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• Are you locked with a captive and all of the mounting restrictions?
• Are you tired of trying to write the business “they” want you to write?
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**SUMMER 2013**

An Official Publication of the National Association of Professional Allstate Agents, Inc.

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*A Magazine for Allstate Agency Owners and Allstate Personal Financial Representatives*
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This is just a sampling of the quality carriers Couri represents.
Suddenly agents in some parts of the country are reporting that Allstate is competitive again. One has to wonder why, after years of depriving agents and consumers of takeaway rates, the company is loosening its underwriting to the extent that drivers with major violations, multiple tickets and accidents are now being welcomed with open arms as long as they have pristine credit and enough cars.

Is this curious about-face in response to Allstate’s dwindling PIF, the voluntary exodus of agents who left in disgust after they were confronted with lower base commissions, or a pre-planned effort to placate the agency force after the Great Agent Purge, wherein thousands of agents were terminated for missing unobtainable sales goals? Maybe it’s all of the above.

I don’t know about you, but I find it difficult to sell somebody a policy when my rate is twice as much as the next guy’s. Of course it doesn’t help when companies like Progressive, USAA, AARP and 21st Century declare that Allstate has the highest rate. Is this because they like to beat up on Allstate? Why don’t State Farm, American Family or Farmers ever top the list?

Agents may be able to justify $100 more each six months by finagling prospects into believing Allstate is worth an extra $200 per year, but most agents don’t believe it themselves, making it difficult for them to peddle policies to anyone else. Then there is the long history of substandard reviews from Consumer Reports and J.D. Power & Associates – not to mention Allstate’s conspicuous absence from the Ethisphere Institute’s World’s Most Ethical Companies List, where we saw The Progressive Group of Companies land in the top five. It’s no wonder Allstate agents have a hard time meeting sales quotas.

Whatever the inspiration was for the company to become more competitive, it is a welcome change. In fact, it can’t happen fast enough. There is no doubt that selling four cars per month is much easier with less restrictive underwriting and competitive rates. Agents are happiest when they’re selling and when other nagging distractions – such as the possibility of lower base commissions – are put on the back burner.

Even Tom Wilson, who purposely tiptoed around Nancy Fish’s pointed agent compensation question at last month’s annual shareholders meeting, understands that talk of 8% commissions will only lead to another agent revolt, unless they soften the blow by making it easier for agents to get back to 10%.

But once agents are lulled into seeing how easy it is to get back to 10%, things will change, as they always do. In its never-ending pursuit of more profit, you can expect the company to tinker with the Agency Success Factors and production quotas – they simply can’t keep their hands out of the cookie jar.

You see, too many agents will earn 10% and that’s not what the company wants. Why else would they lower the commission rate in the first place? If most agents end up earning 10% year after year, the whole idea would have been a giant waste of time.

The truth is for the company stock to rise, it must create more value for shareholders, which oftentimes means taking more from the pockets of the agents. This is not meant to be a negative statement; it is what corporations do. They are not created with hearts or souls and their ethics are only as good as those who manage the company. Profit-making is pretty much their whole objective and the more they make, the more corporate officers take for themselves.

My point is that agents will someday find that earning 10% is no longer a cakewalk. The noose of qualifiers will tighten and agents will find themselves earning a base commission rate of 8 or 9 percent. I hope I’m wrong, but after more than 50 years in the insurance industry, I’ve learned a thing or two about the way certain companies operate – and Allstate is among them.

If you have concerns over fair compensation, quotas and other issues, why go it alone? Now more than ever, agency owners need the voice and power that only a unified organization can offer. Our affiliation with OPEIU provides NAPAA with greater leverage to accomplish more for you.

If you are not yet a member, we encourage you to sign up today. You can join online at www.napaaUSA.org or by completing the membership application found on page 56 of this magazine.
“ASNOA provided direct access to the markets we needed, providing us the ability to compete with national and regional agencies. The automation support saved us time and money, which enabled us to divert more resources to marketing and growing our business. The results on our bottom line have been amazing!”

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I am a former NAB member who stepped down several years ago because I was frustrated by the lack of progress on pressing agent issues needing resolution. I wasn’t the only one who was disillusioned; others left too. I also admit that I now often agree with NAPAA on issues, especially those regarding our independent contractor status. Consensus support for achieving true independent contractor status and other red meat agent issues are mostly non-existent on the NAB. Bringing up certain issues is not politically correct, so they are conveniently overlooked, sidestepped or tabled indefinitely. There were many times I wanted to speak up, but didn't have the courage. I was afraid my NAB peers would hang me out to dry, and I would be singled out by management as a rabble-rouser.

On both the AEC and the NAB there are second generation Allstaters. Their fathers were part of a generation that saw the best of times at Allstate. Their children were allowed to acquire their large books of business, and as a result, these progenies are fiercely loyal to the brand. In my opinion, this loyalty blinds them from seeing what is happening to other agents around the country. And more often than not, they side with management over what’s best for the agency force and/ or what’s best for them personally.

It’s no secret that the “good old days” are long gone, yet these die-hard souls remain steadfast in their belief that the company can do no wrong. What I find disquieting about these and the descendants of other “royal families” is their failure to grasp – or appreciate – the tribulations of the average agent who has never been advantaged as they have. Living in the shadow of regional offices, they benefit from an overabundance of business generated by company employees and their families.

Don’t get me wrong, I envy those who have a built-in niche. I know they work hard and I consider them my friends. But they don’t know what it’s like to be in a market where there are no company offices. Because of this, I believe it is difficult for them to empathize with agents from smaller markets who have no such advantage.

I want to thank NAPAA for the issues they continue to raise for the benefit of all of the agents, not just the select few who are blessed by management.

The tornado in Moore, Oklahoma is shining a spotlight on the new House and Home policy. I have a feeling that it will be the agents who are blamed for selling this abominable policy. According to what I’ve read, selling this policy to someone whose roof is too old to qualify for replacement cost, is a violation of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac guidelines, both of which require replacement cost coverage. Do you see an E&O exposure here?

Editor’s response: Yes, but not just for Allstate agents. Loan servicers and loan originators will likely get stung too. In our view, it is their responsibility to make sure that the evidence of insurance is acceptable. But it is just as important for Allstate agents to inform their clients and the party closing the loan that the House and Home policy is not compliant with Freddie and Fannie guidelines because of the ACV provision. We suggest that this disclosure be made in writing. At this point, agents have no way of knowing whether a loan will go to Fannie or Freddie. The customer calls to buy a homeowners policy and most of them don’t realize it will be a Fannie or Freddie loan; they think they’re dealing with a local lender. The best strategy for agents is to make sure ACV roof coverage is acceptable to lenders before writing the policy. Agents may lose some sales, but it’s better than paying multiple E&O deductibles.

It was just over 38 months ago that Allstate management received the green light to “reduce the herd” of Allstate agents. Try losing some 90 agents out of a roster of 141 since January, 2009. Some have been replaced, but not many. That is why our region was down 5000 autos in 2012 alone.

One morning, I received a frantic call from a fellow agent, whose office was just four miles from mine. The first words out of his mouth were, “They STOLE my agency! What can I do? I have no phone service and my computers no longer work. All I have is cell phone!” Management had warned him with a written notice, but he never saw it coming to this. They never informed him how to file his TPP and didn’t return his calls for two weeks.

Now here is my sage advice: never allow yourself to get caught in this situation. Join NAPAA and use their wealth of experience and knowledge to prepare you for Plans B and C. As for the agent above, I gave him the phone number to NAPAA and said, “Call them ASAP”. Later that afternoon, he called me with a tone of relief in his voice. “Thank you” he exclaimed, “I just do not know what I would have done without the help of Nancy Fish.” She not only talked him down off the roof, but informed him of his options.

Don’t be that guy. Call NAPAA now and spend a few bucks. I did, and now I am a proud member. I wish I had done it 10 years earlier. By the way, when you call, be sure to ask about their E&O help and benefits. Pushing more and more E&O claims our way is surely part of Allstate’s next wave of reducing costs and transferring them to us. Agents need to prepare themselves for this possibility. Join NAPAA and you’ll automatically be enrolled in their deductible assistance program.

