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What should you expect from your insurance broker?

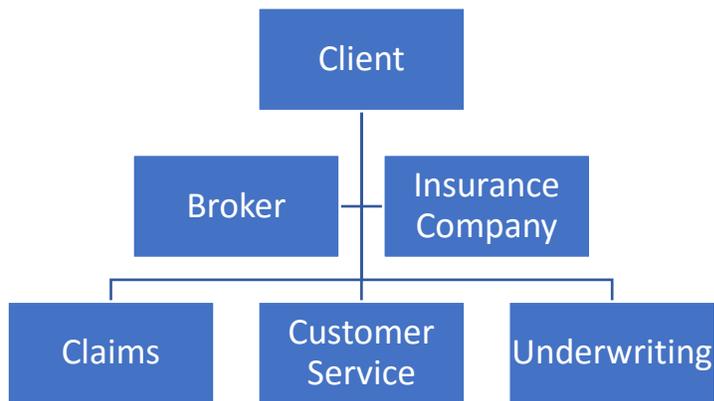
As a result of a recent experience, I thought it might be worthwhile to provide some insight with respect to what Insurance Brokers actually do and what their clients should expect of them. Regardless of whether it's Commercial Property & Casualty, Group Benefits or Personal Insurance, the stakes are high and the dollars are significant. It is my belief that after your Attorney, Accountant and perhaps your Banker, your Insurance Broker is the most important person on your core team of external advisers.

For starters, it would probably make sense to explain the difference between an Insurance Agent and an Insurance Broker. Generally speaking, an Insurance Agent is a captive agent and represents one specific insurance company. You might think of your neighborhood All-State or State Farm agent who can provide insurance quotes only from the company they work for. An Insurance Broker is a representative of the insured and is able to provide quotes from any insurance company in the broader marketplace.

The core charge of any Insurance Broker is to arrange insurance coverage for their client. A broker can only fulfill this mission if they thoroughly understand the needs and expectations of their client. Achieving superior results in this process requires an investment of time and effort by both the client and their broker. An investment that too few are willing to make in today's fast paced business environment.

The three primary considerations in any policy placement are cost, coverage and carrier. Cost is always a primary concern as it should be, but coverage and the quality of carrier has to be just as important if not more important in the decision making process. As the Broker, it's our job to put this discussion in the proper context for our clients so that they can make an educated decision. If you have a claim and it doesn't get covered, it doesn't matter how much you paid for the policy, it was a waste of money.

The broker plays a critical role in bringing his support team to the table and helping them understand the client's needs and expectations while also helping to shape the strategic direction of the placement and manage internal processes and procedures. The broker's support staff generally consists of Underwriters who help market the account to the insurance companies, Account Managers who help support and respond to the day to day needs of the client and Claims Managers who help bring resolution to claim issues. The broker must truly "broker" this dynamic by bringing together all parties, both internal and external to focus on the needs of the client. In this environment, it truly takes a team to meet all of the needs and expectations of the client and to truly deliver exceptional customer service.



The graphic above represents my role as a Broker in managing client relationships at The Whitmore Group. In this model, I am able to bring the collective talents of our team to the table while managing the overall relationship. Also, it has long been my opinion that if you convince someone to do business with your firm, that you as the Broker must remain relevant and personally accountable at all times.

One of the unique requirements of our field is the need for industry specific knowledge and experience. The depth and breadth of knowledge that is required to properly underwrite and service a given client cannot be learned in a couple of months or even a couple of years. In today's litigious environment there simply is no substitute for knowledge and experience.

I am very proud to say that our staff at The Whitmore Group is one of the most knowledgeable and experienced that I have seen in my 20+ years in the insurance industry. In an era of cost cutting and profit taking, our firm continues to make significant investments in knowledgeable and experienced people. I believe there is a strong correlation between this investment and the overall sense of satisfaction that our clients seem to have.

Over time and with a lot of hard work, I have been able to build a successful practice that puts me in the top 1% of our industry for annual premium written. I have built my practice around a core belief that "a healthy client relationship is built on trust and performance". By consistently practicing the habits listed below, I have been able to develop trusting and long lasting relationships with my clients.

- My client's best interest will be the only one that I serve.
- That I will be personally available to my clients at all times.
- That my clients will be properly covered at the lowest possible price.
- We will only do business with quality insurance carriers who will pay a claim.
- We will deliver policy renewals well in advance of their expiration date.
- That there will be no surprises at any time during our relationship.
- That we will be highly responsive to our client's customer service needs.
- That we will oversee the handling of their claims from start to finish.

Thank you for reading this article, I hope you found it helpful! I would like to hear your thoughts and comments. Please forward them to me at The Whitmore Group mhudak@whitmore.com

