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Agents Want More Carriers to Use Real-Time Systems, Survey Says

"Sky is the limit" on what agents can do with time freed up because of real-time programs, an agent says.

For independent agent Joyce Sigler, one hour of time can be the difference between a carrier that uses a real-time system and one that does not.

An agent works on an auto policy with three vehicles and three drivers, each with a different rating. It takes less than minute—a click of a button—to move the information from the agency management system to the carrier using a real-time system, says Sigler, vice president of administration of Jones & Wenner Insurance in Fairlawn, Ohio.

But for a carrier using its own portal, the agent spends an hour rekeying the information and verifying it for accuracy, she adds.

"That time could be spent evaluating renewals, it could be spent doing other marketing programs, it can be spent looking at coverages," says Sigler, whose agency employs 15 people and offers insurance for trucking and transportation, professional enterprises and personal lines. "The sky is the limit as to where it could be spent."

Sigler agrees with other independent agents and brokers who say more insurance carriers should offer real-time capabilities to improve workflow efficiency at their agencies, according to a recent Real Time/Download Campaign survey with more than 3,100 respondents.

Using a five-point scale, survey participants prioritized 11 types of enhancements to real-time programs, according to the campaign.

Six of 10 survey respondents gave "additional carriers with real-time capabilities" the highest rating, according to the campaign. Agents and brokers also prioritized "broader carrier participation" and having "consistent lines of business/real-time functions offered across carriers."

The number of carriers using real-time systems is growing, but there's still more work to be done, says Stuart Durland, vice president of Seely & Durland Insurance in Warwick, N.Y., who has long supported real-time models.

For Durland's nine-person agency, which specializes in business and personal property-casualty insurance, not all of the carriers have real-time functions—or are fully carrying them out. The same is true for other agencies too.

To receive a quote for a client, an agent may only need to enter information into the agency management system and click a button, sending the information to a carrier through a real-time program, he says. But for another carrier that's partially implemented real-time, the agent may need to log in to the carrier's website to add more information before receiving a rate. And for a carrier not using real-time, the agent may need to start from scratch by retyping all of the client's information in a carrier's portal.

"It's an inconsistent workflow at this point," Durland says.

In addition to carriers, more agencies could also use real-time, he says. Some aren't using it for reasons that may include staff size or lack of access to an IT professional, but Durland notes it may seem "more overwhelming than it probably is just to get involved with it."

"The companies have to implement it, but the agencies have to use it as well," he adds.

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More information about the Real-Time Campaign survey results is [here](#).



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