LETTERS continued on page 10.
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SIAA
THE NATIONAL INSURANCE AGENCY ALLIANCE
I am an experienced Allstate agent and I am beginning to worry. In my territory, they have fired or driven away many of the profitable, established agencies. As I look around at those who remain, I see a bunch of morally challenged agents. You know the type; agents who are always trying to beat the system by putting square pegs into round holes. They do things like giving cars that are garaged in the suburbs the “farm” rate, and as soon as their clients turn 55, they always seem to get the defensive driver discount. Like a good corporate citizen, I have reported this fraud to Territorial Management and they say they’ll take care of it, but these perps are still here because the territory doesn’t want to lose their big production volume. I even called the RVP and he washed his hands of it by calling it a “Territorial Management issue.” In addition, the offenders often receive accounts the company stole from the agents they fired. Now here is my fear; let’s say that all or most of the fired agents become IAs and go after their best and most profitable PTL clients after they serve their one year of penance. Doesn’t it make perfect sense for them to cherry-pick the best customers from their old book? If that happens, our territorial book will be left with the worst risks.

Being a stock company, Mr. Wilson has gone on record to state that we are not a non-profit company and when rate increases are necessary, he will personally direct management to take them. We are already rate-challenged in our state. What will happen if this scenario is allowed to play out nationwide? Our Region was down 5,000 autos in 2012 alone. What can we do to stop this madness?

Signed,
Sleepless in Kansas

Editor’s response: This is not a new problem. When management at all levels fails to put a stop to bad behavior, everyone suffers. We suggest filing a confidential complaint with AlertLine, a third-party compliance provider contracted by Allstate. To file a report go to www.AlertLine.com or call 800.427.9389.

I’m happy as a clam in the independent agent world. Companies treat us as customers because they know we have choices and can place the business elsewhere. We’re not doing any marketing or advertising, have no sign, and yet we’re writing roughly the same amount of business as we did before leaving Allstate. To do that without the Allstate name is an accomplishment. Over time, we’ll represent more markets, do some advertising and put up a very visible sign. I believe it only gets better from here. Leaving was a difficult decision, but the right decision for me.

I would like your opinion on an on-going matter with the agent who took over my book. He has been slandering my name to my old customers by telling them I was fired, that I overcharged customers when other options were available and that I was a bad agent. I have stuff in writing and he has been warned. I would like to know if others have sustained this type of defamation and if anyone has sued and been successful.

Editor’s response: Since these kinds of disputes generally only involve the agents and not Allstate, we seldom hear about them. If you can provide proof that you are being defamed, you might ask your attorney to draft a cease and desist letter, which would immediately put the other agent on notice that you mean business. Then, if the bad behavior continues, you could sue him. Again, everything hinges on the quality and the quantity of the proof you have and whether anyone will testify on your behalf. If you sue him and prevail, you may be entitled to damages and possibly, a written retraction from him that you could use in a newspaper ad or possibly even a mailing to his book of business, if so ordered by the judge.

During my time as a manager and before our region underwent its regime change, our management meetings were always very agent-centric. We wanted to grow successful agencies for the company. In the last 6 years that has changed dramatically. They are really pushing the envelope with regard to how they handle the agents and their independent contractor status, which the company still claims to honor. I think what we are seeing today trickled down from Home Office and Tom Wilson around the time Resources for Growth (RFG) was launched. RFG, as you know actually meant, “Methods of Withholding Resources!”

We should talk; maybe I can shed some light on some of the more questionable management practices I witnessed during my management years.

I just read your brilliant article on Nancy Fish. You really should contemplate a career as a writer. SERIOUSLY! Your words flow gently from paragraph to paragraph without any wasted words. My apologies for savoring every word in your magazine, and for reading it so-o-o slowly. You were spot on in your description of your other half!

Thank you both for all you have done for me and my fellow agents over the years. NNOAC and NAPAA kept me sane for over three decades!

What a wonderful story about Nancy Fish! I’ve had many dealings with her and based on my experience, all that was written about her is true. I’m glad Jim wrote the story because I learned more about the respect they have for the agents and for each other.

Continued on page 57.
Break the Shackles...

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This year’s Southwest Regional Forum took place March 12-13 at the beautiful Aria Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The event included general sessions, smaller breakout sessions and an awards dinner. The cost was $150 per agent, which did not include transportation. The speakers for the general sessions were: Kathy Mabe, President, Allstate Protection Western U.S.; Southwest Region FSVP, Denis Bailey; RSL, Jim Turner; and TSL, Grant Wood.

The venue was outstanding. The Aria is one of the newest casino resorts in Las Vegas and features large, sumptuous rooms with flat screen TVs and the latest amenities, including an in-room remote control system that allows guests to open and close the window draperies from across the room. While I would rate the food in the “good” category, the service was “great” and the ambiance was scored a “pleasant” rating. As most in most Casinos, the meeting area was quite a hike from the rooms and not very convenient, a common casualty for conferences hosted in Las Vegas.

The general sessions were generic and fraught with the usual rah-rah, especially from Kathy Mabe. Denis Bailey and Jim Turner, who are actually outstanding leaders and probably two of the best managers in the country, were very upbeat. Denis suggested Allstate made some unwise decisions in the past, but that the best was yet to come and that Allstate would now help agents succeed, an admission that agents in other regions also claimed they heard from leadership – including Matt Winter – at their regional forums.

It was the first time I had ever met Jim Turner and I was touched that he personally went out of his way to order a wheelchair for me. I was recovering from...
two foot surgeries at the time and walking was a real struggle. I give him a lot of credit for the compassion and courtesy he demonstrated. He was not obligated to go above and beyond for me – an agent with the smallest book in Tucson and one who did not win any awards.

Make no mistake, all of the managers understand the elephant in the room, but much like Allstate agents across the nation, they need a paycheck to support their families and they work very hard to toe the line. I think most of them get it, but they really aren’t at liberty to say, “Gee, it’s too bad our CEO did not value the agents and chose to get rid of them, causing our market share to drop” Or that, “Agents couldn’t grow because we weren’t competitive, so let’s punish them by reducing their commissions.”

The breakout sessions consisted of the usual how to staff your office, outbound prospecting and building great EA/EFS partnerships, most of which you can get at a NAPAA conference.

Depending on where you are in the cycle of your agency, these sessions can be very useful and provide helpful ideas and resources. Attendees could choose the sessions they wanted to attend. The most dynamic breakout session was “Expect to Win” with Greg Gray. One thing he suggested was to modify the Care, Sell and Quote process. The changes were some that you had already thought of doing in your agency, but it was refreshing to get a stamp of approval from this speaker. He suggested making the following modifications to the script: number 4 should change to, “Tell me more about your current coverage and discounts;” number 5 should change to “How satisfied are you with your current agent?” and number 6 should change to, “Besides price, what else is important to you?” While these minor suggestions alone were worth attending the breakout session, he offered additional advice about the attitude needed to make a sale, following up, and not asking yes and no questions. He also reminded us how relationship-building is a powerful tool and how using the discounts tool – coupled with the ongoing conversation – can be vital to closing the sale.

The keynote speaker was Brian P. Sullivan, who gave his speech with a lot of energy and was well-versed in his topic. The title of his speech was “It’s the End of the World as You Know It – Will You be Fine?” The main objective was to drive agents to think differently about how they do business by looking at our changing society.

As insurance agents, we witness changing demographics and societal variations every day. Our customers are young, old, and in-between. And each of these generations has a different way of handling personal relationships and financial issues. The family structure has changed; women now outnumber men in college, and technology advances have altered the way people make purchases. Rather than exclusively focusing on those in the middle of the demographic spectrum, he suggested that agents challenge themselves to adapt by learning and understanding how to deal with the younger and older generations, as well as the increasing economic power of women in society. Of course there are other demographic changes that are taking place and we should be ready for them. The secret of future success could rest with how well you know your marketplace. There is a huge supply of free demographic data by very narrow census blocks. The bottom line is that the real trends are in the future, not in the past and they are ever-changing, so we must be prepared and adjust our agencies accordingly.

