Focusing Directly on The Customer; A Small Commercial Lines Shift

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3 Ingredients for A Successful Direct-to-Consumer Insurance Experience

Among consumers, self-service online portals have become the preferred way to get information and get things done. Whether shopping, banking, paying a bill, or managing a subscription, we want to be able to log on and conduct our business quickly and easily, without the need for a phone call or face-to-face meeting.

Small business owners are no different. When it comes to insurance, they want straightforward language, an easy binding and billing process, and most importantly, speed. Small commercial insurers have met this demand by establishing direct-to-consumer platforms… but every company has a slightly different approach, with varying degrees of human intervention.

It's important to remember that small business owners are entrepreneurs. They like being in control and doing things themselves, but they need flexibility beyond the traditional 9-to-5 when most insurance companies are operating. The ability to purchase and bind coverage entirely online provides that.

However, a direct-to-consumer model works best when there is a balance between insured self-service and insurer expertise. Ultimately, there is a lot of opportunities for insurers to both demystify insurance and make sure that businesses are adequately covered through a direct-to-consumer model.

Here are three key components of a direct-to-consumer experience that works for both insurers and their small business clients:

1. Simple Language

The insurance industry is rife with technical jargon and complex phraseology. The average small business owner may not be familiar with the terms brokers and carriers use and certainly doesn't have the time to study up.

Words like 'indemnity,' 'aggregate limit,' and 'per occurrence' versus 'claims made' may not be immediately clear to someone who isn't involved with insurance every day. Confronted with confusing language, a small business owner is more like to move on to a new prospect than to break out the thesaurus. That's why there is an absolute requirement to use layman's terms in a direct model.

Just like with any other product, customers are more apt to buy when they understand what they're getting. There's no room for ambiguity.
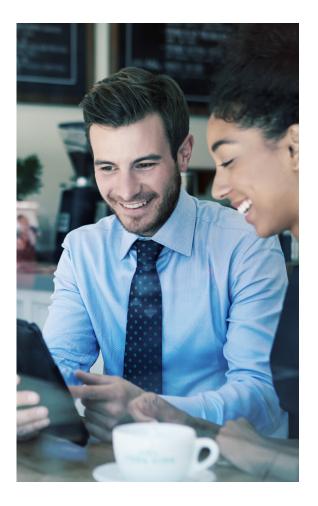
2. Streamlined Product Offerings

Offering the option to bundle coverages makes managing insurance easier for small business owners. Especially if they can pick and choose what they need depending on their business's unique exposures.

At OneShield, we've introduced OneShield Package Designer, which allows us to string together coverages from different lines of business to make bespoke product offerings based on selection criteria.

A prospective buyer can match specific coverages by filling out a risk assessment questionnaire that determines the business type, number of employees, vehicle usage or ownership, etc.

The final product may include general liability, product liability, and commercial auto coverage, but will look and feel like a single policy to the small business owner. This packaged offering not only improves customer satisfaction, but it is also easier to service on the back end.

3. Someone to Talk To

The self-service model owes its success largely to the elimination of an intermediary and the back-and-forth communication that comes with it. But too little contact has negative consequences as well.

No matter how much you demystify the idea of buying insurance, there will still be questions. An FAQ page isn't always sufficient to answer customers' queries; there still needs to be a knowledgeable person available to pick up the phone.

Make sure you contemplate an augmented customer service requirement, wherein your system supports self-service, but still connects to real people who can offer expert guidance. Insurance is still, after all, a people business.

About OneShield

OneShield provides solutions for insurers of all sizes. Deployed in the cloud, our portfolio of standalone, subscription, and As-a-Service products includes enterprise-class policy management, billing, claims, rating, product configuration, business intelligence, and smart analytics. OneShield automates and simplifies the complexities of core systems with targeted solutions, seamless upgrades, collaborative implementations, and lower total cost of ownership. With corporate headquarters in Marlborough, MA, and offices in India and Canada, OneShield has 50+ products in production across P&C and specialty insurance markets. For more information, visit www.oneshield.com.

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