

http://www

MMAIP Experience

January 2009
Volume 1 Issue 10

Mid-Michigan Association of Insurance Professionals
Serving Bay, Midland, Saginaw, and Genesee Counties
Website: www.MMAIP.org Email: MMAIPinsurance@yahoo.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 President's Message
- 2 Public Relations: How to Create a Press Kit
- 3 Legislative News: Legal Issues facing Insurance Agents
- 4 Technology Corner: Wireless Networking
- 6 Customer Service Considerations
- 7 MMAIP Leadership

Message from the President

By Jaime Millikin, AIS, CPIW - Countryside Insurance Agency

I hope all members enjoyed a safe and happy holiday season. It is with great pride that I announce MMAIP, GKAIP, and SMIP have decided to partner together and host the 2010 State Council Convention at Treetops Resort in Gaylord, MI. We are in the process of planning the details to make this a wonderful experience at a new venue which will allow the northern associations to participate at a state convention. We are still in need of sponsorship so if you have a lead on a vendor please let me know since I will be a co-chair for the convention and I will be able to pass on any information to the corresponding individual responsible for that task.

Please keep in mind our upcoming speakers for the next few months and take advantage of the presentations being scheduled to enhance our knowledge in the changing industry. The web page is a great resource for the scheduled speakers with locations, biography details of the speakers and information on the content of the presentation. We as members should promote the association at all opportune moments, practice the elevator speeches that were recommended by the Public Relations committee and approved by MMAIP. Put this easy tool to use, the more we discuss with co-workers, bosses, and acquaintances regarding our classes and presentations of the association this marketing provides heart felt advertising which could lead to membership. Our Easter candy fundraiser is starting, orders are being placed and the product will be delivered in time for the February meeting. Happy selling!!!

Also, keep in mind the State Council meeting scheduled for February 9th, 2009. The theme for the meeting is "Bridging the Communication Gap", the speaker is none other than GRIP's beloved Linda G-E-R-K-E. Whenever she gives a presentation it is sure to be an interesting one. There will be a one hour Ethics CE credited class following the council meeting being taught by Linda as well, if you plan on attending please email me the registration form @ jaimemillikin@yahoo.com or mail it to 4812 Brown Rd. Vassar, MI 48768 so I can add your name to the growing list. In March IAMD will be hosting the Regional conference in Detroit if you plan on attending please get your registration forms sent in.
Respectfully Submitted,

Jaime Millikin, AIS, CPIW



Beginning in 2008, the MMAIP Experience is published quarterly and is delivered by email. If you would like to receive the newsletter, just send an email to MMAIPinsurance@yahoo.com and ask to be added to our mailing list.

Mid-Michigan Association of Insurance Professionals

is a local association, affiliated with the National Association of Insurance Women (Int'l) Membership is open to men and women who are employed in the insurance industry or students pursuing an education in the field of insurance, risk management, or actuarial studies.
E-mail: MMAIPinsurance@yahoo.com

Public Relations: How to Create a Press Kit

Your agency is never too small to have a press kit. This handy kit contains everything a reporter needs to write a bang-up story about you and your company. Will it cost a fortune to put together? Not if you do it yourself.

Things You'll Need:

- Bonded Paper
- Business Cards
- Word-processing Software
- Pocket Folders
- Laser Or Inkjet Printers
- [Computers](#)
- Flatbed Or Page Scanners



➤ Step1

Choose a pocket folder to hold all your information. You can purchase pocket folders of almost any color at any office supply store.

➤ Step2

Write short, one-page bios of each association officer, and print them on a laser or inkjet printer on association letterhead. Include the officer's title, history with the association, quotable statements, basic [personal information](#), theories or ideas about your local association and a picture, if possible.