Mr. Sullivan specifically mentioned Allstate and the fact that, in the past, leadership failed to communicate its affection for the only distribution force that matters: the agency force. He followed by saying that “they get it now.”

Just as you would find at most events of this kind, there was a huge selection of vendor tables to visit with free tchotchkes. Later on, drawings were held for several different prizes.

The awards dinner was nice for those winning awards and the food was a cut above the rubber chicken usually served at these events.

Management announced the company would be hosting a National Forum next year for all agents and that it would most likely take place in Las Vegas. As an active agent, I am pleased I could attend the SW Regional Forum and felt that for $150 plus my plane ticket, it was worth the cost.

Debe Campos-Fleenor is an active Allstate agent in Tucson, AZ and is a proud member of NAPAA Board of Directors.
Watch the Clock: Wage and Hour Rules for Small Employers

By Dirk A. Beamer

Allstate agency owners have their hands full as they work to grow their books of business, service their existing clientele, and keep up with the ever-changing rules out of Northbrook. In the midst of all this, you can’t lose track of your responsibilities as an employer. State and federal wage and hour laws apply to you if you have even one paid staff member, and it is up to you as the employer to make sure you are following the law. Here are just a few examples of potential problem areas.

1. Overtime Pay. Although the law has been around for a long time and in many respects is straightforward, small employers continue to struggle with the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Basically, the law requires that employers pay their workers time and a half for every hour over 40 that an employee works in a single work week. Here are a few common misconceptions about the law:
   • “It is up to me to decide whether an employee is “exempt” from the overtime requirements;”
   • “If I pay a salary, I don’t have to pay overtime;”
   • “I can offer comp or flex time instead of overtime;” and
   • “If the employee works overtime without my permission, I don’t need to pay for it.”

While certain employees are “exempt” from the overtime requirements of the FLSA, the test for determining exemption is more complex and more rigid than many employers realize. Paying someone a salary to do office or “white collar” work does not guarantee that you are exempt from the law. If the law does apply to you and your employee, it is not up to the two of you to decide if you want to deviate from it in favor of some alternative form of compensation; even if the employee agrees.
2. **Paid Breaks.** The FLSA does not mandate that employees be given any specific breaks during the workday. It does require, however, that if you as an employer allow small (sometimes called “de minimis”) breaks during the day, you cannot dock pay for them. Longer breaks (typically 20 minutes or more) can be without pay; however, you need to completely relieve the worker from job responsibilities if they are on an unpaid break. Here are some common mistakes concerning breaks at work:

- Asking office staff to answer phones or run errands during an unpaid lunch break; and
- Tacking on break time to the schedule without accounting for resulting overtime (e.g. eight and a half hour workday with a half hour paid lunch equals a forty-two and a half hour workweek).

Bottom line? If you allow small breaks, you need to pay for them. Longer breaks can be without pay provided the employee is relieved of duties.

3. **Withholding from Paychecks.**

With certain exceptions, employers generally may not withhold monies from an employee's paycheck without prior, written authorization. Frequent mistakes include the following:

- Withholding money to offset damage caused to company property or to a company car;
- Withholding money from a final paycheck to offset an outstanding loan obligation; and
- Giving an employee’s paycheck to a spouse or other family member without explicit permission.

Ordinarily, none of these things should happen without a prior, voluntary arrangement with the employee as reflected in writing and signed by the employee. Withholdings for payroll taxes and also for garnishments pursuant to a court order do not require the employee’s prior written consent.

The last thing a busy agent needs is an inquiry from the state or federal Department of Labor looking to audit your payroll practices. Consult with your payroll service provider, your attorney, or your accountant to make sure you are complying with your payroll obligations in order to avoid the risk of costly investigations, fines, and interest. **Ef**

Dirk Beamer serves as General Counsel to NAPAA and helps NAPAA track legal issues of interest to its members. NAPAA has provided this update for informational purposes only. The contents should not be construed as legal advice or an endorsement from NAPAA or its attorneys, and NAPAA expressly disclaims any such advice. Wage and hour laws vary from state to state. Consult your local attorney for advice applicable to your situation.

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Interview With Future Allstate Hall of Fame Agency Owner Bill Eggar

with Bill Gough

In the last four years, I have interviewed dozens of top Allstate agency owners as part of my business coaching program. Today, I’m sharing with you a portion of the interview I recently did with Texas agency owner and creator of Green Sheet Success™ and the original Green Sheet™, Bill Eggar.

I hope you enjoy it, if you have comments or would like to see more interviews in the future, just email me at support@bgisystems.com.

Gough: Why did you trademark and copyright your Green Sheet?

Egger: A few years back, I began getting invited to speak about my Green Sheet Process™ at Leader Forums and kickoff meetings around the country. Allstate agents and management began sharing my measurement form, the Green Sheet, with their agents and buddies, but the message of exactly how we do it (our 3-step process) became muddled. This is not anyone’s fault; it is just human nature in the way we pass messages along to one another.

I certainly do not mind sharing my successful processes, as I have learned from many other great Allstate agents over the years. In fact, every month I go to the Texas Regional Office and speak to all our new agency owners about what it is really like to be an Allstate agent. I also suggest some things they should be doing as new business owners. One of those suggestions, Bill, is to pay attention to you, and all you offer at BGI Marketing.

A year or so ago, something strange started happening as more than just a few agents from all over the country would approach me at Allstate trips or events and say something like, “I tried your Green Sheet, and it doesn’t work for me.” My reply was, “Oh really? Please tell me how you are using it.” The answer is always the same; they were NOT doing it as we do it and how I teach it. The simple 3-step process was never properly explained to them, and in some cases, the Green Sheet had more questions added to it, and is now called the blue sheet, the olive sheet, the orange sheet, and more colored sheets... you get the idea – it was not being implemented as I originally intended.

There are hundreds of Allstate agents using it the “Right Way,” the way I taught them. So, I decided to bring in a team to create video DVDs to show agents and staff exactly how we do the process everyday in our five agencies. I even explain the scripting and the reasons why we use the language we use.

Now that we have copyrighted the Green Sheet Success product, we have entered into a license usage agreement with Allstate. So now when Allstate management talks about the Green Sheet they must also pass out a letter (Allstate form# FIN2508) which basically states that the Green Sheet itself is just a measurement form while the real magic is in using the 3-step process.

Gough: Why do you call it the Green Sheet?

Egger: I like to be able to walk through my offices and easily see what is going on
For most Agents, percentage-wise it’s probably 90-98% of every customer contact. Even for good agencies with good processes in place, about 50-70%. Every customer contact is an opening to improve our relationships with our customers by selling them more products. Even the best agencies miss up to 50% of these opportunities!

This problem is now solved with this simple, yet powerful, system that Allstate Agent Bill Eggar has developed. The Green Sheet Success Process™ is a complete how-to session with detailed instructions and examples on how to use this money making process captured on 4 DVDs, 4 CDs, and a Data CD containing all of the transcripts and electronic forms. It also includes an action guide with exact instructions and scripts.

You’ve Never Been Taught How To Turn EVERY Call Into A SALES Call, Until Now...

Meet Allstate Agency Owner Bill Eggar, one of the premier Agency Owners in the country. Bill consistently writes $300,000+ in APS every year himself, without an EFS. In 2012, he wrote over 2,000 cars and about 1,000 EBs.

Bill started a scratch agency in 2002 during the Texas mold debacle and had zero homeowners markets, unlike today’s brokering opportunities in most states. He started studying the very best agents, and began writing life insurance to survive. He not only survived, he thrived because of his winning attitude, work ethic, and networking with the very best agents, helping to motivate him to become the best he could be.

The Green Sheet Process™ How It All Began...

In 2005, Bill began paying attention to what his support staff said to customers on calls and office visits. He started keeping records of how long a typical service call would take and exactly what his staff was saying during those conversations. He even positioning himself in the hallways outside their offices so he could listen to their calls without them even realizing it!

