‘Outsiders’ Can Produce Winning Results

Before you discount the producer candidate with no prior insurance industry experience, consider the critical success factors to perform the role: competitive, yet likable, entrepreneurial, and the grit to succeed. Hire for these qualities—then train on insurance.

When hiring a producer, the last quality to look for is industry experience. Yes, you read that correctly: Past positions in insurance sales are absolutely not necessary for success as a producer in today’s progressive agencies.

This is a bold statement—and it goes against the recruiting strategy many agencies have employed for years. Agencies have typically focused on selecting producer candidates whose resumes touted deep insurance industry experience. They scan candidates’ employment history for positions at competing firms. A work history peppered with producer roles at similar agencies signifies a winning hire—someone who will surely post results at your firm. The opposite is in fact true: hires with a “strong insurance background” will not guarantee a smooth hiring transition. There will not be less training, greater revenue, and an easier hiring process. In fact the typical 10 year retention rate for producers hovers at a measly 31%!

CONSIDER THIS:

Do you really want to recruit producers who are trained to function in a different agency culture, or worse yet, failed to produce in a similar environment? (Of course not!) You want producers who will perform at your agency, drive new business at your firm, and bring advisory value to your clients.

That’s why the old phrase, “Hire for attitude, train for aptitude,” is timeless and true.

Acquire a Winning Attitude

The reality is, the best producers can come from any industry.

In fact, they may have little, to no, sales experience in your target vertical market, and still succeed at producing new business at your agency. This fresh perspective might be exactly what your firm needs to push to the next level—if you think beyond insurance and give an “outside” producer candidate the chance (and the training).

The opportunities an agency provides to a fiercely motivated, hard-working, personable producer will trump any “past experience” with another firm. And, the training tools offered to producers who are new to the insurance industry will help them learn the science and art of building a strong book of business. Essentially, agencies can build the “perfect producer” by giving

Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals.

Source: Personality Processes and Individual Differences, Angela L. Duckworth, University of Pennsylvania

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### Producer Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Producers</th>
<th>Total Hired (working 30+ hours a week)</th>
<th>1st Year Retained</th>
<th>3rd Year Retained</th>
<th>5th Year Retained</th>
<th>10th Year Retained</th>
<th>10th Year Owners</th>
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<td>364</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Retained</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MarshBerry proprietary financial management system Perspectives for High Performance (“PHP”).

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"Brought to you as a benefit of membership in the Massachusetts Association of Insurance Agents"
them the aptitude—so long as the producer brings to the agency a competitive, yet likable attitude, an entrepreneurial spirit, and the grit to succeed. This winning combination produces positive results—no past insurance experience required.

Mark Bass of BancorpSouth is a shining example of how a motivated, hard-driving individual with a desire to learn and grow can transition into an insurance industry producer role without prior experience in the industry, and even overcome unforeseen circumstances.

Bass was recruited to his agency, using MarshBerry’s Talent Acquisition Team, from outside of the industry. He previously worked at a firm that managed work-related injuries and medical surveillance for employers. During that time, Bass had worked with colleagues at other agencies and saw an opportunity to work as a producer and serve as a strategic resource. Bass wanted to be a problem-solver for clients; exactly the type of producer BancorpSouth was looking for: Someone with the energy, drive and desire to make a difference in the lives of clients’, and in the performance of the agency.

After beginning his producer career at BancorpSouth in 2011, personal tragedy struck. At the age of 30, Bass was diagnosed with rare Stage IV appendix cancer. “When you’re 30, you think you’re invincible, and here I was starting my career at BancorpSouth, eager to get business going,” Bass stated.

Bass was able to channel his energies and competitiveness to succeed. He did not lose his entrepreneurial drive. He had the determination and grit to stick through thick and thin. Bass was a perfect fit for BancorpSouth. And, producers like him are a perfect fit for your agency. Here’s why:

**Recruit for Relentless Drive**

*Bass is the definition of motivated.*

During training at the agency, Bass more than doubled his business, despite 12 rounds of chemotherapy, surgery and an uncertain prognosis. Mark made cold calls on his “bad days.” He closed his office door and hunkered down. On good days, he was out in the field meeting with prospects. He never stopped hunting, even when his health was in serious jeopardy.

Bass is an inspiration for so many reasons. His contagious energy inspired colleagues to work harder at meeting goals. If Bass was going through chemo and doubling his book of business, there were no excuses for anyone. Bass saw how his work helped the agency grow, and he was proud of this. That’s another important quality for agencies to seek in producers:

*Bass brought out the best in the entire team at his BancorpSouth office and reminded everyone that they were working toward a common goal.*

Agencies can learn a lot from Bass, including how (and why) to train and mentor a quality producer from outside of the insurance industry.