➤ Step3

Compile all recent press releases, positive press coverage and sell sheets. [Print](#) the press releases on association letterhead, and color copy or professionally photocopy recent articles for inclusion. **Presentation is everything; standard copy paper doesn't make the best first impression.**

➤ Step4

Include your association newsletter. If you don't have one, work on releasing your first issue, which can be done inexpensively on a [laser printer](#). Just include some basic clip art and photos, articles of importance to your association or industry, and upcoming events.

➤ Step5

Assemble all the information in a logical order. Typically, start with the bios on top, followed by your newsletter, and any press releases or recent clippings near the back of the packet.

➤ Step6

Top it all off with an informative letter that briefly explains what's inside and offers to provide any additional information needed. If there are business card slits in your pocket folder, include your card there. If not, it's appropriate to paper clip it to your letter.

➤ Step7

Find some way to identify your press kit. If you're using your association brochure, your name and logo will already appear on it. Otherwise, choose a pocket folder with a window in the front panel so that your association letterhead will be immediately visible.

Legislative News: Legal Issues Facing Insurance Agents: How to Protect Yourself

Insurance Compliance Guidelines

The state(s) in which you sell insurance will keep major tabs on you—and all other insurance agents selling policies in the state. And, while each state has its own set of rules and guidelines, you are responsible for learning those guidelines and meeting them accordingly.

As an insurance agent, you're responsible for keeping the state informed of some of the following:

- Completion of pre-licensing courses
- License renewals
- Credits earned toward continuing education
- Change or update in address or phone number

It's important to remember that these are general filings to be made with the state—your local Department of Insurance will have state-specific information on what requirements must be fulfilled to legally sell insurance in your area.

Heavy fines are a common punishment for agents who fail to comply with state guidelines—emphasizing the importance to learn and abide by the insurance laws in your state.

Personal Liability Coverage (E&O)

While the government has taken steps to protect the consumer, steps also need to be taken to protect insurers from unscrupulous clients.

Personal liability coverage, more commonly known as **errors and omissions coverage (E&O)**, protects agents from clients who claim the insurer acted improperly on their behalf, which caused the client harm or financial loss.

While formalizing contracts with clients can help limit liability, the major cost in E&O claims is the legal defense needed to prove the insurer's innocence. E&O insurance covers these costs, as well as the final judgment if the insurer does not win.

When it comes to E&O insurance, you should also be aware of the following:

- General business owner's policies do not include professional liability coverage
- Cost and coverage for E&O insurance vary, depending on the agent's size, location, services provided and the business' classification
- Maintaining detailed client records can help reduce the risk of E&O claims
- Lawsuits against insurance agents and brokers are on the rise

Continued from pg. 3

There are many companies and risk management firms that specialize in E&O insurance and with the litigiousness of today's society, it's important that you protect yourself and your business from liability damages.

Knowledge is Power!

When it comes to working in accordance to state laws and protecting your business, arming yourself with knowledge is the best course of action.

TECHNOLOGY CORNER: Wireless Networking

Doing Things Your Way

Why consider setting yourself up with a wireless network?

Wireless technology allows you access to email, account information and the Internet anywhere a wireless network is available.

Whether you're traveling, out to dinner with a client, or moving from your office into the boardroom, the wireless approach means you can take your computer or PDA with you, gain remote access to your wireless port, and go on with your life...without the hassle of cords.

There's also no need to reconfigure your computer or handheld device, and you have everything you need at your fingertips!

Wireless networking allows you to boost your productivity and your client base. It's one of the best ways available to get in touch and stay in touch...quickly and easily.

The High-Tech Approach to Business Growth

With one high-speed Internet connection and a wireless network card, you can immediately access your email, get all your leads' pertinent information, work up a quote quickly, and contact those leads—before your competitors do.

Going wireless is also the most convenient way to ensure you stay in contact with your clients and communicate effectively.

This high-tech approach provides agents like you:

- Convenience
- Portability
- Flexibility
- Freedom

Best of all, wireless networking requires only minimal equipment and expertise...so it's inexpensive, too!