Bill discovered his customer service staff were taking a lot of time, too much time, processing everyday requests like car changes, billing, while only doing just an average job of seeking out and asking for more sales opportunities. So Bill began tweaking his customer service process workflows and developed an easy-to-use fact-finder for his staff to uncover more sales opportunities without being seen as a pushy salesperson. BRILLIANT!

Bill developed his Green Sheet Process™ as a very simple 5-step system to deliver great customer service based on promises made to his customers. At the same time, the process uncovers other insurance sales opportunities in the household, plus the all-important life and retirement needs.

Bill calls it the Green Sheet because as he says it best, “It’s all about the color of money.”

“Our results using the Green Sheet Process have very little to do with the Green Sheet itself. Our success is due to the magic of the simple 3-step process we use every day here in our agencies. If we skip a step or try to shortcut the process, our results will suffer and it shows. It's all about the Process; the Green Sheet itself is just a form to keep us on track.”

For ONLY $497 YOU GET IT ALL!

You can even use your Allstate Executive Advantage Card to pay for it.

For this small fee you get the Green Sheet Process™ & the Yellow Sheet Process™ (Bill’s award winning Customer Policy Review Process) captured on 4 DVDs, 4 CDs, & Data CD. Also included is an action guide with detailed instructions, transcripts, talking points, frequently asked questions, and much more!

What others have to say:

Sean O’Donohoe, Galveston, TX:
“I was very skeptical about starting a new process. Bill’s easy to understand DVD on the Green Sheet took all that away. Our 1st month results were 6 new life policies!”

Wendy Murphy, Florence, AL:
“Our 1st 90 days using the Green Sheet resulted in 12 life & 18 P&C policies.”

Hurry, the first 9 people to invest in this program today will receive a FREE 30min 1-on-1 Consultation with Bill Eggar!

Bill’s so confident in this process, he’s offering a MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!

If this process doesn’t fully pay for itself in the first 60 Days, Bill will give you a 100% Refund!

The original pricing on this amazing system was $897.00...and well worth it at that price. But, because of Bill’s relationship with Allstate and it getting approved for Executive Advantage, he has discounted the investment by almost 50% to ONLY $497!

You’re getting everything...the Green Sheet Process™, the Yellow Sheet Process™, Detailed Instructions, Live Demonstrations, Easy-to-use Scripts, After going through this course, you will know exactly how to do everything and You’ll Reap The Benefits FOREVER!

If you have any questions or need more information go to www.greensheetsuccess.com or call (877) 208-9649

Take Action Now:
www.GreensheetSuccess.com or Call (877)208-9649
without having to stop and ask everyone. Everything we do in our agencies is on color-coded paper, green, yellow, orange, red, etc. Plus, green is the color of money, and we make a lot of money from this process. I like to see completed Green Sheets on my employees’ desks, as it represents future money coming in.

Gough: Can you tell us about the Yellow Sheet, and how it’s used?

Eggar: Our Yellow Sheet is used for our Face-to-Face Insurance Policy Review Process. I personally do the in-house policy reviews at all of our locations. My number one job is meeting with customers in my offices with preset 40-minute appointments scheduled back-to-back. I call it “BIS”, or “Butts in Seats.”

It’s much harder to get customers to come in for a review, but the ones who do are gold. I’ve worked hard perfecting my staff’s scripts to persuade our customers it is in their best interest to schedule these meetings with me personally. Customers are promised there will be no selling and are told to leave the checkbook at home. This is only a review with me.

I have never missed selling the customers something using this process – mostly increased policy limits, EB lines, life insurance, or retirement products. As promised, our customers are not sold anything at that initial meeting, but using the process sets up the sale every time. I also video recorded this exact process as well.

Gough: I know that Josh Kelley from our office did the Yellow Sheet process with you when we visited your agencies. When he came back home to Alabama, he went and bought a life insurance policy, plus increased his liability limits on his auto and home insurance. What have been your results using these two processes, the Green and Yellow Sheets?

Eggar: We have gotten better and better at these two processes as the years have rolled by. It’s because we do it every day at each location. The staff absolutely loves it because they know exactly what to do and are paid on production.

Recently, we had a gentleman call in to make his payment by phone, a common occurrence in Allstate offices countrywide. I bet 99.7% of staff would have taken that payment, thanked the customer and hung up. That is not our process. Our very alert staff recognized this customer had just retired and got the Green Sheet to me the same day and I called the customer to set up an appointment. I rolled over his $600,000 retirement fund within just a few days.

In 2012, we issued over $352,000 in AFS, wrote over 2,000 cars, and over 1,200 EB lines. Most of the AFS and EB lines come from the Green and Yellow Sheet Processes.

I often say, “I’m not a very smart guy.” We like to keep things simple, plus create staff accountability that is focused on rewards not punishment. This is exactly how we have designed our processes in our agencies. Ef

For more information concerning Bill Eggar’s original Green Sheet Success™ process, please visit www.GreenSheetSuccess.com.

Reporting “Questionable Business Practices” to Allstate

NAPAA receives many inquiries from agents who call to complain about unethical conduct by other agents. It seems unethical behavior is becoming more commonplace, which is why it is up to the agency force to police itself. And reporting bad behavior is easy and will help protect our rates. Following are selected excerpts from the www.AlertLine.com website, operated by Global Compliance, a third-party provider contracted by Allstate.

“The Allstate i-Report process is designed to allow employees and non-employees to report potential compliance, unethical business practices and/or raise business issues.”

“The Allstate i-Report Process is based on these principles:

- Fairness: Every concern will receive individual consideration and be evaluated consistent with the commitment of Allstate to the employees.
- Promptness: Concerns will be promptly directed to areas within the company that have the authority and responsibility to review, investigate and resolve the issues.
- Safety: Concerns can be voiced without fear of retaliation.
- Confidentiality: Concerns will be kept confidential. Information will be disclosed only to those who need to know in order to review, investigate and respond to your concern.”

“Global Compliance Services (“GCS”), pursuant to an agreement between its clients, provides a website to collect from employees and others wishing to report information. This information includes but is not limited to allegations of misconduct, questionable business practices, violations of a company’s code of conduct or other events and behavior which may result in harm, injury or liability. The information collected and submitted is forwarded, without review or modification by GCS, to the client’s designated contacts.”

To file a report, agents should go to www.AlertLine.com or call 800.427.9389.
One thing was for sure, I was just as disappointed to see Tom Wilson at the 2013 Allstate Annual Shareholder meeting as he was to see me. Perhaps he felt that I had gotten the better of him at last year's meeting when he blurted out in frustration, “We can do whatever we want.” In the wake of his momentary lapse of coolness, I suspect that he made a vow to never let it happen again.

At this year’s meeting, I approached the microphone and stated my question in a professional, business-like manner. It was a question that is on the minds of most every Allstate agent in the country. Mr. Wilson’s smug reply was an obvious attempt to discredit me and the validity of my question.

“Miss Fish, thank you. I believe it has been about a decade or so since you worked at Allstate.” The rest of his reply went something like this: “We do not refer to our agents as captive agents now. We call them agency owners. So, some of your information is misleading. Our commissions are over 10%.”

I was flabbergasted, but not surprised, by his response. If there is one thing he is good at, it’s his adeptness at dodging core questions, which he accomplishes by verbally dancing around the peripheries. However, I’ve seen this same act before, and I was determined to get a truthful answer about the future of agent compensation.

“The question” I said, “was regarding the BASE comp. The BASE comp RIGHT NOW is 9%. So the question is; in 2015, will you be reducing the BASE comp again?”

Once again, Wilson reminded me how long I’ve been away from the company, even though he knows full well that I probably know as much about the agent position and the agent contract as he does, if not more. He then proceeded to talk down to those in attendance by launching into an irrelevant tutorial that barely touched on the issue I had raised. Instead, like a character out of Seinfeld, he provided “much ado about nothing.”

I had asked a simple question and expected an honest and direct response, but I got neither. Following is the essence of his remarks, paraphrased, of course:

“Allstate has streamlined its agency ranks, however, existing agencies are now 25% larger than they were in 2009; Allstate has made $325 million in loans to help agents expand; and 2012 marked the second-highest agency bonus in five years.”