**Set Goals—and Hold Producers Accountable**

*Setting specific sales goals allows producers to work toward a concrete number.*

Aiming to “grow your book of business” is great—but that’s not the type of detailed direction producers need to hunt and close sales. When there’s a clear target, producers can focus on meeting that number, whether a dollar amount or percentage increase over the prior year’s business. With a goal in mind, new producers can gather the support and tap into training tools in place to get them where they need to go.

Setting goals—and stretching to beat those targets—gave Bass the motivation to keep cold calling and meeting with clients even on bad days. He took one day at a time; one phone call at a time; one task at a time, one renewal at a time.” He always stayed on track, because he had a track to run on.

Give producers clear goals so they understand expectations. Celebrate wins during the climb to that target number. Continually offer support if producers are struggling with book...
For producers just entering the insurance industry, they may come in with the preconceived notion that insurance is a commodity business.

This is not at all the case in today’s dynamic insurance industry, where progressive agencies serve as risk management advisors to their clients, providing products, support and ancillary services, from payroll to HR consulting. Producers are a strategic resource for clients. But fulfilling this role requires training.

As Mark noted, the more he got to learn about the industry, he realized that selling isn’t all you need to know—you need to understand all the coverage lines and communicate those with clients.

The insurance industry today provides producers an environment where they’ll not only write policies, but also will provide solutions and help implement them. Agencies that engage producers in continuous training will prepare producers to succeed in today’s dynamic insurance landscape.

Offer Mentorship Opportunities

Mentors are invaluable to producers joining the insurance industry from other fields.

We learn by watching, and we grow in our careers when we can mold successful colleagues. Mentorship is a critical aspect of training producers because the partnership gives new hires an internal go-to for questions—anything from cold-calling scripts to visiting prospects in person, and the number-crunching side of the producer role. Mentors can assist new producers as they learn the technology and gain the tools to perform their duties.

Mentorship can also help expand producers’ networks and learn the intricacies of the insurance sales process. Bass was used to making cold calls and securing client contracts in his previous job. He had to get used to the longer sales cycle in insurance, and the marketing and presentation efforts required to close sales. Mark added “I learned that it’s important to always keep putting business in your pipeline and that you’re always moving—you’re never complacent. And I had a lot of support from colleagues. At the end of the day, the agency had my back and told me, just take care of yourself.”

Change Your Paradigm of the Ideal Candidate

If you’re in the position to recruit new producers—and all agencies should be constantly seeking fresh talent—then take a close look at candidates that show a deep interest in insurance, the highly respected and lucrative career which positions them as a trusted, consultative advisor—even if they have no prior industry experience.

Tune in to this attitude and give new producers the tools to succeed. Integrate producers with a fresh perspective into your culture, they aren’t bringing “baggage” from another agency to your firm.

A key indicator often referenced to determine the success of a Producer is validation. If you can see that a Producers’ book of business is progressing towards covering his base salary, you can evaluate the value and benefit they are bringing to your agency. By seeking out candidates who possess the unique blend of competitiveness, likability, grit, and entrepreneurial drive, and providing mentoring, training, and solid goals, you will have found the recipe for candidates who more quickly validate their
base and build a strong and thriving book of business. In fact after one year, Producers who meet these criteria have validated 85% of the average 60k base salary as opposed to 57%!

In Conclusion

**Bass beat his cancer. The chemotherapy and surgery were successful, and Bass continues to only do his best.**

His advice: “I had tough days, but the whole year, I probably missed about three days of work. Don't be complacent. Have a plan. Set goals you want to accomplish. Set a sales structure, and know how many calls you want to make that week, how many people you want to see. Time management is an important piece of your success.”

**So seek out Producer candidates like Mark Bass—candidates who do not fit the traditional model, but have the vigor, passion, and attitude to succeed. Tap new producers’ energy for the insurance industry. After all, they are seeking a position in this field—they want to be here. They are coming to the table inspired, ready to learn. These are traits you just can't train.**

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**Increase New Business Production:**

**SalesPro Producer Training**

*MarshBerry’s SalesPro Producer Training is specific to the insurance industry based on the practices and processes of million dollar producers that have consistently grown their book of business. Attendees will learn a systematic approach to increasing new business production.*

**TOPICS INCLUDE:**

- Qualifying Prospects
- Niche Development
- Business Planning
- Time Management
- Seven Levels of Prospecting
- Creating an Elevator Pitch
- Utilizing Social Media to Get Better Referrals

**DATE & LOCATION**

- **April 20 - 21, 2015**
- **Chicago, IL** — Swissotel Chicago, 323 East Upper Wacker Drive, Chicago IL 60601

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND?**

New and/or seasoned commercial lines or employee benefits production personnel who are looking to achieve a higher level of performance.

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