave. They may charge expensive exit fees, or they may even claim partial ownership of your book of business.

You should be free to leave a network whenever you decide that doing so is in your best interest. If a network puts up barriers, ask yourself why they feel the need to do so?

In general, organizations with high satisfaction levels don't need to make it difficult to leave because few people want to leave. Organizations with low satisfaction levels, on the other hand, may make leaving difficult as a final way of extracting money from their members.

3) What is the Up-Front Cost?

While it's true that you sometimes have to spend money to make money, you should not have to spend money to join a network.

When you're trying to get any business off the ground, expenses can add up fast. With some networks, expensive joining fees can be another cost in a long line of fees dragging you down.

When you're considering joining a network, find out whether you'll have to pay fees upfront. If you do have to pay fees to join, find out why. When you join, the network hasn't done anything for you yet. After you join, the network should succeed when you succeed if it's a true, solid partnership. It's supposed to be a mutually-beneficial relationship, so why should you have to pay to enter into it?

4) Are There Monthly and/or Annual Fees?

In addition to fees to join and fees to leave, some networks charge fees to maintain your membership. These fees may take the form of a monthly fee or an annual fee that's due upon renewal.

Before you accept a monthly or annual fee, think about how it could impact your overhead costs down the road. You'll have a lot of other expenses, from rent for your office to marketing materials. The more costs you add, the more it hurts your bottom line.

The situation could become especially challenging if you need to take time off to deal with a family health emergency. Your business may decline temporarily, but you'll still owe that network fee.

If a network charges a monthly or annual fee, ask what you're paying for. After all, you're already paying a commission split. Why is an additional fee necessary?

5) What Do They Offer Outside of Standard Markets?

The excess and surplus (E&S) insurance market has achieved tremendous growth in recent years. According to S&P Global, E&S direct written premiums rose by 20% in 2022 to reach $75.51 billion. E&S direct written premiums have more than doubled over the five-year period between 2018 and 2022.

This growth cannot be solely attributed to premium hikes, either. According to Fitch Ratings, the E&S lines have gained significant market share. Before 2018, E&S lines only accounted for about 5% of the total property and casualty market. In 2022, E&S lines accounted for 9% of the property and casualty market.

Recently, rising premiums in multiple lines—notably property and cyber—have forced more and more businesses out of traditional markets.

If you don't have access to a multitude of E&S and specialty markets, as well as an easy way to navigate them quickly and efficiently, you won't be able to help clients who are not well-served by the traditional market. As a result, you could have to turn away prospects who come to you for help. You may even lose current clients who are hit with notices of nonrenewal or massive rate hikes. As the E&S market share grows, this will become an increasingly serious issue.

Agency networks can help you quickly find markets to fit almost any risk turned away by standard markets, which is a critical skill in the current insurance climate.

Other Agency Members

Perhaps most importantly, if you want to see how you might prosper or fare with a particular agency network, look to the current agency members.

A network should be able to point to satisfied members who have achieved their professional goals. Although these members have their own hard work to thank for their success, they should also feel that their network has helped them along the way.

By reading agency success stories or even getting in touch and talking with other members, you can learn how other agents have built their book of business and how the network has helped them. This is a fantastic way of determining what's possible with a network you're considering.

Carol Drake was named Senior Vice President, Personal Lines in January 2024. She joined Smart Choice® as Vice President of Corporate Strategy in September 2017, and is primarily responsible for working with Smart Choice's carrier partners to design strategies that maximize profit for both agencies and carriers. From 2013 to 2017, she was the Vice President of National Accounts at Grange Insurance, and prior to that, Grange Insurance's Vice President of Marketing from 2003 to 2013. Drake has an extensive background in insurance, and began her career with The Midland Life Insurance Company in 1991, where she held several positions including Director of Business Integration and Marketing.

Red Flag!
The FTC warns that dishonest companies sometimes use tricks to trap people. Although the FTC warning is specifically about phone companies, the same principles can apply to agency networks.

Warning!
Although owning an agency can be lucrative, you probably won't start bringing in a significant income for a few months. By avoiding unnecessary startup costs, you can help you keep your cash flow healthy during these lean months.

There are 410,176 brokerages and agencies in the U.S. as of 2023.

Source: IBISWorld

How to Have Success in Your Agency in 2024

Rex Hickling, CPCU, AIM, President at Premier Group Insurance

How long will the hard market last? Why is it still here?

I get it, it's tough out there—in every channel of distribution, from Captive to Independent, to Insuretech via Direct-to-Consumer plays. The toughest I've seen in my forty years in our noble profession of insurance and protection.

If you had a good 2023 financially, and many agencies actually did, there is no guarantee you will have the same results in 2024. Consider that most agencies improved their retention numbers, as customers had fewer shopping options. That shopping environment providing little consumer choice is likely to continue, especially for monoline Auto & Home customers. For you, as an agency owner, now you are going against your own improved retention numbers from last year. The net gain or lift is not likely to occur again from a policies in force basis, agency by agency, from retention improvement alone.

Affordability and Availability is on every consumer's mind, and those two topics have made the news daily now for the past twelve months.... You know the drivers of the market, having to do with inflation, Mother Nature, Supply Chain, Increased Litigation, Challenging Regulatory environments, High Labor Costs, High Interest Rates, along with Reinsurance and Surplus to Premium obligations carriers have, which also impact loss costs.

So, what's the outlook, when will things improve, and how do I run my business to do what I do best…?

2024 Outlook for Auto Home and Business Insurance

Markets vary by state, of course. In general, though, Auto and Home premium increases look to continue in 2024, especially in the first half of the year, with some increases in double digit amounts again. In some ways that is a good thing from an agency's financial standpoint. Your premiums go up, so your commission go up….In other ways, however, it increases, again, consumer and agency pain. But the question begs when will you be able to write New Business?

First, some good news! Allstate and most of the Personal Lines carriers had improved results in Q4 of 2023. This was after taking a bath for the first three quarters and almost all of 2022! While not all YE and Q4 carrier results are in at the mid-February writing of this article, it does appear most of the industry had a good or at least improved Q4 overall for Personal Lines. We all know, however, that while one quarter does not a trend make it is a place to start, and Auto is consistently the more profitable and more predictable of the two lines, compared to Homeowners in profit performance. If as an industry we can stand strong together with a solid Q1 and Q2 in Personal Lines Auto and Homeowners, in 2024, the second half of the year could be a tale of two cities…

The fact remains, not all carriers will make it out of this hard market alive, nor will all agencies survive. Allstate and other financially strong Captive and Independent national carriers will of course survive and eventually thrive, but it is the smaller carriers that are suspect. Especially with still high capital costs, labor costs, and regulatory challenges against a backdrop of needing continued investment in technology for most carriers, and surplus-to-premium ratios needing replenishing from a near empty piggy bank in part due to poor personal lines earnings for most carriers.

So, part of the when depends on us, as distribution, to do what we can—individually and collectively.

The market is so dynamic that Agency Actions to regularly refresh by going deeper in your knowledge of your Carrier(s) and brokers regularly is so important.