He also muttered something about agents always receiving fair compensation and reminded me that the company had not actually implemented 8%.

So in the end, his disjointed response to my simple question appears to be identical to the answer he gave me last year. This time it was unspoken, but we heard it loud and clear – “We can do whatever we want.”

What was even more telling was what he didn’t say. If the company has no plans to reduce base compensation to 8% in 2015, don’t you think he would have revealed it right then and there? Ef

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**NANCY FISH’S QUESTION TO TOM WILSON**

“The new variable compensation plan is now underway with your captive agents. During statements made at the 1st Quarter earnings call, Mr. Winter mistakenly reported that ‘this past year was really the first full year of implementation for both the variable comp piece and the annual bonus piece.’

In reality, captive agents received only their 4th monthly commission payment last Friday under the variable structure.

The variable compensation scheme was originally rolled out with 8% base commissions, but later, the agents received a letter from Mark LaNeve with the following statement:

‘For 2013 and 2014, base compensation will be moving to 9/9, not 8/8 as previously discussed. This change eases the transition to the variable component and better allows you to plan for your business over the next several years and develop your long-term strategy.’

To most agents, his statement left the future of agent compensation unsettled. With 2015 approaching, what assurance will you give Allstate agents that you will leave their 9% base commissions unchanged for 2015 and beyond? And if you plan to reduce commissions to 8% as originally planned, when do you intend to tell the agents?”
Allstate CEO Tom Wilson has begun an earnest effort to expand the ranks of his agent sales force. Perhaps reacting to the loss of more than 1.4 million auto policyholders in recent years, Wilson appears ready to admit he needs more than his roughly 9,000 captive agents to get some of his old clients back.

Previously choosing to blame market conditions for the loss of market share rather than the stunning loss of nearly 5,000 captive Exclusive Agents over the past few years, Wilson’s newest recruitment program seems to defy even his own logic. Instead of invigorating the company’s EA program, he has decided to breathe new life into Allstate’s more costly alternative, the Independent Agency (IA) program.

Once seen as a burgeoning avenue to reach rural markets where its captive sales force was missing, Allstate’s IA program had recently declined to the point that its separate management structure was consolidated under the company’s central management. Now with approximately 1,700 independent agents, the IA program looks primed to expand in a big way – at the expense of captive Allstate EAs.

Recent promotional material from Allstate – obtained by NAPAA – touts access to the company’s 13 lines of insurance and other benefits as an inducement for independent agents to sign up to sell the Good Hands brand. In a recent Property and Casualty 360 article, reporter Mark Ruquet sites Allstate spokeswoman April Eaton as stating: “Allstate continually evaluates market opportunities to ensure that customers are able to do business with us how, when, and where they want to, including through a local Allstate [independent agents].”

Ruquet further quotes Eaton as saying Allstate “will consider appointing independent agency owners only in rural markets where we do not deploy Exclusive Agents. We want our current inde-
pendent agencies to grow with us.”

Then at this year’s Allstate shareholder meeting, CEO Tom Wilson echoed Ms. Eaton’s comments, adding that Allstate’s relationship with independent agents has spanned decades and that it only allowed independent agents to market Allstate’s products in “rural markets where there might not be enough business for Allstate’s Exclusive Agent (EA) agency owners.”

But if Allstate’s recent actions are any indication of its true intentions, both Eaton’s and Wilson’s statements will ring hollow in the ears of Allstate EAs. In just the past few months, Allstate has appointed six new independent agents in the Houston, Texas market. With more than two million residents, Houston could hardly be considered a rural market.

Twelve other Texas cites also saw independent agent appointments, including Lubbock with over 200,000 residents; Austin with 842,000 residents; and Dallas with 1.2 million residents. As of this writing, Texas alone represents a net gain of nineteen new Allstate independent agent appointments.

Recently appointed independent agent Mike Dagher operates an agency in Houston where he is surrounded by approximately 842,000 residents. As a newly appointed independent agent selling the Allstate brand, he has seven EAs either in his same Zip code, or within 4.4 miles from his office. The closest Allstate EA is only 2.2 miles away.

Newly appointed Fort Worth independent Jeffrey Ferrell operates in a city of about 760,000 people and has twelve Allstate agents surrounding his agency. His closest Allstate agent counterpart is only 1.9 miles away.

It seems highly dubious that Allstate CEO Tom Wilson could be unaware of the placement of these 19 independent agents located in urban Texas markets.

In addition to their concerns over the number and proximity of their Allstate IA competitors, the EA agent can add the troubling aspect of unequal pay. The Allstate IA contract pays a base commission of 15% new and renewal compensation. In addition, there are opportunities to earn lucrative bonuses. And besides a much better compensation scale, they have no office appearance requirements, staffing requirements, or life quotas.

In contrast, the company’s best and brightest EAs earn a base of 9% and must meet the Agency Success Factors before they earn a penny more. New Jersey agents have it even worse, as their base is only 6.5%.

Even more unsettling is the fact that Allstate IAs have full access to the company’s entire client base. This means that Allstate’s IAs can take payments and service existing Allstate accounts, but it also means they can request Agent of Record changes, as well as capture full compensation on accounts via cross-sales. Finally, when a customer becomes disenchanted with Allstate’s rates, the IA can easily move the client to another company, while the EA facing a similar situation simply loses another customer.

The reality of Allstate’s recent actions – in spite of Tom Wilson’s assurances to the contrary – does little to diminish the skittishness that EAs are now experiencing. And when combined with the reduction of their base compensation and the purchase of Esurance, the prospect of having to deal with yet another new Allstate competitor in their neighborhoods may prove be too much for them to take.

Little is known about the ultimate goal for Wilson’s IA program. If Texas is intended to be a pilot program, it is a safe bet that IAs will be added in other major metropolitan areas as well.

It has often been said, “Actions speak louder than words.” This phrase, when properly modified to apply to Allstate CEO Tom Wilson should read: “It is better to watch what he does than to ever trust what he says.”

Here are the eight Allstate EAs closest to his independent agency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Distance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fran Piegari</td>
<td>1.0 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Wolfe</td>
<td>1.6 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rick Lindsey</td>
<td>2.8 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alana Calloway</td>
<td>2.5 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Smith</td>
<td>2.2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon Walters</td>
<td>2.5 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandy Hunt</td>
<td>3.8 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wes Barnes</td>
<td>1.8 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dean Davis operates Davis Insurance Agency in Austin Texas, a city of approximately 842,000 residents. As a newly appointed independent agent selling the Allstate brand, he has seven EAs either in his same Zip code, or within 4.4 miles from his office. The closest Allstate EA is only 2.2 miles away.

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The tragic Moore, Okla., tornado has jump-started what could be a very active tornado term that precedes the start of the Atlantic hurricane season. When these wind-related storms strike, it's inevitable that roofing claims will follow.

This reality comes amidst a trend over the last year by insurers to revise the coverage terms of their homeowners' policies, moving from replacement cost value (RCV) to actual cash value (ACV) for the settlement of roof claims. Many (but not all) state insurance departments allow insurers to settle roof claims on an ACV basis, and it can benefit insurers that are seeking to restore profitability to their homeowners market. Rather than increase premiums and potentially lose market share due to the higher costs related to RCV, they can reduce coverage to ACV.

However, these policies—many of which were implemented in late 2012 and have yet to be tested during significant windstorm seasons—are beginning to draw legal scrutiny and questions about whether or not they meet requirements to protect the collateral of mortgage investors.

Regulatory Conflict

Why all the scrutiny? Roof claims settlements on homeowners' policies that only offer ACV pose significant problems going forward because of the lack of uniformity between state insurance regulators and the federal government-sponsored entities (GSE) of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. On its face, settling roof claims on an ACV-basis seems like an issue for policyholders and insurers only. Digging deeper exposes some problems with that conclusion.

For instance, consumer advocacy organizations have protested that the claims settlement practice of using ACV appears to be predatory against consumers, but experts in insurance, mortgage finance, securities, real estate, and credit ratings also have failed to recognize that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have guidelines that require claims to be settled on an RCV-basis.

