

## Succeed in Personal Lines

Commercial lines accounts may command higher premiums, but many independent Trusted Choice agencies are taking a fresh look at personal lines. Even though captive writers and direct writers leverage massive advertising budgets to increase brand visibility, some Trusted Choice agencies are finding other ways to grow their market share.

### Sidestep 'Andre'

Auto and home insurance represent half of the P&C premium pie, totaling some \$530 billion. Private-passenger auto alone makes up a full third of that total.

Agents who were running scared from the direct writers are now realizing that they can very effectively compete with them.

But it takes a savvy strategy. You're not going to wrestle with 'Andre the Giant' and come out a winner. The smart agency doesn't pit itself against the pricing strength of the direct writer. You must go after them with the strength of the independent agency system, and that strength is personal relationships and knowledge. If you use your knowledge base and the fact that you're a local professional to your benefit, you can beat the direct writers pretty much every time.

### Make It Personal

Try taking a personal approach to personal lines. Go deep and establish a personal relationship with your clients. Trusted Choice agents can approach personal lines by making friends with their clients. Consider sending handwritten notes to clients every year, making personal calls to every homeowner for renewal, and sending a newsletter that includes "nothing about insurance."

Client appreciation events can form the cornerstone of an agency's personal lines strategy. In June host an opening game of your local baseball team, buying everyone tickets and dinner. During the holiday season hosts a "gratitude open house" in your home.

Or how about a Christmas tree farm open house where you invite client families to a tree farm for hot chocolate and snacks, festivities and a free Christmas tree. This event will provide an opportunity for you and your agency team to see many clients in a three-hour period. You could never drive to all their homes to personally say 'thank you.'

### Make the Workflow Work

While keeping up with customer outreach, the back end needs to operate efficiently in order to make personal lines profitable.

To compete with the captives and direct writers you have to operate faster, smarter and better. How are you going to do that? Technology!

Before the advent of agent-carrier workflows in real time, personal lines were time-consuming. But now, an agency can adapt technology to roll out a customer portal for clients to access ID cards, policies, endorsements and more. The future success of a Trusted Choice independent agency will be predicated on technology to help achieve customer-service and operational efficiency. Agents not only need better technology—that technology needs to be standardized. Carriers have to help and push standardization so agents can do business in an efficient manner without having to learn to do business 12 different ways for 12 different companies.

**Be Remarkable** - Take the personal approach to Personal Lines!

Frank Whitcomb