Carriers want and need profitable growth. What is that and what is it not from an appetite standpoint?

For most preferred carriers it is packaged and rounded PL business. Not monoline. What else? It is business that:

- Fits your carrier's bullseye appetite beyond the packaging and monoline piece.

- It is auto business utilizing telematics, not without it. (New and In force)
- It is customer accounts having 2+ lines of business along with prior insurance and little driving activity.
- It is asking your carrier where in the funnel of quotes do they see lifetime value the best and for what type of client, i.e., mix of business.
- It is working with your staff to not always find and sell the lowest rate, but the premium that meets your customer needs and understanding the exposures, and insurance-to-value, so you have rate adequacy vs premium leakage. Death by a thousand seemingly little cuts of premium leakage can happen—for you and the carrier…
- It is being an agency front line underwriter, even in this day and age of third party reports. Your eyes and ears, and asking probing and open-ended questions, matter.
- It is understanding outliers to benchmarks for mix of business—think older homes and the necessary roof, plumbing, and electrical updates, and condition of the structure.
- In the end, a favorable pattern of this opens doors for business that is more profitable and retains better and will be a conduit for more like referrals.

The above is part of Premier's 5 Pillars in Running a Successful Agency. Focusing on the many underlying elements, processes, workflows, and muscle motion agency business habits that drive success with regard to:

1. Pipeline and Prospecting
2. Value Based Sales
3. Retention & Lifetime Value (These 3 Affecting Your Top Line)
4. Agency Operations (Affecting Your Bottom Line)
5. And Carrier Relations (Relationships bring Results and Vice Versa…)

These 5 areas, when put together in a business plan tailored to these focus areas, and a plan that is flexible and intentional to pivot as needed to market conditions and opportunities assures Successful Execution. Many Premier agencies using this method have margins 1.5-2 times greater than top quartile agency margins that are so popular for Private Equity firms to buy!

Pivoting is important. One of the huge pivots Premier Group Insurance has made is to focus more on Commercial Lines. Commercial in general, outside of Transportation and some specific Property Risks in certain states, is a much more open market, including California, than Personal Lines.

This diversification makes sense when you periodically step back to WORK ON your business vs. WORKING IN IT. You likely already diversify your personal assets—perhaps real estate, various stock, bond, mutual fund investments, your home, etc. It only makes sense to diversify your product lines in P&C to better ride out such hard market cycles.

And YES, that is work. It is a grind in the beginning. We all know it is easy to grow in good times, but is a greater challenge when carriers put on the brakes. Why not commit to Commercial now and make it a focused enterprise in your P&C practice…?

That, along with writing more preferred-to-higher risk business with E&S brokers has been a difference maker for Premier, with 95% of our agency owners having a richer operation in 2023 than 2022. If your agency completes accord forms and supplements well, and you have strong flow, you build a relationship with your E&S broker. In time you can also negotiate higher commission with brokers.

Even in this hard market, at Premier we've earned higher New Business and Renewal Commissions and Profit Sharing with many carriers, which is shared with agencies who perform like the larger group.

The mindset of Going on Offense and knowing that failure is not an option for YOU, and that perhaps NOW is the time to strike, is critical. Case in point, Premier is helping more Independent Premier Agency Owners buy other agencies outside of our group than ever before via our Premier Acquisition program. Similarly, we are helping more agencies, in record levels, to transition to Commercial via our CL Producer Development & Funding program.

Definitely keep the focus on retention, education, all the great service and community things that you do already. But exploring New Pivots is worth consideration and ACTION.

Our business is about people and protection. In closing, take care of you and your team. This is another Must DO, so you can continue to take good care of others—your customers which is Job 1. None of us can do it alone.

Feel free to engage me in idea sharing via email below. We have a plethora of ideas from our Premier Agency Community Forum, which is more than 1000 Independent Agents strong in a single exclusive group driving success and innovation daily!

Rex Hickling is President at Premier Group Insurance, Inc., a leading Independent P&C Agency Owner Group of more than 600 agencies coast to coast and a leading writer of Auto-Home-Business insurance in the United States. From State-of-the-Art Technology to Optimizing Pipeline, Sales & Service Engagement, to Helping Agencies to be More Profitable, Premier Agency Owners Exceed Every Key Agency Benchmark. To reply to this article, respond to ownyourtomorrow@pgiagents.com. We'll then Click, Call, Text, or Video you as you prefer. Rex can be reached directly at RexH@PGIAgents.com.

Who's Your Number One Customer?

Shifting Your Focus to the 20% to Leverage 80% of The Results

Craig Pretzinger

Unearthing who your prime client is can shift the trajectory of your entire operation. What's more, it hands you a kind of power that can tilt the scales in your favor. And the best part? For those of us who chase the dream of autonomy, this insight is either an old friend or about to be a new ally you're bound to embrace. The reason is simple: it's the smoothest journey pursuing the best results, the 20% work that gets you 80% of the result, and that's the journey I'm committed to.

For this to make sense, we need to head back 8 years to 2016; I felt totally trapped with no way out. Eight years of grinding and fried from 14-hour days, I also had some other concerns: a giant note payment and a team I felt I couldn't depend on. I was in the trenches with them every day, which didn't buy me much goodwill anyway. I'd think "They didn't get it," when in reality, I was the one missing the memo. Being the fire chief, sales director, claims handler, payment processor, and sometimes janitor or appliance repairman was not the formula to achieving 1%-er results. Even without a rocket science degree, I figured out that working harder was definitely not smarter.

Another valuable lesson gained aligns with Jim Collins' flywheel effect. Consistency is your rocketfuel for momentum. As that momentum builds, things start happening. I experienced this and when you see it in your own agency, your jaw drops. That's the flywheel in motion. This holds true for any marketing, sales, and almost anything in life. Mailers, lead gen, referrals, transfers, leads, bake sales—anything works when you actually work it! But I didn't want "good enough," I wanted way more. The least risky, most abundant way to buy enough quotes for the team AND be the most profitable? Internet leads.

Back in Tucson, it's the end of 2018 and we're actually growing! Those few years of intense learning taught me more about business than both undergrad and business school combined. The road was tough, mired with setbacks, and frustrations. There's no midroad: if you've made this journey and come out on the other side like me, you understand. Dabblers quit, money wasted, proclaiming "LeadGarbagePit Corp. is the worst! Internet leads suck!" If I could do it all over again, I would have bought Apple in 1985, and I would have bought leads in 2012 after knowing what I know about the math, the mechanics, and the derailing nature of the Dunning-Kruger Effect—the mental struggle we face when we embark on a new endeavor. Without the immediate reward, fairly quickly, and without properly set expectations, we plunge into fight, flight, or freeze mode. It's the ancient wiring located in the front part of our brain (Not a doctor, stayed at a Holiday Inn Express).