This requirement brings yet another party into the equation when homeowner roof claims are not settled on an RCV basis: unwitting mortgage investors are harmed when mortgage-backed securities (MBS)—yes, they're back—are improperly packaged and unloaded by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Mortgage lenders and servicers are tasked with providing replacement cost coverage for mortgaged properties. The practice of insurers settling claims on an ACV-basis is a sure sign that the controls of lenders and servicers have failed and that false representations and warranties are being made to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Respected credit raters have published articles and provided commentary about the unusual practice of settling roof claims at ACV while leaving the rest of the dwelling coverage at RCV, which is a strategy that some insurers are employing.

All of this means some tough questions need to be answered:

- Do state insurance departments have a responsibility to enforce acts similar to the Unfair Trade Practices and

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Unfair Claims Settlement Act of 2009 in Tennessee?

- Do insurers have a legal liability to provide evidence of insurance binders that accurately reflect their claims settlement practices in the forms and endorsements section of the binder?
- Do mortgage lenders and servicers have a legal obligation liability to detect when insurers’ claims settlement practices no longer comply with GSE guidelines?
- Do GSEs have a legal liability to alert lenders and servicers about insurers that no longer settle roof claims on an RCV-basis?

The aforementioned sequence is important because enforcement at the top solves the problem of evidence of insurance binders that conflict with an insurer’s claims settlement practices. It makes it much easier for lenders and servicers to understand when insurers are no longer in compliance, which will significantly reduce the false representations and warranties made to the GSEs.

Conversely, a lack of enforcement at the top of the list provides immunity for insurers that furnish evidence of insurance binders that conflict with their claims settlement practices, making it virtually impossible for lenders and servicers to detect the conflict, thereby creating the problem of the GSEs improperly packaging securities that contain false representations and warranties.

Therefore, it is vitally important that the evidence of insurance binders and policy booklets match up with the claims settlement practices of an insurance company. Insurers will need to address this incongruity before Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac figure out if they will become proactive in enforcing their guidelines or strike the RCV requirements from their selling and servicing guidelines.

Other Exposures

There are many other questions that need to be answered, including:

- Will agents have some type of safe harbor protection for violating acts similar to the Unfair Trade Practices and Unfair Claims Settlement Act of 2009 in Tennessee?
- Will publicly traded insurers face stock-drop securities litigation for unintentionally misleading investors when they were unfamiliar that GSE guidelines could derail their business projections?
- Will Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac blindside homeowners by hitting them with very expensive force-placed coverage for purchasing policies that settle claims at less than RCV?
- If Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac continue to ignore their own guidelines that require RCV, how long can compliant insurers continue to compete at what amounts to a competitive disadvantage against insurers that do not comply with GSE guidelines?
- Will credit raters downgrade insurers that don’t settle claims on a RCV-basis?

The issue is so pervasive that many homeowners who are paid less than replacement cost to settle their roof claims later find out they are unable to sell their homes until they repair or replace their roofs when they attempt to list their homes for sale with real estate agencies.

Furthermore, insurers who pay claims directly to policyholders without involvement or oversight from lenders and servicers set the stage for homeowners to walk away with a check in hand while their homes go into foreclosure with damaged roofs.

Addressing the Issue

One way to protect homeowners and mortgage investors in the claims settlement process is to require the mortgagee to be listed on any claims check for dwelling damage. That extra step will ensure that unwitting homeowners follow through with the repair or replacement of roof damages rather than sabotaging themselves by pocketing claims dollars that were paid on an ACV-basis, forcing them...
The Option to Decline?

Insurers that offer the option for homeowners to choose between replacement cost value and actual cash value coverage on their insurance policies may want to reconsider the approach.

Consider the following scenario: If someone owns a personal automobile, he has the option to purchase collision and comprehensive coverage. However, if the vehicle is being leased or financed, lienholders require buyers to purchase and maintain collision and comprehensive insurance to ensure the protection of their assets.

Putting homeowners in the position of making policy choices that could result in false representations and warranties to mortgage lenders like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—which require home purchasers to buy and maintain replacement cost value coverage in their insurance policies in order to protect their collateral—could create potential bad-faith or error and omission situations if and when a claim occurs.

After all, who wants to explain to a homeowner who has just experienced a loss that a policy decision shouldn’t have been a decision at all to pay the replacement costs at a later date when they attempt to sell their homes.

Many homeowners are unaware that they will be funding the difference between their claims settlement and the cost of repairing or replacing their roofs before they sell their homes. Likewise, many mortgage investors are unaware that homeowners can pocket claims checks to repair or replace their properties without following through to protect their collateral.

Another effective strategy to detect the root cause of these problems is to review the wording in the forms and endorsements section on the evidence of insurance binders and compare it with the claims settlement practices of the insurer. Insurers that continue to deliver evidence of insurance binders without disclosing that their claims settlement practices have changed from RCV to ACV could encounter litigation.

It is unfair to expect policyholders and mortgage investors to possess the expertise to realize the extent to which they are harmed when insurers fail to settle roof claims in a compliant manner. Unfortunately, they have been put into a “buyer beware” situation because of a lack of transparency from GSEs that are familiar with the problems.

However, the simplest solution to allow for a level playing field is for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to drop all pretenses that their securities are packaged properly to protect investors, strike the RCV requirement for claims settlements from their guidelines, and allow mortgage investors to “take one for the team” in much the same manner as GM bondholders did to help the automaker survive.

Federal funds earmarked to subsidize Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac should be escrowed for mortgage investors to cover increased losses. Mortgage investors put their capital at risk in good faith, only to purchase improperly packaged securities that ensure the survival of cash-strapped insurers. They deserve better than being thrown under the bus by the GSE’s willingness to market improperly packaged securities.

It remains to be seen if Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will eventually enforce their guidelines that require insurers to settle claims on an RCV-basis or continue to rely on taxpayer generosity to cover potential litigation costs. But insurers should consider getting out in front of the issue before it’s too late.

Dean Jarvis is an insurance agent with State Farm in Maryville, Tenn. He has been a CLM Fellow since 2013 and can be reached at (865) 748-0771, l_dean_jarvis@yahoo.com.
I wonder if anyone else felt the warm, fuzzy feeling I experienced after the regional kickoff meeting. I attended the 2013 kickoff meeting in NJ and for the first time in many years, I felt like someone was actually paying attention to the agents’ needs and the challenges we face.

In a conversation with some of the executives after the speeches, they seemed sympathetic to the challenges we face. For instance, when Mr. Winter noted that if an agent needs two screens and a laptop just to make it look like we know what we’re doing, then something is very wrong. Very true; I just hope it’s not forgotten and that they act on it. I am hopeful, however, as it seemed as though he was sincere.

I want Allstate to understand that there are a lot of agents who want to be here and want to do a good job. Many, if not most of us, are grateful for the opportunities we’ve been given. But we often get frustrated with Allstate’s cumbersome technology. It hinders our performance and often gets in our way. I am hopeful that they will address this obstacle sooner than later.

As a company, we’ve made some choices that were meant to work, but they didn’t. Perhaps some were made in good faith and others, maybe not so much. Decision makers, like parents, sometimes make mistakes. As I tell my children, “If we don’t make some wrong decisions, we won’t learn.” It only becomes a mistake if we don’t learn from it, or if we do the same thing again.

Most of us in the field and in management are aware of the poor choices that have been made: Impact, Woople – which is in the “mistake” category – and CONNXEXUS, which strikes fear in all of those who use it. Hopefully, it will go away soon, but in the meantime, diligent agents continue to press forward with it.

Okay, what about the non-technology decisions that have now become mistakes? PML, or CAT counties, is something that the head underwriters use to determine where we make a profit and where we do not.

I’m a successful agent and my agency does well, but I would like to write more Customizers on Allstate paper. However, the pesky demarcation PML line that was drawn about 20 years ago says, “If you’re on the east side of the line, you’re a bad risk and if you’re on the west side of the line, you’re a good risk.” Other commercial carriers will at least use the Parkway as a line, but we have a line that is drawn about 30 miles inland, effectively wiping out whole counties that have a few towns in the CAT zone. There is no real underwriting, since some of the counties stretch across the entire state and the west side is obviously not in a CAT zone.

