

Real-Time Usage Continues to Grow for Independent Agents

Daily Time Savings Pegged At As Much As an Hour per Person

PEARL RIVER, N.Y. (MAY 12, 2010) – A recent Real Time/Download Campaign (www.getrealttime.org) survey of independent agents and brokers shows that more than two thirds (69%) of agency management system users employ a real-time tool to begin real-time inquiry or service transactions. These 2010 findings are up by nearly 30% over last year.

The use of tools for rating and quoting is up, as well, according to the survey of more than 1,600 agents and brokers from every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Fifty-seven percent of survey participants use a real-time rating tool for personal lines policies—a jump of more than 32% over 2009. For commercial lines, the use of real-time rating tools, at 21.5%, is up by roughly 20%.

“It’s encouraging to see continued growth in the number of agencies using real time,” says Campaign co-chair Cyndy Smith, vice president, technology, at Haylor, Freyer & Coon, Syracuse, N.Y. “As more agents and brokers adopt the new workflows, they improve their competitive position as a distribution channel and are better equipped to serve their clients. The more carriers and vendors see their agents using real time, the more willing they are to invest further in real time to provide additional transactions across more lines of business.”

Time Savings and More

Users identified speed, time savings, workflow improvements and accuracy as key benefits of using real time. Nearly nine in 10 (89%) real-time users indicated that using real-time tools saves their agencies time. For those reporting time savings in personal lines departments, the average daily amount saved was just over an hour (60.3 minutes) per person. Average daily time saved per individual in an agency’s commercial lines department was just over 43 minutes.

“Agencies are always looking for new ways to increase efficiency,” says Karen Youngman, CPCU, personal lines manager at Don Allen Agency, Rochester, N.Y., and Real Time/Download Campaign co-chair. “To find a tool that saves that kind of time—more than a half a day each week—is huge. Best of all, for most agencies, the functionality already exists within their current agency automation.”

Youngman also pointed to a number of free resources available to help agents and brokers make use of those tools. Among these is the Campaign’s 21 Day Challenge (www.getrealttime.org/21DC), designed to help agents and brokers make the use of real time a habit within their organizations.

Among other findings:

- Two thirds of real-time users said the tools allow them to respond more quickly to client questions.
- “Able to quote more/faster” was a benefit cited by nearly the same number (63%) of respondents.

- Forty-four percent said use of the tools provide staff more time for service and sales.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) said the tools are easy to use and save many keystrokes.
- “Accuracy of information” was cited as a benefit by 57% of respondents.

Top Real-Time Transactions

Those who use a real-time tool said that personal lines billing and policy inquiry transactions were used most commonly, by 88% and 85%, respectively. In commercial lines, 74% of agencies that use real time said they make billing inquiries using real-time tools in their system; 69% use real-time tools for commercial lines policy inquiries.

Seventy-one percent of survey participants who use a real-time tool for inquiry and service transactions said they use it to perform personal lines claims inquiries; commercial lines claims inquiries are conducted by 61% of users. Personal lines endorsement processing is handled using system-based real-time tools by 59% of real-time users.

Barriers to Implementation

Some 31% of survey respondents said they do not use a real-time tool in their management system to perform real-time inquiry or service transactions. These respondents all were asked “Why not?” Of these, roughly 15% said either they did not know the functionality was available within their system or they lack time to implement and/or train staff. Twelve percent said they found it to be too difficult to set up; 5% said they could not convince management of its value.

To see actual demos of agents using real time and to learn about available tools to assist with implementation, attend the Campaign’s free webinar, “Save Time & Increase Profits with Real Time,” on June 9, 2:00-3:00 p.m. EDT by registering at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/953284472>.

About the Real Time/Download Campaign: Launched in 2007, the Real Time/Download Campaign (www.getrealttime.org) is dedicated to improving the competitiveness of the independent agency distribution channel. The campaign—supported by independent agents, trade associations, carriers and technology providers—isn’t advocating a specific technology, but a workflow approach that frees up more time for agencies to sell, process and service business.

Campaign sponsors include: ACORD User Groups Information Exchange (AUGIE)/ACORD; Agents Council for Technology (ACT)/Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America; Allied Property & Casualty Insurance/Nationwide; Applied Systems; Applied Systems Client Network (ASCnet); Artizan Internet Services; EMC Insurance Companies; Grange Insurance; Harleysville; The Hartford; IVANS; Liberty Mutual Agency Markets; MetLife Auto & Home; Network of Vertafore Users (NetVU), formerly AMS Users Group; PIA of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut & New Hampshire; Progressive Insurance; Strategic Insurance Software (SIS); Travelers; Vertafore; and Westfield Insurance.

###