Continued from pg. 4

The Spreading Craze

Everywhere we go, wireless "hotspots" are cropping up to serve the needs of people in business.

Most restaurants, hotels and airports—and even complete communities—have now gone wireless.

As long as your computer or handheld device is "Wi-Fi" compatible (meaning it has the capability to interface with a wireless network), you can connect at any of these access points and work as if you were sitting in front of your home or office computer.

An additional tip: If you work remotely often, you may want to look into purchasing "subscriptions" to your favorite wireless locations. This is a much cheaper alternative to *a la carte* access fees.

Safety & Security

Installing a Wi-Fi security application on your laptop or other device guarantees your information's safety.

In addition to popup blockers, adware prevention programs, and virus-protection software, nearly all wireless solutions offer encryption and password-access options to help protect your data and equipment.

Make sure you take advantage of these options, as they help prevent hackers and other thieves from breaking in and stealing vital information.

A quick note: Wi-Fi operates on the same bandwidth as cell phones, so it's easy to hack in to. Don't let valuable client or credit card information get into the wrong hands! If you frequently connect publicly to a wireless network, consider additional security measures. Your Internet provider or local computer store can give you more information on these protective programs.

Getting with the Times

Carrying your business with you has become easier than ever before, thanks to today's advanced technologies.

If you haven't looked into wireless networking, check it out! This time-saving business-booster could be just the advantage you need to outpace the competition!

Customer Service Considerations

Competing on price isn't really an option for most independent agents or small agencies. So the question is how can you compete with the big dogs—customer service.

The easiest way to define customer service may be by what it's not.

- It's not getting transferred multiple times, only to repeat your issue with each new rep.
- It's not dealing with smugness or ignorance.
- And it's definitely not being treated like a pest instead of a customer.

Good customer service is hard to come by, maybe because it is hard to provide. Dealing with people is no easy task, but is a large part of your job as an agent.

Technology might be the culprit making it harder to satisfy customers because the internet has taught us to demand everything immediately and cheaply.

Here are some tips to satisfy the most demanding prospects.

Fix their problems...with a smile.

Through your customer service efforts, you can make your customers into fans and receive such rave reviews that prospecting becomes obsolete. They will do the work for you.

The best time to really wow a prospect is when they're unhappy. Although, it's unfortunate when a customer becomes upset with something you've done, you can use the situation to your advantage. When you fix a customer's problem quickly, efficiently, and amiably you have the opportunity to earn something no amount of advertising or cold-calling can beget—their loyalty.

Don't take it personally.

Sometimes if you step outside yourself, serving your customers becomes easier. Basically, if you don't take anything personally, you will likely remain calm, which in turn diffuses the customer's anger or frustration. Even if you are dealing with an annoying customer, employing this strategy might help you keep your cool.

Make them feel special.

Show your customer's tricks to save a little cash on their premiums. Even if the savings don't amount to much, you let them behind the curtain or past that velvet rope and made them feel special, something many people rarely experience. Maybe you can't offer any savings, but remembering their name, their kids' hobbies or the fact that they recently took a vacation has the same effect.

Continued from pg. 6

Remember the smallest things can make the biggest difference.

Fresh coffee in the waiting room, a note saying thanks after a meeting or a Starbucks gift card on their birthday are all pretty effortless things you can do that will make a big difference when a customer is deciding between you and your competitor.

Customer service is perhaps the simplest, albeit most difficult, way to stand apart from the rest. So rethink how you are treating your customers and come up with ways you can improve and watch your sales book grow.

MMAIP Leaders

President	Jaime Millikin Countryside Insurance Agency
Vice President	Dorita Beal Meadowbrook Insurance
Secretary	Dorita Beal Meadowbrook Insurance
Treasurer & Membership Chair	Sandy Pope AAA of Michigan
Fund-Raising & Legislative Chair	Tara Weber Mid-Valley Insurance

******all association activities and forms are
posted on our webpage******

MMAIP.org