The Data-Driven Agent: Unlocking Deeper Client Insights in Personal Lines

By: David Meinen

Client needs are constantly evolving, and as life events like marriage and children introduce new risks, their insurance policies need to keep pace. In a busy insurance agency, it is easy to lose sight of the comprehensive client journey amid regular client touchpoints like policy changes, deletions, additions and other transactions that are important to personal lines. Business intelligence (BI) through data capture can help fill this information gap and improve the personal lines process by providing agents with an extensive snapshot of who a client is and the risks they face.

Many agents already have access to these high-level insights through tools like agency management systems (AMS) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. An AMS, when used jointly with CRMs and other BI tools, can help bypass previous hurdles for compiling and combing through data, allowing agents to make the experience of writing personal lines more efficient for the agent and client.

Important BI and Data Points for Personal Lines

BI can take many forms and it's sometimes difficult to parse through what is and is not important when facing so many data sources. Ultimately, it comes down to using data points about a specific client and their life as well as those around the agency's book of business and more general data to pull out critical BI factors. Here are some of the most important data points agents need to seek out:

- **Demographic Data** is a key contributor to the entire process of writing personal lines. Information such as marital status, age, family size and income rely on a mixture of automated "pulls" and manual input. Staying on top of updating client information in an AMS is crucial to ensure this information is available agency-wide. Some agencies offer self-service software that allows clients to input and update data on their own. Data-enrichment services are also helpful as they pull home data from public and national sources, compiling information on where a home is located, if the property is in a fire or flood zone, and more. Agents should consider investing in tools that automate the information exchange process, so important client information and general demographic data is readily available and up to date.

- **Third-Party Data** shows BI doesn't have to come solely from in-house sources. These third-party tools can pull information such as credit scores, driving records, home conditions and geographical risks to ensure a comprehensive understanding of a client's history and current insurance needs. By leveraging third-party data, agents can identify cross-selling and upselling opportunities that anticipate future needs and keep a client fully covered, even for risks that may not be top of mind.

- **AI-powered Analytics** can provide a more accurate understanding of a client's risk assessment in their current stage of life and highlight potential areas of interest to keep an eye on. More recent AI modeling gives agents a better grasp of the risk of nonrenewal for clients and allows for a larger pull of data for pricing considerations.

- **Retention Metrics** around policy per client and revenue per client can be used to identify further opportunities for upselling and cross-selling. This data lets agents view how one client's coverage compares to similar ones in their areas and life stages to determine whether they are adequately insured or how often they should be communicated with, for example. Automation is also available to integrate sentiment into an AMS so agents can seamlessly correlate client events and their insurance experience to aid retention.

Mistakes to Avoid

Data and BI have made writing personal lines easier than ever, but efficiency doesn't come without blind spots. These are some frequent mistakes agents should look out for:

Losing Client Connection

The widespread standardization and centralization of personal lines data has come more swiftly than with commercial lines, and clients have been trending away from agent interactions. By streamlining processes and implementing automation where possible, agents can benefit from the additional time available for client communication. When agents fail to nurture relations with clients, they miss out on opportunities to differentiate themselves in a competitive market and increase client satisfaction.

From emails to chatbots to phone calls, there are numerous ways to communicate with a client and agents need to take a more proactive approach in informing clients of policy updates or changes. CRM systems are a great resource to manage communications with clients and prospects. These additional check-ins allow agents to not only ensure client information is still current, but also receive better insights for writing personal lines.

Creating Data Silos

Agents should fully commit to using their AMS. An agency's AMS can solve the heavy lifting of client interactions from policy renewal reminders to tracking policy changes and much more. But agents must put the time in to log the relevant information.

Storing all client interactions centrally can be difficult, but results in accessibility to data that informs client support and strategy. Agents can quickly view a client's history, previous policy questions and what policies they have already been offered. This observation into past and present needs and expectations can help agents provide more efficient and tailored services. So, learn to use it, use it well and as the single source of truth, or client information will continue to get lost in the administrative shuffle.

BI and data can greatly improve an agent's ability to write personal lines, but only when agents know what insights to look for and do their part to keep information updated. When utilizing BI and other data collection tools consistently and effectively, agents can expand their capabilities to improve client communication, client retention and operational efficiency. By leveraging the right tools, agents can ensure personal lines policies better meet a client's needs. ∎

David Meinen is the chief information officer of SIAA – The Agent Alliance, where he is responsible for the administration of a complex, multi-platform computing, telecommunications, networking and IT system. He can be reached at david.meinen@siaa.com.

Reprinted by permission of Standard Publishing Corp. © 2025.