Luckily, we'd made it past the "Dunning Dip" and our telefunnel was performing very well, with a low cost per sale against a strong customer lifetime value. I was close to tripling my investment on telefunnel in 2.5 years, with a breakeven somewhere in month 11-13, according to my forecasts. I made an excel sheet back then that compared the delta of investing in the market and getting 8% versus investing in my agency with a $246 cost per sale and a 8% close from quote rate (we close at 12.5%—I was managing my expectations). It's not even close: after taxes, the return is finally positive in year five. Yuck. I'll bet on myself, thank you, not you Wall Street.

LSPs were sticking around longer (to the tune of 14 months by 2019). This was huge. And even more crazy was that we didn't even crank out a 100k month until January 2020 (while I was in Cabo for 4 weeks). It took 4 years to finally get there and I could not have done so without that amazing team. The wild part was that we were building the plane with it up in the air, and it all worked out. We charted the trail. Now you can run. That's when I foresaw a very big problem.

My attention was 100% on activity metrics, coaching, building processes, feeding them, coming up with contests, and other activities to keep the team engaged. I had forgotten the other part of the funnel because people weren't quitting: feeding the funnel with players to close deals. Outta sight, outta mind. It was the sales equivalent of turning off leads because someone calls out. I learned all too well that turning off, or even lowering lead flow, is a funnel killer. One day of 0 leads can kill a week of sales—you can't drive 300 miles with one gallon of gas. The math doesn't work, and the engine dies. With leads, sales will die in two or three weeks based on the lowered inputs. Back in the day, if I saw a big drop in sales on a day we bought a lot of leads, I'd panic and turn them off.

That wasn't going to happen. Not this time. I listened to my mentor and made one of my best career decisions: I fired myself from speaking with clients. My new job was Chief Hiring Officer, and my first task was to build the process for consistent candidate flow. And just like that, I was way less needed at my business, shifting from operator to owner status. No more calls. No more meetings with customers. You'll see how doing this shifts perspective again. You're playing a different game at this point.

I was talking with Jason a lot at this point, and we framed out the hiring funnel. And whether coincidence, or some sort of divine affirmation, we knew we'd put our focus in the right direction when this happened.

We're recording an interview on our podcast and our guest proclaims: your team is your number one customer. Jason and I let that sink in. I thought of the difference in treatment my team got compared to any customer, let alone my number one customer! If that was the ticket to leverage, I was all about it (and had a lot of work to do!)

Over the coming weeks, as we built and began running and optimizing the framework for hiring, we made drastic shifts in our interactions with our team members. We brought this into our group calls, our one-on-ones, and our training for candidates and hires as well. We're already training them in the interview! Making your team your most valued customer gives them the feeling that you see them. Your people want to be valued, seen, and heard. This is only part of the solution.

That's just the beginning—what's better is your leverage increases as employee retention increases, meaning your take home is more. Newsflash, McFly: whether you work or not—you're no longer the bottleneck! I was overjoyed! And since your turnover problem has vanished, there's no incessant worry everyday about whether today is when Karen (name-changed) doesn't come back from lunch. Since you have less turnover, the most exciting thing is that holding

sales people accountable for the one key metric, quoted households, simplifies everything and propels results! Yahtzee!

I'll bring it home with this final thought: for too long, and for a very expensive price tag, I was doing all the wrong things. I usually call this tuition. There are many strategies to skin the cat, and even more tactics to help. If I can save you some time by sharing my blunders, I've made an impact and helped, and that's what fills my batteries! As much as I would wish it not to be true, some will doubt these very proven methods; they will suggest it is impossible in their market, or their state, or their carrier. These are the peers I've shed from my rolodex, and you should too. John Lee Dumas says "You are the sum of the 5 people you spend the most time with." Look around you and ask how many are traveling 6 months of the year, and how many are complaining. Then, take action.

If you're in that latter group, and stay there, that's fine too! We all have our path—I too did it the hard way. Do me a favor and save this article and shoot me an email in a few years when you've done the work to get to the same place. We can share war stories while the others work smarter. If these words land in such a way that it stings, I invite you to consider why it stings.

I've included the hiring framework we use to build our own teams—it's yours. Start now. It's the map for your first phase. Hurry up! I'll be at the beach enjoying some tacos.

Hiring Framework

1. **Group Interview** - DIY or pay someone - the front need lots of traffic (candidates)
2. **Assess Using DISC+ SSI** - looking for someone who is money-driven, low-theoretical, and likes repetitive work—Mid D, Mid to low I, Mid-high to very high S, and Low C—most hiring companies rank incorrectly based on our data. Trust but verify.
3. **One-on-One Interviews** - in person, at your agency, when it's at its busiest. Never bring a salesperson into a boring environment
4. **Have a written offer letter and make it good.** Outline all of the benefits of your agency: if you buy leads, have callers, etc, tell them!
5. **Pay well, fire fast** if they aren't doing the activity. I found the cost of turnover to be way less than the $500-1000 a month difference it takes to make someone feel good about their pay.
6. **Start them on the phones** calling old leads on day 1. Daily expectation is 4 transfers from a minimum 500 dials for the first week.
7. **Week 2 - Week 3** - Dial and quote 80 households. All quotes done while on the phone. At 80 households, they are proficient.
8. **Follow a script** - not word for word, but as a roadmap to come back to.
9. **Meet daily, practice script, review calls, celebrate!**

Craig Pretzinger is an agent with multiple locations and over $10 million in premium on the books. He is co-creator of The Insurance Dudes Podcast, one of the top 100 Marketing podcasts in America, with over 500 episodes published. The Insurance Dudes' mission is to help insurance agency owners create a predictable, consistent, and profitable agency sales machine. Learn more by heading to live.teledudes.com, or check out the podcast or YouTube channel.

If you like this info and are looking for even more knowledge nuggets that could help you grow in this tough climate we're in, check out our newsletter on our website by scanning this code:

Variable Rate Debt – The Good and The Not So Good

Melanie Otto

The federal funds target rate has remained at 5.25% to 5.50% since last summer, following 11 increases that began in March 2022. The federal funds target rate sets a benchmark for other interest rates throughout the economy on credit cards, mortgages, auto and business loans. In support of its goals, the FOMC decided to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at the January 2024 meeting and stated in its release, "The FOMC does not expect it will be appropriate to reduce the target range until it has gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2 percent." The next two meeting dates are mid-March and early May. The CME FedWatch Tool projects a 97.5% probability that there will be no movement in the federal funds target rate at the March meeting and an 83.3% probability of no movement at the May meeting.

What does that mean to you?

If you have fixed rate debt, rate movement won't impact your existing debt, but it can impact any future financings.

If you have existing variable rate debt via a business loan or credit card, you likely experienced rising interest rates and monthly payments which impacted your cashflow over the last two years. If rates are expected to move down, is now the right time convert that debt to fixed? It depends. If you believe the headlines and think rates may come down in the near future, fixing a rate now may not be wise. However, if your credit circumstances have improved since you put the debt on, you may still be able to save rate by looking at a refinance simply because you may be in a better credit or collateral situation.

If you have a business loan that has an adjustable rate, you may not have been impacted yet if the adjustment period hasn't occurred yet. But it could be coming and surprise you.