Most everyone agrees that this makes absolutely no sense. Talk to field management all the way up the line to the top executive and all say, “We agree, but that’s the way it has been, and right now, we have no plans to change it. However, maybe we’ll consider it at some future point,” something they’ve been saying for at least 10 years.

What doesn’t make sense is that we are sending tons of business to the Ivantage brokers – Northeast and Butwin, where Harford, Travelers, CNA and others are gobbling up these so-called “bad” eastern risks. Personally, I would prefer that Allstate keep the business.

Mr. Winter, can you help?

I liked your speech, but can you ask someone to review this? They may have to brush off two inches of dust, but I believe it would be good for Allstate and the agents of New Jersey.

PS to Mr. Winter: Maybe you could also take a look at dumping Connexus; even the thought of it sends shivers up and down my spine.

PPS to Mr. Winter: Please don’t believe the Connexus folks; even with the updates, it still stinks.
What Can You Do To Help Yourself?

By Gerry Flores

I was only 18 years old when John F. Kennedy gave his inaugural speech on a cold winter day on Jan 20, 1961. After listening to those powerful words, many Americans took them to heart, understanding that keeping America great is the responsibility of each and every citizen. Throughout my life, America has always ranked right up there with God and family. While those now-famous words still resonate for many Americans 52 years later, there are signs of slippage.

I have been a NAPAA member for many years and when I retired from Allstate, I continued my membership, but it wasn’t enough. I wanted to give something back to the organization that had helped me throughout my career, especially when I sold my book of business. One day while I was chit-chatting with Jim Fish, he asked if I would help NAPAA recruit new members. I didn’t just say “yes,” I said, “Hell, yes.” That was five years ago and I’m still as dedicated to NAPAA as I ever was.

I sit at my desk day in and day out making cold calls to Allstate agents to chat with them about NAPAA. I enjoy the calls because I like talking to agents – at least most of them – and they enjoy talking to me.

The other day, I was making my calls and I got a hold of an agent who asked, “What can NAPAA do for me?” All of a sudden, JFK’s words popped into my head and I was blown away. I don’t equate NAPAA with our feelings of patriotism for my country, but there are some similarities. NAPAA is your professional association and it is what you make it. If all our members had the same “What’s in it for me?” attitude, there would be no one to speak out in solidarity or continue to fight the good fight on behalf of the agency force.

Had it not been for NAPAA and the ruckus it caused throughout the summer of 2011, agents would likely be at 8% base comp right now. It is largely because NAPAA raised its voice and commanded intense press coverage that the 20% commission cut was reduced to 10%. As a result, many agents have realized a financial gain that would have otherwise gone into Allstate’s pockets.

Many of you are newer agents. Allstate is on a hiring binge because it fired thousands of older agents. What sins did those agents commit? Everyone knows that as an agency grows, service takes more and more time away from sales. It will happen to you too, unless you add more and more staff, which will put a major dent in your take home pay.

Some of those who were terminated probably deserved it, but 5,000 agents? There simply could not have been that many slacker agents.

Soon the company will announce that it will lower your base commissions to 8%. All they have to do is give you a 90-day notice. If you ask your FSL, he won’t, or can’t, confirm it. On May 21, 2013, NAPAA asked that question of Tom Wilson at Allstate’s annual shareholder meeting, and all he did was beat around the bush. Mark my words, lower base comp is coming in January 2015, and unless agents unite, there is no chance of stopping it.

So, with another comp cut on the horizon, joining NAPAA seems like a no-brainer to me. NAPAA can and does do a lot for you. It is the only legitimate organization that puts your interests above anything else. It is a not-for-profit entity and its board members work on your behalf without compensation.

I hope you will consider joining us soon. Give me a call and I will be happy to chat with you about all things Allstate. Then, if you choose to join NAPAA, I will share the sales secrets that led me to produce $128,000 in AFS production without spending a dime on leads.

Good selling. Ef

Gerry Flores, Membership Development
Phone: 563-564-1800

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I woke up on the last workday in April with a blinding pain in my tooth and my right eye not functioning very well. I knew something was up. My friends all joked that I'd fall apart at the seams someday, and for a moment, I thought maybe my personal Armageddon had finally arrived. “No, that can't be it,” I thought, “I'm much too young; I'm still only 39 years old.” But I soon realized that I've been saying that for a few years now and have convinced myself it's the truth.

After dismissing the age factor, I figured something else was up. It didn't take long to solve the mystery – I deduced that it was my FSL's fault. Totally. You see, I had a premonition that he would be visiting my office soon to go over last year's results and this year's goals. I quickly snatched my calendar off the wall and carefully examined it with my left eye. “Nope, that's not it,” I concluded in dismay. “It must be something else.” Little did I know that it was actually a sign from above, and in less than a month, my life and business career would change for the better…

May is always a whirlwind around the Revels household. The first Saturday in May is the Kentucky Derby and during the last full weekend in May, the great American race – the Indy 500 – is held. Squeezed in-between these crucial events are the graduations for children of friends and family and the drudgery of spring cleaning. Yes, May was a busy month, and there just wasn't enough time to get everything done and still run a thriving Allstate agency.

So with an aching tooth and a dysfunctional eye that would make a pirate envious, I set out to write a book that would help Allstate agents and their families succeed beyond their wildest dreams, and after intense, but careful deliberation, I came up with the following title: The Four Week Day.

Initially, I thought it would be too short to publish, but after reviewing the manuscript with my editor, we decided to go ahead with it. Here’s how it works:

First, you must discard all monthly and yearly planning and throw out the notion of operating your business on a calendar year basis. After all, we wake up every morning and find there are boundless opportunities awaiting us – a solid 24 hours to learn, grow and prosper. Heck, I'm even wondering why I sleep at all, there is so much I could be doing, like opening a satellite agency in Beijing. That way I could work 24x7 every day for the rest of my life.

Then we must find ways to multitask to make it appear to our loved ones that we are giving them our undivided attention. Quality time is essential for good marriages and raising children. I suggest that you host family dinners and gatherings at your office. The kids can learn how to x-date and your spouse can learn the books as he or she cooks supper.
and cleans the office. After sunset and through the night, they can assist you with your satellite office in Beijing. It’s all in a day’s work.

Of course, we still have to iron out a few kinks. We need to eliminate the barriers of time and space and condense all monthly activities into one day and then divide the day into six-hour weeks. Four six-hour segments per day equal one month, which, in turn equals a full four-week month. Brilliant, isn’t it?

To accomplish this amazing transformation, the first thing we need is vision, something I sorely lacked due to the impairment of my right eye.

For maximum results, agency owners must first set monthly goals and then condense them into daily goals so that every day we get a fresh start and a new set of production quotas. Then every evening around 11:00 p.m., when we might be tempted to get some shut-eye, we realize that the start of another new day — uh, month — is imminent. Of course, any thought of sleeping is quickly forgotten as we eagerly anticipate our new monthly goals which are issued every calendar day. After all, we must keep pace so we don’t fall behind.

Transitioning to the Four Week Day may be challenging for the duffers, church-goers and sports fanatics among us because it means sacrificing these activities for the greater good of achieving our goals. After abandoning these vices and agreeing to never participate in them again, the next step is to change our thinking, which involves putting our sense of time into hyperdrive. This can be accomplished by chanting the following mantra over and over, “There are not four weeks in every month, but four weeks in every day.”

Once you accept this mantra as gospel, it is time to move on to the next step, which is to surrender any previous notions of what you always expected the “perfect life” to be. They will now be replaced with a rigorous training regimen that teaches us how to achieve our new reality. This involves proper planning, intense focus and incredible discipline that will fully prepare us for achieving our monthly goals in just one day, which is the new month…

So as we drill down into this philosophy, we’ll see that week one is early morning (12-6), week two is morning as we know it (6-12), week three is afternoon (12-6), and week four is evening (6-12). By breaking up the day into six-hour increments, we can easily reach our goals quicker and more consistently.

