SECTION

03

Enhance Your Communication Strategy

As the industry transitions into a less volatile insurance market, your firm should take the time to revisit your communications strategy.

Enhance Communications to Grow Your Agency in a Challenging Market

An effective agency communications strategy is critical to protecting client relationships, bringing in new business and, ultimately, maintaining or growing the firm's profitability.

The last few years have tested client relationships as many agents bore the brunt of the confusion and anger over rate hikes, coverage restrictions and policy cancellations. Retaining business was difficult but many agencies were able to do so by proactively communicating their value as a trusted resource and advisor.

As the industry transitions into a less volatile insurance market, your firm should take the time to revisit your communications strategy. **This includes:**

- Evaluating current methods of communication with clients.
- Understanding where and how communication could be improved.
- Investing in more efficient communication tools for growth.

Cross-Selling and New Business

Different segments of personal and commercial lines of business require different forms of communication. The first step to communicating effectively is to establish your business goals and the audience you want to reach. Be very specific in your planning.

Once you've determined your goals and audience, narrow down what communication will best help you reach these goals, like the two examples below.

If you want to grow your current business by cross-selling to existing clients, you may provide information on the following:

- Current marketplace conditions and how they impact coverage availability and costs.
- The importance of reviewing policies and reevaluating coverage needs as the client's family needs change or the client's business evolves.
- Coverages to consider as market conditions change.
- Coverages required to meet loan or licensing requirements or to mitigate exposures.
- Ways your agency can help clients identify exposures, what risk management steps they can take to mitigate those, and any potential premium savings.

If your goal is to grow through new business, your firm should focus its communications on:

- Highlighting your agency's expertise and experience in different coverage areas, market cycles and economic conditions. Keep in mind to carefully avoid using words like "expert" or "excellence". For more tips visit: eoguardian.com.
- Feedback and reviews from existing clients.
- What value-added resources, tools and other services your agency offers.

Keep the Conversation Going

Do not underestimate the importance of ongoing and proactive communication with clients. Most insureds are not thinking about their policies unless they need to file a claim or pay a bill. You must continually provide useful information and resources to clients, not only when they have a problem. This helps build your reputation as a trusted advisor and increases client retention.

You can proactively communicate with clients to highlight your value and expertise in several situations:

- Before a natural catastrophe, provide insureds with information on how they can manage their risk or who to contact to ask coverage questions.
- After a natural catastrophe, provide insureds with information on who to contact to file a claim and the documentation they'll need.
- Explain how the insurance market or the economy can impact coverage. For example, when a company pulls out of a region or market and how that could affect the client's renewal.
- Give clients a checklist of life events that may change their insurance needs or exposures, such as buying a new car or home, or starting a business.
- Update clients on new insurance legislation or regulations that could impact coverage availability and affordability.

Be Accessible

In today's digital world, consumers expect to be able to do business and reach their key business partners whenever they want. Insurance is no exception. Agencies that are not offering enhanced communication tools for clients to have questions answered quickly, find out policy information or get a quote will lose out.

Customer experience is a strong predictor and driver of financial and organizational outcomes, according to a recent McKinsey study of more than 8,500 insurance customers. Yet, over 30% of respondents said they are not satisfied with the digital channels available from the insurance industry.

Agents have a huge opportunity to improve the overall customer experience through digital communication platforms, such as a website chat tool or text messaging service.

30%

of respondents said they are not satisfied with digital channels available from the insurance industry.

Up Your Communications Game

There are a number of communication mediums that will help your agency effectively reach its audience and differentiate itself from the competition.

These may include the following:

- Social media
- Email marketing
- Newsletters
- Texting/SMS
- Website or blog
- Paid advertising

These platforms are also a great way to promote your agency's core values and communicate why it's a great place to work, which can help recruit new talent.

If you don't already have someone in your firm who is comfortable with writing, designing and distributing agency communications to your client base, particularly through digital mediums, you should invest in such a person. Even hiring part-time support or outsourcing to a local consultant could be the spark you need.

Trusted Choice® offers a variety of customizable marketing and communication resources that help highlight your value as an independent agent.

Preview creative assets and learn about our robust marketing resources on the next page →

UP YOUR COMMUNICATIONS GAME

Marketing Resources, Creative Assets, and Educational Toolkits

Check out a variety of customizable marketing and communication's resources and creative assets to highlight your value as an independent agent.

Creative Resources:

Leverage video, digital display ads, social media graphics, print marketing, and more.

→ Customize these creative assets with your personal or agency contact information.

LINK TO HARD MARKET **CAMPAIGN**

Educational Toolkits

We offer a variety of resources that equip agents with the knowledge to leverage today's latest technologies and reach clients in innovative ways. Two examples:

- AI Marketing Toolkit
- Google Business Guide

LINK TO **EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

SECTION

05

Communication Strategies for Commercial Accounts

The hard market continues to add new challenges and opportunities to commercial insurance. Refine your communications strategy to drive retention and highlight your agency's expertise.

Communicating with Commercial Accounts

The hard market has brought a new set of challenges to commercial insurance. But it has also offered the opportunity for independent agencies to demonstrate expertise and creativity in resolving the impact of large premium renewals, cancellations and policy exclusions.

Positioning Accounts

The current outlook suggests that the market is stabilizing—albeit with variations by lines of business. And there are still existential headwinds generated by cyber-related threats, explosive jury verdicts and increased catastrophe activity.