For example, if you obtained a ten-year loan in 2021 with a three-year fixed rate that adjusts in 2024, you could see a jump of over 5% in your rate. Prime was 3.25% in 2021 versus 8.50% now. This could mean an increase in monthly payment of over $250 per month for every $100,000 of debt assuming seven years remaining.

If you obtained a ten-year loan in 2019 with a five-year fixed rate that adjusts in 2024, you could see a jump of over 3% in your rate. Prime was 5.25% in 2019 versus 8.50% now. This could mean an increase in monthly payment of over $150 per month for every $100,000 of debt assuming five years remaining.

What about credit card debt?

Many business owners use credit card debt to ramp up a business and forget how quickly that can add up if not repaid in full each month. Refinancing credit card debt used to grow the business into a more traditional business loan may save you a significant amount of interest regardless of the rate environment.

Should you wait until rates go down to incur debt?

Holding off to get the lowest interest rate may not always be the wisest business decision because you may miss growth opportunities that are present now in your business. Evaluating the return on funds invested into growth will help guide your decision on when to incur debt.

What steps should you take?

The best move is to evaluate the debt that you have, understand your risk for interest rate fluctuations, identify capital needs for growth opportunities and talk to a lender who understands your niche market to see what options make the most sense for your unique situation.

Melanie Otto is Senior Vice President of Agency Finance at First Mid Bank & Trust. For over 15 years, she has successfully supported insurance agencies with growth capital, debt restructuring, and acquisition financing. To speak to Melanie directly, reach out at motto@firstmid.com and learn more on First Mid Agency Finance's website at www.firstmid.com/agency-finance/ or reach them at 877.294.8785.

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Lezlee Liljenberg

ZOOM, TEAMS, SKYPE. Our new world. Our new norm.

Whether you are back in the office or working remotely, there is little chance you can avoid online meetings.

I am in virtual meetings constantly, and they are a must in today's business landscape. What bothers me the most (and many other people) is the behavior of others who are on the calls.

We all witness behavior that would never be acceptable in a board room, conference room, or staff meeting. How one acts in a virtual meeting vs an in-person meeting should be no different. Behavior should remain the same and the respect shown to all parties should not change.

Here are the Top 10 Virtual Meeting Etiquette Tips:

BE ON TIME! Whether you are leading the meeting or attending, just like in "real life" being early is best but ON TIME is a must. Hosting various webinars lately, I have been told waiting ten minutes has become the norm. Nope! A meeting is a meeting. Schedule it on your calendar and be on time. Plan ahead in making that casserole and get on the call.

This includes Numbers 2 & 3: **Dress appropriately and have your camera on.** Just because you are not in person does not mean you should be a slouch. There are times when you are with people that you are friends with and know well, and it is okay to have on workout attire or look like you are heading to yoga. Otherwise, be dressed as you would in a live meeting. Also, quick reminder: if you are bottomless, Do Not Stand Up to reach for something or obtain a file—we can still see you. You are still commando for all the world to see.

See above.

Do not take calls—While in the meeting, do not take calls. Remember you are on camera so just because you mute yourself and take a phone call does not make it alright. Everyone can see you taking the call. It is still a rude action to everyone else.

Position your camera to make eye contact with the group. This is more of a technical issue so when setting up your office work hard at having the ability to face the computer so you don't appear to be in a different realm than the meeting you are intended to be in.

Background: Be aware of what is in the background. It does not have to be picture perfect, but you need to make sure customer information cannot be seen behind you. Filters are not always great and can be annoying, but it is better to block out a garbled or messy background than to have lots of distractions behind you. Again, for a casual meeting it is OK to have a little bit of your stuff, but a more professional meeting where you are trying to get a pertinent point across—Not OK!

Be still! Maybe you are in your comfy recliner or swiveling desk chair and that is wonderful but do not swirl, swing, and rock around like a little kid with ADHD. It is rude and though you may not realize it, you are making other people on the call dizzy and distracted. While you are rocking yourself into a comfy, nappy mode you are making others nauseous and distracting others from your message or the message of the presenter. This is very unfair to all participants, especially the person who has worked hard to prepare the presentation.

No eating allowed! Do not use this time to have your meal. Plan ahead and eat offline. The only exception? If it is a designated Brown Bag meeting where you are encouraged to bring your lunch. This is what you would do in an in-person meeting, so nothing has changed in this virtual culture.

Family members & Fido: Tell family members about your meeting and teach them the manners around having a person in a meeting. Ask them not to interrupt. Emergencies happen, but if you were in a conference in your downtown office would Little Billy be able to run in and ask for lunch money? No, it would have been planned ahead of time or Little Billy would have to do without or borrow money from a friend—not interrupt a business meeting. Everyone else in the meeting has issues to contend with that they probably took care of before entering the call, so have respect for others and do the same planning.

Remember when! Take a minute and go back in time to when all meetings were in person. What did you do? What did you not do? Those rules still apply today in Virtual Life. Have respect for everyone concerned: presenters, attendees, the company that is paying you (or yourself if you are on straight commission) and the institution of professionalism that does still exist no matter how much everyone is trying to fight it.

Lezlee proudly continues to serve on the NAPAA Board of Directors. She lives in Arlington, TX, recently celebrated 22 years of marriage to Magnus Liljenberg (Ex-Allstate Manager) and loves her new career as an Insurance Expert Witness and Author. Her newest publication, "If You Only Knew: Navigating DNA Surprises and the NPE World" was released October 2023. Connect with her through her website www.iamlezlee.com.

Winning the Sales Game: Building an Elite Roster of Sales MVPs

Alaina Sims, The Omnia Group

Producers are an integral part of any agency team. Their drive to turn that promising prospect into your next customer helps grow your business (and keep the lights on!). Outstanding salespeople make all the difference, but they can be hard to come by—and even harder to keep. What really works to attract and retain talented producers? Let's start by delving into what makes great salespeople, well, great.

The Drive to Win and Keep Score

Successful producers have several things in common. Firstly, they are competitive, assertive, and ambitious. They want to knock it out of the park and prove themselves through their accomplishments, namely their sales numbers. They can directly ask for sales commitments from prospects—and can keep asking if necessary. They are comfortable playing hardball in negotiations, too. Experiencing some resistance when trying to land a deal doesn't make these go-getters want to throw in the towel; rather, they enjoy the challenge of overcoming obstacles.

They relish keeping score, and earning commissions is an ideal scorecard. The stronger a producer's need to win, the more motivated they are by risks and commissions. A secure salary with a chance to earn an additional 10% won't inspire these producers as much as a small base with the opportunity to earn most (or all) of their pay through commissions.

The sales game has to be exciting enough to keep all-star producers intrigued, and the game's prize must feel worth their time and effort. If the game is too easy or the prize too small, they could look past your job ad when searching for work or move on from your agency to one that offers them more challenge.

With that in mind, review your compensation package to ensure it is not inadvertently turning off top producers. Make sure your pay structure is appealing to new salespeople when you are recruiting and hiring, as well as to your current producers who you want to keep engaged and successful at your agency.

