

CUSTOM SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS INC.

Broker-controlled link to customer critical to warding off competition

There is an online business transition to a full-serve, self-serve customer environment happening across the broker landscape. Direct writers and banks are aggressively pushing forward and expanding their platforms to link with clients online. Some say the online services are approaching a point where the future existence of the broker channel may be in jeopardy without a broker-controlled alternative solution.

If brokers want to battle the rising online competition, they need to concentrate on servicing new and existing clients in an automated online environment, says Scott Andrew, president of Custom Software Solutions Inc. That answer, he adds, goes far beyond the limited website offerings brokers have invested in up to now.

CSSI is actively undertaking development of the next component in its broker/company services chain to embrace online customer transactions. It's called I-Client.

The firm's flagship offering, The Broker's Workstation (TBW), has a broker management accounting module that provides all necessary accounting tools to



Andrew

manage a brokerage. It is tightly integrated with a rating and underwriting system, IntelliQuote (IQ), which is also available stand-alone. TBW's Commercial Insurance Workflow Management (CMS) component, offered as a stand-alone or integrated product, supports marketing to insurance companies and proposal creation. CSSI has also created The Underwriter's Workstation (TUW) for MGAs and an insurer product called I-Company.

For the past number of years the Virden, Man. vendor has been devoted to I-Company and WebConnect (seamless access to a wide range of insurance company and service bureau websites) integration projects with carriers and other industry participants. I-Company includes I-Biz, I-Broker and CSIO download modules to provide insurers with a complete, integrated solution.

Insurers currently using or implementing all or components of CSSI's I-Company initiatives include Peace Hills Insurance, Peel Maryborough Mutual and Wawanesa. Andrew believes it's now time to address online transactions with customers just as actively.

"We are able to leverage the I-Company work to date for use in the I-Client project because so much of the functionality is built or well along the path to completion."

Andrew says the I-Client objective will be to offer an online self-serve environ-

ment in an integrated system that brokers own and control. CSSI is working with a focus group of brokers on the required functionality.

Included will be anonymous quoting for home, auto and rateable commercial lines with the ability to calculate replacement costs; allowing users to move from an anonymous quote to secure client status with a bound app; delivering policy docs electronically, in real time if available, based on the rules of the insurer used; delivering renewal documents electronically; giving clients the ability to view policy and related documents; billing and claims information; and online account payment and claims management.

"It may appear to be a stretch," says Andrew, "but we already have many of the tools and most of the information required residing within the BMS. Exposing the information and automation tools in a secure online environment to the end client is the next step, and it is possible."

To get to the end client will require insurance company participation, and brokers will need to be financially committed and focused on deployment, he said.

"This is a significant lift for CSSI, but we're devoted to this goal to give brokers the competitive footing they need to face off with the banks and direct writers." **IW**