Safeco asks independent insurance agents what’s ahead in 2020

IAs know consumers want online services, but need to become comfortable with online account management

SEATTLE (July 11, 2017) – Future growth of the independent agency channel will partially be determined by how well independent agents (IAs) and carriers anticipate and adapt to new technologies, shifting demographics and evolving customer preferences. Safeco Insurance’s Agent for the Future survey asked 600 IAs which trends they believe will have the most impact by 2020 and what they are doing today to prepare for tomorrow.

The results of the survey, along with recommendations on how to develop a strategy for success, can be found in Safeco’s report, “What it takes to be an Agent for the Future.” The report helps IAs evaluate their agency’s state of readiness for the future and identify opportunities for improvement.

In addition, Safeco has created AgentfortheFuture.com a new resource providing insights and ideas to all IAs, beyond those who partner with Safeco.

“Consumers are changing how they live, learn and buy in a digital-first world. This transformation has made it necessary for carriers and agents alike to adapt to these new trends,” said Tyler Asher, president, Safeco Insurance. “Safeco is using technology and rich data to help enable everyone in the IA channel identify the most important steps they can take to meet the needs of today’s customers and provide them an unparalleled experience.”

A few survey highlights

Safeco’s research indicates that IAs recognize that technological and societal shifts are impacting consumers’ insurance needs and how they want to interact with their agent. The majority of IAs acknowledge that consumers increasingly want online and mobile services. They also appreciate the significant influence millennials will have given that they are now the largest and fastest growing segment of the population.

![Chart showing effects on agencies by 2020](chart.png)
Although IAs recognize the importance of online services, the majority of IAs surveyed state that they are not fully comfortable with customers accessing online account management tools.

**a need to embrace online account management**

- 40% are comfortable
- 38% are somewhat comfortable
- 14% are not comfortable
- 8% don’t want to offer it at all

Some agents expressed appropriate concerns about customers making unwise changes to their coverage without professional guidance. However, customers can take care of many routine activities online such as checking policy details, printing ID cards or paying their bills.

It is essential that IAs become more at ease with e-services. As research by Gallup indicates, “offering the services you need online” and “ease of managing your account” are some of the top drivers for engaging millennial customers.

**The roles of producer and CSR are blurring**

Recognizing that IAs often wear many hats, Safeco asked how the roles of CSRs and producers might be evolving. Those surveyed said that they see the responsibilities of producers and CSRs merging into an account executive or account manager role. Agents reported that 37 percent of CSRs write a lot of new business and that 43 percent of producers provide a lot of service to their customers. This trend appears to be consistent regardless of the size of an agency.

**roles in 2017**

- 73% of agencies under $2.5M agree roles are merging
- 64% of agencies over $2.5M agree roles are merging
You’re hired!

One potential way to gauge the outlook for the industry is to look at hiring trends. More than half of the agents surveyed indicated their agency has hired new producers, service and support staff in the past two years. Perhaps even more encouraging is that 58 percent of those positions were filled by millennials.

For additional results, please visit agentforthefuture.com

About Safeco Insurance

In business since 1923, Safeco Insurance sells personal automobile, homeowners and specialty products through a network of more than 10,000 independent insurance agencies throughout the United States. In a survey conducted in 2016 by Channel Harvest, independent agents named Safeco as the carrier that does more than others to support the overall growth of agencies, and be a champion of the independent agent. Safeco is a Liberty Mutual Insurance company, based in Boston, Mass.

For more information about Safeco Insurance, go to www.Safeco.com.

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