Additionally, excellent salespeople enjoy visible ways of keeping score. They want to see their names at the top of a sales leaderboard. They like participating in contests where they can compete against their colleagues and win not just bragging rights but also big tangible rewards. Remember, the more impressive the prize, the stronger motivational power it has to keep your A-player producers engaged.

The Ability to Rebound and Manage the Game

Another trait superstar producers have in common is their resilience. They love to revel in the thrill of victory but don't really feel the agony of defeat. While no salesperson wants to hear "No" when trying to earn business, they understand it's just part of the sales game. A turndown may even make them hungrier and work that much harder to close their next deal.

This ability to let disappointments slide off their back is partly why first-rate producers can easily self-manage; they are comfortable with trial and error. They don't have the need to ask their managers for advice or permission; instead, they prefer to take the shot and go for it—even if the results aren't what they expected. When that happens, they can bounce back and try again. This also enables them to be innovative and comfortable trying new or unproven methods. They can adjust their sales approach as needed for each unique opportunity.

These independent producers don't need (or seek) much direction from their managers, and they want to get results their way. They prefer working with significant autonomy, and they want to have a say in how they perform their job as well as in the goals they strive to reach. So, pairing them with a supervisor who wants to keep close tabs on their progress or requires them to follow a strict sales process can be a formula for disaster.

Keep your salespeople energized and motivated by giving them autonomy to make minor decisions on their own. For bigger decisions, ask for your producers' input and work alongside them to arrive at suitable solutions. The more (reasonable) latitude you give them to do their job, the more inspired—and likely more successful—they will be.

Exceptional salespeople also focus more on the end results and the broad overview instead of the minor details, so an exacting sales manager who insists on precise sales documentation won't go over well. Producers want to focus their attention on the big picture of securing business. Having someone else who is more detailed assist with sales administration could be a win-win for the whole team.

Honors and Accolades

Everybody wants to be praised, and your salespeople are no exception. However, they may want to receive that praise in different ways. For your gregarious, expressive producers who sell by building strong friendly relationships with potential customers, the more public and enthusiastic the recognition, the better. Prestigious status symbol perks and being singled out at meetings to receive applause are big motivators for these salespeople.

But what works for your social salespeople won't have the same effect for your more reserved salespeople. In fact, it could backfire. Your more practical, no-nonsense producers who sell by problem solving and using their product expertise favor more concrete feedback. They want to know precisely what they did well more than receiving generalized praise, which could be perceived as insincere. Also, they want acknowledgement of their victories delivered in a lower-profile way. Instead of putting them in the spotlight at a company meeting, which may feel embarrassing, consider sending a group email recognizing their accomplishments.

Understanding the traits of successful producers is the first key to designing an effective playbook to attract and keep superstar talent—and that's a winning gameplan for your agency!

Alaina Sims is the Senior Manager of Profile Analysis and Workflow at The Omnia Group, an employee assessment firm providing the power of behavioral insight to help organizations make successful hires, develop employees to their full potential, and effectively engage staff. For more information, visit us at www.OmniaGroup.com, email info@omniagroup.com, or call 800.525.7117.

Yes, Podcasts Actually Can Be a Good Tool for Marketing Your Agency

Doug Coombs, Chief Marketing Officer, SIAA

When I first considered initiating a podcast for SIAA, I thought, "Are you crazy? No one wants to think about yet another podcast." Then I did a little research. At a time when I thought podcasts must be on a downward trend, I learned that a lot of people fancy podcasts, can't get enough of them—and the numbers were actually still rising on new podcasts. Lesson learned: presume nothing.

In today's fast-paced digital world, podcasts have emerged as a popular medium for communication, offering insurance agents a unique opportunity to connect with clients and prospective clients, share insights, and establish authority in their field. In this article, we'll explore the benefits of podcasting for insurance agents, identify the essential tools and software needed to record and disseminate podcasts effectively, and provide strategies for structuring content to maximize engagement and relevance. In the end, it really isn't that difficult to host and share a podcast, but the commitment to keep it rolling can be challenging.

Benefits of Podcasts for Insurance Agents

Reach and Accessibility. Podcasts transcend geographical boundaries, providing insurance agents with a significant platform to connect with clients and prospects. Whether commuting, exercising, or multitasking, listeners can access podcasts conveniently, allowing agents to reach a wider audience and maximize their impact.

Establishing Authority. Through insightful discussions, expert interviews, and informative content, insurance agents can position themselves as trusted authorities in their field. Consistently delivering valuable insights and practical advice helps build credibility and trust among clients and prospects, ultimately enhancing the agent's reputation and influence.

Building Relationships. Podcasts offer a unique opportunity for insurance agents to cultivate meaningful relationships with their audience. By sharing personal stories, addressing common concerns, and fostering listener interactions, agents can make deeper connections, gain loyalty, and create long-term partnerships with clients and prospects.

Educational Platform. Insurance can be complex, often leaving clients confused or overwhelmed. Podcasts provide a platform for agents to simplify intricate concepts, offer practical guidance, and address common questions and misconceptions. By educating their audience, agents empower clients to make informed decisions, leading to stronger relationships and better outcomes. Given today's hard market, educating and informing clients specifically is critical to high retention rates, regardless of how it's done.

Marketing and Branding. Podcasts serve as a powerful marketing tool for insurance agents, enabling them to showcase their expertise, promote their services, and differentiate themselves from competitors. By consistently delivering valuable content and engaging with their audience, agents can enhance brand visibility, attract new clients, and strengthen client loyalty.

Tools and Software for Podcasting

Recording Equipment. To produce high-quality podcasts, insurance agents will need basic recording equipment, including microphones, headphones, and audio interfaces. USB microphones such as the Blue Yeti or Audio-Technica AT2020 offer terrific sound quality and ease of use for beginners (I've been using the Blue Yeti myself).

Recording Software. Software such as Audacity (free) or Adobe Audition (paid) enables agents to record, edit, and enhance their podcast audio. These tools offer a range of features, including noise reduction, equalization, and audio effects, allowing agents to create professional-grade podcasts with ease. You can also use web-based platforms to record and edit podcasts, such as Riverside, SquadCast, and Zencastr.

Hosting Platforms. Once recorded, podcasts need to be hosted on a reliable platform for distribution to major podcast directories such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts (which just shut down in favor of YouTube Podcasts). Hosting platforms like Libsyn, Podbean, Buzzsprout, or Anchor provide storage, distribution, and analytics tools, simplifying the podcasting process for agents.

Editing Software. Editing software such as Adobe Audition, GarageBand (for Mac users), or Audacity allows agents to edit and refine their podcast episodes, removing mistakes, adding music or sound effects, and ensuring a polished final product before distribution. Again, there are online options for this as well (many recording sites and recording software provide for editing as well).

Promotion and Marketing Tools. To maximize the reach and impact of their podcasts, insurance agents should leverage social media platforms, email newsletters, and website integration to promote their episodes and engage with their audience. Tools such as Canva for creating promotional graphics, Buffer or Hootsuite for social media scheduling, and Mailchimp for email marketing can help agents streamline their promotional efforts.