Given the varied size of commercial accounts, your agency's marketing-communications tactics should reflect the unique characteristics of their respective markets.

How does your agency approach the market? The typical client account segments and characteristics include:

- **Business owners policies and small commercial accounts: Under $100,000 in premium.** Local presence and community involvement are important factors.
- **Middle-market accounts: $100,000 to $500,000 in premium.** Commercial lines expertise and dedicated customer service representatives matter.
- **Large commercial accounts:** ***Over $500,000 in premium.*** Specific risk and insurance knowledge, agency service capabilities, and substantial experience are critical for these sophisticated buyers.

Communications Approach and Tactics

The businessowners policy (BOP) niche requires your agency to consider the time to write, service and renew accounts. For effective communications, you must clearly understand your target. BOPs can present a nice cross-sell opportunity for personal lines, which can generate more commission revenue than the BOP itself. But cross-selling personal lines does not happen in a vacuum and should be part of a consistent, outbound communication effort. The same concept holds true if you offer life, health and employee benefits. Continually asking for the business is key.

A successful communications strategy follows the same discipline as sales. Producers are typically required to have a set weekly number of new client appointments, leading to agency of record (AOR) opportunities, quotes and bound policies. Similarly, you should decide who is responsible for generating or coordinating consistent communication. This will support client retention by providing industry updates, as well as save time for account reps to keep clients informed.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS:

The Target Audience Sets
Communications should not be one size fits all. Divide the customers and prospects based on needs.

The Communication Methods
What is the best way, or ways, to reach those targets?

Frequency of Communication
Implement a frequency of customer touchpoints that will be doable and affordable for your agency.

THE AGENCY'S COMMUNICATIONS ASSETS SHOULD ALWAYS INCLUDE:

- Website Content and Blogs
- Social Media Postings
- Drip Email Campaigns

Agencies should segment email campaigns so current clients don't receive the same message as prospective clients. Doing so runs the risk that a client will ignore a vital update.

The agency's content must be fresh and interesting. Demonstrate that you're a thought leader using podcasts, webinars and blog posts, and lead with education. Business owners and families all face risks, so talk about those and the coverages they should consider.

Every staff member needs to be engaged in the effort, reposting agency content on their social media, particularly LinkedIn, and including their community volunteer activities, industry participation and recognition.

How can smaller agencies create content and consistent communications when they have to divert staff from client sales and service work?

Content and Resources:

Trusted Choice offers an extensive library of marketing, communications, and educational resources including:

- Content to share, social media resources, calendars, marketing campaigns, technical information and brand information on what independent agents offer.

LINK TO **CONTENT TO SHARE**

Google Resources

Google is a critical tool all independent agencies should be fully leveraging. Optimize your agency's Google Business Profile and Google Reviews strategy to maximize results:

- Trusted Choice offers a variety of Google resources, including informative guides and toolkits.

LINK TO **GOOGLE RESOURCES**

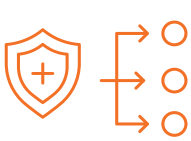
Demonstrate Your Agency's Commercial Lines Chops

For small accounts, communications themes should highlight the agency's brand, including its client service philosophy and community involvement. For program business, highlight specific industry expertise.

For midsize and large commercial accounts, your marketing content can focus on the following agency attributes:

- Offer risk management tips and updates.
- Topics that would interest commercial lines clients' "centers of Influence." These are accountants, lawyers, trade associations and local business groups to build awareness and credibility.
- How you leverage relationships with wholesalers to deliver innovative products and unique policy forms. This might be more important if your firm is smaller and lacks specific industry expertise to compete with large brokers.

- Other agency capabilities, like online certificates, loss-prevention tools, such as telematics and inspections, and employee loss-control seminars.



To improve commercial lines retention scores, develop an evergreen communications blueprint with these strategies:

- **Don't wait for 30 or 60 days before the policy expiration date to start the renewal conversation.** Communications should focus on emerging trends regarding pricing, coverage options and regulatory updates.
- **Do not rely solely on email as the communications vehicle.** Social media is an important ingredient. Clients will follow you if they value your content. LinkedIn is an excellent tool to reach business owners.
- **Utilize blog posts and website content.** Share helpful information such as the use of different financing techniques. For example, explain self-insured retentions (SIRs), higher deductibles, risk retention groups (RRGs) and captives as avenues that can be cost-effective. Then, offer to have a feasibility conversation.
- **Don't provide networking opportunities only to "seasoned" staff.** Encourage junior team members to develop contacts with local community and business groups, or via their nonprofit volunteer activities. Boards benefit from the risk management and insurance perspective of knowledgeable volunteers. Don't provide self-serving advice and information; focus on helping people and the results will follow.
- **Avoid communications about issues that could be seen as divisive to your audience.**

We offer resources to support your agency in the Hard Market:

Check out all sections within the complete version of the Hard Market Toolkit brought to you by Trusted Choice.

All Sections included in the complete Hard Market Toolkit Expansion:

- Hard Market Overview and Update
- Selling Strategies in a Hard Market
- Enhance Your Communication Strategy
- How and Why to Showcase Your Ageny's Community Involvement
- Communication Strategies for Commercial Accounts
- Seven Strategies to Drive Retention for the Long Run
- How to Stop a Cancellation
- Email and Digital Templates
- Extensive Appendix of useful extrnal links, downloads and resources

Download the complete Hard Market Toolkit Expansion:
trustedchoice.independentagent.com/hard-market