

Real Time: A Feature of Distinction

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Do you want to provide superior customer service to your clients? Do you want to improve productivity? These are proven results that you too can achieve by implementing the Real Time features available today. As a consultant working in the insurance industry for the past 20 years, I've heard the pleas of the service staff – “Please rescue me from all this paper. Please help me keep up with all these passwords. There are too many transactions. I can't keep up.”

Today, the paper transaction is disappearing and being replaced with the electronic transaction. We watched as the fax machine replaced the U.S. mail. Now, email is replacing the fax machine. The iPhone puts the Internet, calendar, contacts, email and my phone all in hand! These features are changing the way business is conducted.

Real Time—A Major Break-through in Agency Workflow

Real Time, the newest of all electronic communication tools between agents/brokers and carriers, raises the bar to the highest level. Real Time allows you simple access to client, policy and claims information from the carrier system – with the click of a button – using your agency management system (or perhaps your comparative rater for Real-Time rates). The transaction may be a quote, billing inquiry, claim inquiry/loss run, policy view, endorsement or a request for information. *This provides single workflows for servicing or quoting.*

Let's take a look at why this feature distinguishes itself from all the other features available with technology. Once the Real Time feature is implemented, if a direct bill client calls with a question, the CSR has instant access to the carrier billing information without having to exit what he or she is doing and access the carrier's Web site via the Internet with its multiple layers of security. The same is true if the CSR needs to quote an endorsement. The transaction is quick and easy.

But the real payback with Real Time—the benefit that causes this feature to distinguish itself above all other features—is what happens when you integrate the Real Time feature into practical insurance workflows. When you couple Real Time with other features *you've already implemented* or rewrite your workflows with Real Time features integrated into the process, the potential payback from your Real Time investment makes quantum leaps.

The most logical combination is to couple Real Time features and with your existing Download implementation. Download automatically updates the agency management system database with renewals, endorsements and cancellations. When a change request is processed with the integrated Real Time feature, it is a single workflow for the CSR. The CSR selects the client/policy on his or her agency management system and then hits the real-time button, which launches the carrier site. The CSR makes the change on the carrier Web site. When completed, the CSR is prompted to complete an activity on the agency

management system. Wow! This type of single workflow is what we've all been asking for – for years and years!

Commercial lines is often left out when new features become available. However, Real-Time has some very good applications for commercial lines as well. My favorite time-saver is for processing direct bill cancellation notices for large commercial accounts. Since these accounts are typically not downloaded, the workflow usually includes a check to see if payment has been received. With Real Time, this checking process is instant and an activity logging the event and setting the appropriate follow up (for cancellation or reinstatement) is automatically prompted.

Real Time Enables Us to Put Service First

Our CSR history has been one of processing, then servicing. We come from a paper-pushing environment. We have the tools now to put these days behind us. However, many CSRs have simply replaced paper pushing with transaction processing. It's almost as if keystrokes have replaced filing. CSRs are used to accessing information a certain way—even if it is cumbersome—such as going to multiple carrier Web sites.

It's time to change. Real Time eliminates the keystrokes and lets the CSRs focus on the service event. The old way of doing it was a process. The new way, the Real-Time way, focuses 100% of the CSR's energy on the servicing event, not the process of getting there. The old way makes the servicing event secondary. The new way puts the client first!

Rethinking Your Workflows for Real Time

Real Time transactions are a quicker, more efficient way to transact business. It is easy to implement and requires very little training. However, it does require you to rethink your workflows. All your workflows that involve carrier interface need to be rewritten to include the Real-Time option.

For example, consider the following enhancements to your existing endorsement workflows for Personal Lines and Commercial Lines.

Workflow #1: Ordering Endorsement with Download (PL & CL)

1. Receive phone call or email from your client. If email, review email (on monitor one if you have dual monitors).
2. On monitor two, access the insured and policy on your agency management system.
3. Click the Real-Time Button (still on monitor two) accessing the carrier system. Your client and policy will display. Select the endorse option.
4. Endorse the policy. When you complete and save the transaction, you will automatically exit back to your agency management system. An activity will automatically be opened.

5. Log the activity. If the request from the client was via email, be sure to attach the email to the activity. (The email is open on monitor one. You can drag it to attach.) Be sure to record who requested the change and a brief description of the change if the change was via phone call. Indicate in the activity that the change was completed using the Real-Time option.
6. Depending on agency guidelines, pend for receipt of the endorsement.

Workflow #2: Receiving Endorsement with Download (PL & CL) – Agency Retrieves Endorsement Declarations Page and Stores as Attachment

1. Receive the download (and carrier alert).
2. On monitor one, select the client and policy and activity on your agency management system.
3. View the activity and corresponding documentation to verify change request.
4. Click the Real-Time Button accessing the carrier system. Retrieve the endorsement declaration page and print to a .pdf file. Move the .pdf to monitor two.
5. Verify the endorsement is correct.
6. Exit the carrier system. An activity will automatically open on your agency management system. Attach the .pdf (displaying on monitor one).
7. Complete the activity pending receipt and verification of the endorsement.

Workflow #3: Receiving Endorsement with Download (PL & CL) – Endorsement Declarations Page Maintained on Carrier System

1. Receive the download (and carrier alert).
2. On monitor one, select the client and policy and activity on your agency management system.
3. View the activity and corresponding documentation to verify change request.
4. Click the Real-Time Button accessing the carrier system. Retrieve the endorsement declaration page. Move dec page to monitor two. Verify the endorsement is correct.
5. Exit the carrier system. An activity will automatically open on your agency management system. Record that the endorsement was verified.
6. Complete the activity pending receipt and verification of the endorsement still open on monitor one.

These workflows need to be customized to meet the specific guidelines established in your agency, but they illustrate how important it is to integrate the tools (dual monitors), the features (Real Time, Activities, Attachments), and the Workflows (Ordering and Receiving Endorsements). It's like a three-legged stool; it will not stand unless all the legs are in place!

It's Time to Implement Real Time Now

The only drawback to Real Time is that it is not available with all carriers and for all transactions. Even so, using Real Time where it is available will save you time. Also, the level of agent utilization will drive more carrier and vendor adoption of Real Time, for more transactions and lines of business. It would be a shame to see such a dynamic feature not live up to its potential because of lack of utilization! So get on board!

Implementation of Real Time is easy. The industry has created a Web site – www.getrealtime.org to guide you through implementation. The Web site includes everything you need to get started.

So what's holding you back? Welcome to the new way of transacting business. Welcome to a world that puts the focus back on the client and eliminates hundreds of keystrokes and unnecessary steps in the process. Welcome to the world of the *single workflow*.



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