Structuring Podcasts for Maximum Effectiveness

Clear Objectives and Target Audience. Before launching a podcast, insurance agents should define their objectives and identify their target audience. Whether educating clients, generating leads, or networking with industry professionals, having a clear focus will guide content creation and guest selection.

Consistent Format and Schedule. Establishing a consistent format and release schedule is essential for building a loyal audience. Whether it's weekly interviews, monthly roundups, or themed episodes, agents should maintain a predictable rhythm that keeps listeners engaged and coming back for more.

Engaging Content and Storytelling. To capture and keep listeners, focus on delivering compelling content that resonates with the audience. Incorporating storytelling, real-life examples, and relatable anecdotes can humanize the insurance industry and make complex topics more accessible and engaging.

Expert Guests and Collaborations. Inviting industry experts, thought leaders, and influential personalities as guests can add depth and credibility to podcasts. Agents should seek out guests with diverse perspectives and expertise in relevant areas such as risk management, financial planning, insurance regulations, and technology. Consider hosting a known local personality (perhaps a successful business client) and let them engage with your listeners. It doesn't have to be an endorsement of your agency, but it will often seem like one.

Interactive Elements and Audience Participation. Integrating interactive elements such as Q&A sessions, listener polls, and audience submissions can enhance engagement and foster a sense of community. Agents should encourage listeners to share their feedback, questions, and topic suggestions, creating a two-way dialogue that enriches the podcasting experience. This does take the podcast to the next level in terms of time commitment, so it's okay to start off without these components and then introduce them over time.

Podcasts offer insurance agents a potentially powerful platform for reaching, engaging, and educating their audience. By leveraging the right tools and software, agents can produce high-quality podcasts that resonate with their audience and elevate their brand. By structuring podcasts effectively and delivering valuable content consistently, agents can establish authority, build relationships, and differentiate themselves in a competitive market.

With careful planning, thoughtful execution, and a commitment to delivering value, insurance agents can harness the power of podcasting to connect with clients and prospective clients while expanding their reach in the marketplace in a meaningful way.

One more consideration for those thinking about starting a podcast: video vs. audio only. You can always opt for video and people can simply listen rather than watch (meaning it covers both bases), but if you're a little camera shy, try the audio only approach first – it's not difficult to move to video later.

Doug Coombs is the Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of SIAA (Strategic Insurance Agency Alliance, Inc.). He can be reached at dougc@siaa.net. SIAA is a national alliance of independent insurance agency members generating hundreds of millions in new premium business annually. SIAA is dedicated to the creation, growth, retention, and evolution of the local independent agency. To learn more about SIAA, visit siaa.com.

Agencies for Sale

ARIZONA

Flagstaff
The Halstead Agency
928-380-6357
chbd36@gmail.com
Asking Price: Negotiable
PIF: 3000 Premium: $3.58 million
Number of Staff: 4
Number of Licensed Staff: 4
60+ year award-winning established agency. Longstanding loss ratios below 40%, high retention rates, and cross-sales. Beautiful and inexpensive office location in a vibrant downtown location. Rare and very unique opportunity to own a thriving business in a highly desirable mountain town. Mild seasons and natural beauty make for extensive outdoor living, with activities like skiing, hiking, biking, and dining. The town boasts a diverse population, a major university, and a vibrant arts community.

Scottsdale
Frank and Barb Schubert Insurance & Financial Services, LLC
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $3,200,000
PIF: 6720 Premium: $12,500,000
Number of Staff: 8
Number of Licensed Staff: 8
AZ is Growing—Top Producing Agency Opportunity now available—don't wait, cash flow is amazing! This established $12,500,000 premium agency is located in highly sought after Scottsdale. The agency owner has built an amazing business, will be retiring, and is looking for the right successor to take over the reins and continue growing. The agency has been a multiple year Trip & Bonus Qualifier, with a fully trained staff of 8, plus an in-house financial planner, all ready for the transition. The Scottsdale metro area is an easy place to own a business, has an inviting community feel, highly rated public schools, and easy access to all the amenities the Valley has to offer. The Scottsdale area has a median home price of $750,000 and an average income of approximately $180,000. Families represent 65% of the community, and nearly 55% of residents own their homes. Search no more, you have found that turnkey opportunity that helps balance work and family!

CALIFORNIA

Carmichael
Alain Ionescu
916-752-7706
alainul01@yahoo.com
Asking Price: Negotiable
PIF: 2700 Premium: $3,300,000
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 1
Organically grown agency since 2000, only Allstate agency in Carmichael CA, multiple awards, 47% loss ratio, 89% retention. An elite agent with an average of $ 350,000 commission over the last 2 years, agent ready to retire. Furniture and computers are included in the selling price, turn-key operation, and the agent is ready to stay on board for training.

COLORADO

Commerce City
Petrov Insurance Corp
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $600,000
PIF: 1420 Premium: $3,100,000
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 2
Established Award-Winning Agency Located in Reunion, Colorado. This established agency is located in Reunion, CO, a growing community just 15 miles northeast of Denver. It has a small-town feel with excellent public schools and focuses on small business owners while offering amenities and easy access to larger cities. With the University of Colorado in Boulder and the Rocky Mountains to the west, Denver International Airport to the east, Cheyenne, Wyoming to the north, and Denver to the south, it's the perfect central location to live and work!

Denver
The Mathes Agency
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $680,000
PIF: 1523 Premium: $3,200,000
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 2
Are you looking for a turn-key business opportunity with excellent growth potential, located in the highly desired state of Colorado? This established, $3,200,000 premium agency is located in Denver, Colorado. The agency owner has built an amazing business, will be retiring and looking for the right successor to take over the reins and continue growing. Denver is an easy place to own a business, has a sense of community, and a great feel. Denver has a median home price of $750,000 with an average income of approximately $144,000. Families represent 60% of the community, and nearly 72% of residents own their homes. Proximity to both Denver International Airport and a short drive to the mountains creates an ideal location to live and work. Now is the time for you to find that work and family balance!

Fort Collins
Newendyke Insurance Agency, LLC
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $495,000
PIF: 1350 Premium: $2,650,000
Number of Staff: 1
Number of Licensed Staff: 1
This established $2,650,000 premium agency is located in Fort Collins, CO, a growing community just 50 miles north of Denver. Fort Collins is part of the "Gateway to the Rockies", has a small town feel with excellent public schools, and focuses on small business owners while offering the amenities and easy access to larger communities. With Denver International Airport about an hour to the southeast, University of Colorado in Boulder to the southwest, Cheyenne, Wyoming to the north and Denver to the south—it's the perfect central location in which to live and work!

Johnstown
JK Meksch Financial Services, Inc
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $640,000
PIF: 1435 Premium: $2,800,000
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 2
This established award-winning agency is located in Johnstown, CO, a growing community just 30 miles north of Denver. Johnstown is part of the "Gateway to the Rockies" and has a small-town feel that focuses on small business owners while offering the amenities and easy access to larger cities. Within 45 minutes to Denver International Airport to the east and Estes Park / Rocky Mountain National Park to the west, 30 minutes to Colorado State University in Fort Collins to the north and Denver to the south—it's the perfect central location in which to live and work! With median home prices around $580,000, now is the time for you to find that work and family balance you've been hearing about!

Littleton
George Sechrist Insurance Agency
720-779-1500
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $716,000
PIF: 1233 Premium: $3.M
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 2
This established, 25+ year agency is located in south Jefferson County, CO, a growing suburb of Denver. The agency owner is looking to retire and is looking for the right buyer to take over. With a 92% retention rate, this opportunity is primed for further growth! South Jefferson County has a small-town feel with excellent private school and home school options, and focuses on small business owners while offering the amenities of larger nearby cities. With Denver International Airport about 45 minutes to the northeast, Colorado Springs about 60 minutes to the south, and the mountains a short drive to the west, it's the perfect central location in which to live and work!

Agencies for Sale

Agencies for Sale

Agencies for Sale

Agencies for Sale

FLORIDA

Apopka

Allstate Agency
407-913-8522
malcolmzx7@gmail.com
Asking Price: $850,000
PIF: 1534 Premium: $3.953,794
Number of Staff: 1
Number of Licensed Staff: 1

After 17 years of dedicated service, I have decided to embark on a new chapter in my life, retirement! We are seeking a new owner to carry on our legacy of trust and reliability, ensuring that families and businesses continue to receive the protection and peace of mind they have come to know and deserve. Please call or email via the contact info above. Please leave a message if I don't answer. I will call you back.

GEORGIA

SE Metro Atlanta Area

678-223-7397
nicole@sammconsulting.com
Asking Price: $770,000
PIF: 1726 Premium: $3,480,000

$3.4M Book of business in SE Metro Atlanta. This is a seasoned book of business. Overhead is low, cash flows well. Call today for NDA and additional information at 678-223-7397.

SW Georgia

678-223-7397
nicole@sammconsulting.com
Asking Price: $1,250,000
PIF: 2524 Premium: $5,200,000

$5.2M Allstate BOB in South West, GA. This is a seasoned book, with experienced staff. Call SAMM today for NDA and more info.

HAWAII

Mililani

Manuel Buenconsejo: Allstate Insurance
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
PIF: 3000 | Asking Price: $755,000
Premium: $3,500,000
Number of Staff: 3
Number of Licensed Staff: 3

Excellent Growth Potential in Mililani, Hawaii. Are you looking for a turn-key business opportunity with excellent growth potential, located in the highly desired state of Hawaii? This established, $3,500,000 premium agency is located in Mililani, Hawaii. The agency owner has built an amazing business, will be retiring and looking for the right successor to take over the reins and continue growing. Mililani is an easy place to own a business, has a small town feel with a sense of community, and great views to match the island vibe. Mililani has a median home price of $780,000. Families represent 63% of the community, and nearly 70% of residents own their homes. Look no further for a location with access to the beach/ocean, highly rated schools, hiking in the nearby mountains, convenient travel in and out of the local airport. Mililani is an ideal location to live and work. Now is the time for you to find that work and family balance!

ILLINOIS

Aurora (Western Suburbs of Chicago)

Harvey A Goodwin
630-404-7077
harveyg414@aol.com
PIF: 1858 | Asking Price: 2x TPP
Premium: $2,647,000
Number of Staff: 1
Number of Licensed Staff: 1

36-year agent ready to move on when the opportunity arises. Either take over (rent $500 all-inclusive) or merge with our other agent. 37.44% LR, 89.31% RR, TPP (termination payment plan).

INDIANA

Evansville, South Bend, Carmel

The Tod Wilson Agencies
812-457-0089
todwilson11@gmail.com
Asking Price: Between 2x-3x annual comp
PIF: 8200 Premium: $9.8 Million
Number of Staff: 9
Number of Licensed Staff: 9
Evansville: $5.1 million 4,400 PIF 90% retention
South Bend: $3 million 2,600 PIF 91% retention
Carmel: $1.7 million 1,200 PIF 88% retention

Each is sold separately.

MARYLAND

Savage

Fred Hazeltine
443-758-8534
fredhazeltine@gmail.com
Asking Price: $249,000
PIF: 21377 Premium: $1,268,559
Number of Staff: 1
Number of Licensed Staff: 1
Agency available in Savage Md., just north of Laurel.

Pro level agency with a nb percentage of 6.7%. 25 years in business, high customer satisfaction, current loss ratio 39% retention 88.1. Best to contact by email.

MISSISSIPPI

Hinds County

SAMM Business Marketing
855-306-8627
nicole@sammconsulting.com
Asking Price: $1,100,000
PIF: 1699 Premium: $4,300,000

4.3M Allstate BOB in Hinds County, Mississippi. This is a seasoned book of business. Call SAMM today for NDA and more info.

MISSOURI

Bamhart

The Blechle Agency, Inc
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
PIF: 840 | Asking Price: $275,000
Premium: $1,500,000
Number of Staff: 3
Number of Licensed Staff: 3

This established $1,500,000 premium agency is located in Barnhart, MO, a growing suburb just 20 miles south of St. Louis, Missouri's Gateway Arch. Barnhart has a small-town feel with several small surrounding municipalities, and is located in the 7th largest county in MO, with excellent public schools and a focus on small business owners, while offering the amenities and easy access to major interstate highways. Larger communities, St. Louis Airport, and Busch Stadium are all within a 30-minute drive to the north and historical towns to the east and south—it's the perfect central location in which to live and work!

Columbia

Wobig Insurance Group
573-999-3893
lynnwobig@gmail.com
PIF: 1694 | Asking Price: $negotiable
Premium: $2,300,000
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 2

Long-time agent retiring. Excellent location in the downtown area with great parking!

Nixa

Hall Insurance Professionals, LLC
720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
PIF: 700 | Asking Price: $250,000
Premium: $1,200,000
Number of Staff: 3
Number of Licensed Staff: 1

This established $1,200,000 premium agency is located in Nixa, MO, a growing suburb just 15 miles south of Springfield. Nixa has a small-town feel, with excellent public schools and a focus on small business owners, while offering great amenities and easy access to Branson and the Springfield Airport, all within 30 minutes—it's the perfect central location in which to live and work!

MONTANA

Kallspell

720-902-5200
GChitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $945,000
PIF: 2620 Premium: $4,000,000
Number of Staff:3
Number of Licensed Staff: 3

This established, $4,000,000 premium agency is located in Flathead County, MT, the fastest growing county in Montana. The agency owner has built an amazing business, will be retiring, and looking for the right successor to take over the reins and continue growing. Flathead County is an easy place to own a business, has a sense of community, and a great feel. The median home price is $615,000, families represent 63% of the community, and nearly 70% of residents own their homes. Look no further for a location with skiing at Whitefish Mountain, highly rated schools, hiking in Glacier National Park, convenient travel in and out of the Kalispell Airport, and relaxing by the lake in the Village of Bigfork. Flathead County is an ideal location to live and work. Now is the time for you to find that work and family balance!

NEW YORK

Staten Island

Lana Pikman Agency
646-644-0606
Lanapi0606@gmail.com
Asking Price: $150,000
PIF: 338| Premium: $786,000
Number of Staff: 1
Number of Licensed Staff: 1
Retention 96.64%
Annual revenues $78,686

Suffern

Dean Gentile Agency LLC
845-642-3637
deangentile@allstate.com
Asking Price: $1,150,000
PIF: 2900 | Premium: $4,400,000 + Commercial Book + Ivantage Book – Allstate Approved Carriers
Number of Staff: 4
Number of Licensed Staff: 4

Premier agency fantastic book of business for sale in Rockland County, NY. Brand new remodeled office and new furniture in 2017. Bundle 67%. Retention 92.41%. Loss Ratio 45%. 2016 – Honor Ring Winner. 2017 – Honor Ring & National Conference Winner. 2018 – Honor Ring Winner. 2019 – On Pace Achieved Production Credit.

OHIO

Youngtown

Rocco Nolfi Agency
330-729-5657
rocconolfi2@allstate.com
Asking Price: $900,000
PIF: 1176 | Premium: $3,564,574
Number of Staff: 2
Number of Licensed Staff: 2

PENNSYLVANIA

Walnuport

Havighurst Insurance Agency
610-428-2750
wehavhome@yahoo.com
Asking Price: $1,349,000
PIF: 4546 | Premium: $5,750,000
Number of Staff: 4
Number of Licensed Staff: 3

40+ year old Pro level agency with Great Cash Flow, High Retention, Low Loss Ratio. Agency location is agent owned and ideally located.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Boiling Springs

Ken Patel Insurance Agency, LLC
720-902-5200
Chitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $410,000
PIF: 1000 | Premium: $1,900,000
Number of Staff: 1
Number of Licensed Staff: 1

This established $1,900,000 premium agency is located in Boiling Springs, SC, a growing city just outside of Charlotte, NC. Boiling Springs has a small town feel that attracts families due to their excellent public schools and a focus on small business owners, while offering the amenities and easy access to larger communities. Charlotte, NC is about 60 minutes away; you can get to the mountains in about 45 minutes and over to Spartanburg within a few minutes as well.

TEXAS

Schertz

Wade A Davis Insurance Agency, LLC
720-902-5200
Chitwood@G-Forceac.com
Asking Price: $750,000
PIF: 1792 | Premium: $3,200,000
Number of Staff: 4
Number of Licensed Staff: 3

This established $2,950,000 premium PRO agency is located in the highly sought-after Schertz, TX, a suburb of San Antonio, TX. The agency owner has built an amazing business, will be retiring, and is looking for the right successor to take over the reins and continue growing. Schertz is an easy place to own a business, has an inviting community feel, highly rated public schools, and easy access to all the amenities of a larger city. The Schertz area has a median home price of $360,000 and an average income of approximately $101,000. Families represent 70% of the community, and nearly 80% of residents own their homes. Search no more, you have found that turnkey opportunity with Austin only 60 miles to the north, the Camal and Guadalupe Rivers to the east, and San Antonio 20 miles to the south. Now is the time to balance your work and family life!

VIRGINIA

Richmond

SAMM Business Marketing
855-306-8627
nicole@sammconsulting.com
Asking Price: $300,000
PIF: 1232 Premium: $1,750,800

Great size to merge. Add $1.75M in premium to your existing book. This agency offers great retention and loss ratio. Contact us today for NDA and additional info at 855-306-8627.

WISCONSIN

Madison

Koss Ins & Fin'l Svcs
608-244-8855
bobkoss@allstate.com
Asking Price: $$700,000
PIF: 3,260 | Premium: $3,400,000
Number of Staff: 2
Number of licensed Staff: 2

I'm a hub participant which means you can continue this occupancy or relocate. Retention is over 91%, Loss ratio is 42%. Bundle is 84%.

NAPAA Leadership

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Lockport, IL

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
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Exclusive*focus*

National Association of
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Letters to the Editor: All letters must include an address and a phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and space.

This issue of Exclusivefocus magazine may contain articles of interest submitted to NAPAA by outside authors. NAPAA is not responsible for the opinions, advice or accuracy of any information provided therein.

NAPAA's Mission Statement

NAPAA is dedicated to the success of Allstate Exclusive Agency Owners and to advance the independence and entrepreneurial spirit of our members.

NAPAA's Goals

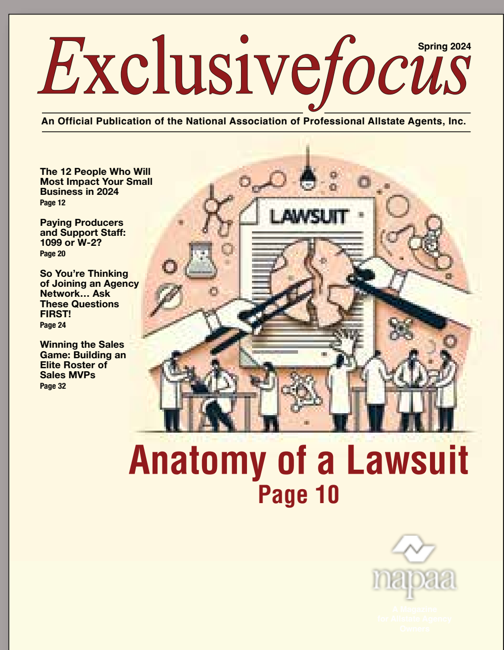
Our goals are subject to alteration, influenced by a constantly changing environment and the needs and wishes of our members.

NAPAA encourages its members to actively participate in the process of defining and refining our Mission, Goals and Positions.

Our General Goals:

- To provide an organization specifically tailored to benefit Allstate Exclusive Agents
- Monitor legislative and legal issues pertinent to Agents and their clients
- Provide reliable communications on all issues that affect Agents and the ability to call upon our members to act
- Provide Agents with a distinct voice on issues that affect them, continually exploring options and solutions
- Make tools and resources available for members in an effort to increase agency value and success.

For more information, please visit
www.napaaUSA.org



Spring 2024

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BECOME THE OWNER OF YOUR OWN INDEPENDENT INSURANCE AGENCY

Global Green
INSURANCE AGENCY

- *Are you locked with a captive and all of the mounting restrictions?*
- *Are you exhausted trying to write the business "they" want you to write?*
- *Are you just tired of working for someone else?*

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AAA

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FRANCHISE BENEFITS

- Access to competitive nationwide and regional insurance markets
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- Brand Identity
- Inclusion in carrier contingency BONUS plan
- Ability to sell your agency & receive FULL VALUE
- Security of franchise laws to protect your investment in the agency

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR A CONFIDENTIAL MEETING IN YOUR AREA: JEFF WILSON

877-452-5476 (toll free)

15455 Conway Rd., Ste. 315 Chesterfield, MO 63017

jwilson@ggiausa.com

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