Next, we need to measure our success, plan our goals and keep score of our results. We’ll start with an hourly scorecard and write down our hourly goals, objectives and visions. Keep in mind that you’ll have more hallucinations, uh, visions if you skip breakfast and lunch and just work through the whole four-week day cycle. This philosophy was born from the writings of Benjamin Franklin, who once proclaimed, “Take care of the minutes and the hours, months and years will take care of themselves,” or something to that effect. But then, he also said, “He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas.”

The first step in putting my four weeks in a day system into operation was to get my vision back. After visiting my ophthalmologist, I was diagnosed with a catastrophic cataract of the right eye.

But even though my physical vision was severely impaired, my mental vision was sharp as a tack. I scheduled what would be a very complicated surgery on my right eye and I am happy to report that it was a resounding success, allowing me to “getteth back to work” and complete the most important mission of my life, which was to execute and market my four week day concept.

None of us want to be executed, but we must execute our vision by implementing and using our plan as we walk through and emerge from the valley of despair. It’s what I do every day when I quote auto policies on time, I think we’ll hit this year’s goals. Oh, wait, I mean our 12 week goals. Well, you get the point, I hope.

I know you’re thinking that my plan is better — much better — aren’t you? I couldn’t agree more. My next step is to arrange a meeting with Matt Winter and get him to endorse it. If he does, he’ll send you my new book for free. If he doesn’t, I’ll be marketing this extraordinary system to other Fortune 500 companies and charge millions in fees for my incredible advice.

After all my hard work to perfect the four week day and transform my agency into a sales dynamo using our newfound sales techniques, I received a cryptic letter from our esteemed President of Auto, Home and Agencies, Matt Wilson; oops, I mean, Tom Winter; dangit all, Matt Winter. The letter said he would be sending me a book.

Miraculously the next day, I received a UPS package containing a book titled, “The 12 Week Year.”

As I skinned through the chapters, it became apparent that the author had not only stolen my idea, but my management concepts as well. If it weren’t for the searing pain in my tooth and my bad right eye, I might have been able to get my book endorsed by Matt Winter before he did.

Obviously, the Four Week Day has it all over the 12 Week Year, mainly because my plan completes a whole year every 12 days (or 30 years every calendar year), whereas The 12 Week Year only completes 4 years every calendar year. Mind-boggling, isn’t it?

Needless to say, I was outraged at first, but I came to realize that management was just trying to help agents get organized and speed up their processes. Heck, they didn’t even charge us for the book, how cool is that?

I am actually pleased the company is thinking of us and relieved that they have provided this solution. Now if we can all just run fast enough to make it to all our appointments on time, I think we’ll hit this year’s goals. Oh, wait, I mean our 12 week goals. Well, you get the point, I hope.

Directors. He is an active Allstate agent in Kissimee, Florida. He has been an Allstate agent for 25 years and a NAPAA board member for more than 10 years.

Dale Revels proudly serves as the immediate past president on the NAPAA Board of Directors. He is an active Allstate agent in Kissimee, Florida. He has been an Allstate agent for 25 years and a NAPAA board member for more than 10 years.
If you’re ready to take your agency to the next level through an acquisition or organic growth, you’re probably aware of all the promises for success that are promoted through a myriad of programs, services, products and best practices. While there are numerous opportunities and ways to grow your agency, each path should be properly vetted to ensure success. Before you decide how to grow, here are insights to increase your chances of getting the right results and expected return on investment.

Plan before you purchase leads
Fitness and wellness experts recommend people put their exercise commitment to a test before purchasing expensive equipment or joining a costly gym. If agency owners follow this line of reasoning with leads, they will increase their chances of seeing a positive return on investment when buying them.

Purchasing leads offers a quick and easy way to obtain a high volume of contacts. But at an average cost per contact of 50 cents to a dollar, it can be expensive and there are no guarantees for satisfactory results. Agents who employ haphazard lead strategies are not as likely to convert leads into customers as another agent with a solid plan might.

Before investing a large sum of money, conduct a trial run by crafting and executing a strategy with a smaller number of existing leads in your database. Work through the leads using whatever approach you would use if you purchased them. If you utilize a CRM system or some other marketing automation system, make sure you utilize it.

The trial run approach can help reveal whether or not you or your staff have the discipline to properly handle the leads before you make a big investment. If discipline is lacking, consider implementing a system that will ensure success, or abandon the idea of spending money on leads. This approach will also help you identify opportunities to improve your process, like adjusting time between calls or adding email or direct mail to your communications. Modifying your internal procedures beforehand can put you in a better position to maximize any leads you decide to purchase.
Ensure strategy precedes marketing technology

Agents often invest a lot of money on websites, CRM systems, email broadcasting subscriptions and marketing automation, expecting the technology—in and of it—to attract, engage and convert prospects to customers. Software can cost tens of thousands of dollars while subscriptions to online services can run between a few hundred to a few thousand dollars per month. Investing this amount on marketing technology—without knowing how it will fit into an overall plan—is never a good idea and rarely translates into a strong return on investment. What’s more, even when technology is wisely implemented, expecting results in a short period of time is unrealistic.

But just as purchasing leads in the absence of planning can prove futile, investing in marketing technology without planning can waste valuable resources. Only with the proper foundation of a marketing plan can you have a real shot at recouping your investment. Keep in mind it may take months before your marketing technology is fully functional and capable of producing satisfactory results.

Financially prepare for new producers

Hiring can be an effective way to grow. If not handled properly, however, recruiting employees can quickly drain a company’s cash. Concern over a lack of talent is a major issue for the insurance agency industry and will become increasingly critical as the majority of agency owners, who are boomers, prepare to retire and exit the business. The most common problems arise when agencies do not financially prepare for additional salaries that don’t quickly equate to sales. These problems include hiring the wrong caliber of talent, providing the wrong compensation, and failing to properly train and develop new hires. Consequently, growth plans through hiring can quickly go awry and waste precious resources.

The average compensation for a producer of an agency focused on personal lines is $52,629 and $33,834 for a support staff employee. In addition, the combined expenses of technology, software and consulting to manage advertising and marketing campaigns can run between $25,000 and $50,000 for conservative efforts. Agencies should financially prepare to cover the cost of a new employee without seeing a return for a while—maybe as long as 18 months—and this may require tapping into savings or obtaining a loan. Hiring is definitely a significant investment, but can result in tremendous business growth when managed properly.

Acquire only with an agreement

Acquisitions are a good way to grow and owners can see quick results. But many acquisitions fail to produce satisfactory results. Too often, agency owners purchase an agency or book of business with too many unknowns. Usually agents think they’re getting a great deal and that they’re aware of all the issues they’ll have to address once they own the business. Unfortunately, struggling businesses that are looking to be acquired may not be forthright in sharing their issues.

The key to successful acquisitions is a thorough due diligence process. This isn’t possible in transactions with sellers who refuse to be transparent. Just as it would be unwise to buy a house without an inspection, acquiring a business without detailed insight into its financials and operations would be a dangerous and risky endeavor. Transparency by the seller must be the first condition that’s satisfied before any other steps are made towards a purchase. A seller who is reluctant to share information is waving a huge red flag, warning you to take a step back and rethink your decision to pursue the acquisition.

The solution to all of this is a well-crafted nondisclosure agreement (NDA) or confidentiality agreement. NDAs give potential buyers access to the information that is needed to conduct proper diligence, while also protecting the seller against buyers misusing and sharing confidential information and/or soliciting their customers and employees.

Bill Nicholson is director of sales for Oak Street Funding. For more than 10 years, he has successfully led sales organizations in highly competitive environments and developed growth strategies for financial service companies. Bill can be reached at bill.nicholson@oakstreetfunding.com.

(Endnotes)

1 The National Alliance Research Academy’s 2010-2011 Insurance Agency Growth and Performance Standards.

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That’s our goal – to recruit one exclusive, like-minded company to partner with in every community in America. Our partners – we call them Community Champions – help us make their communities Kinder, their schools more civil and Kinder; and in the process, we get them more positive exposure in the community than they ever thought possible. These partnerships are a powerful Win-Win for everyone involved! This sounds pretty easy – right? Wrong.

Our biggest challenge
My name is Dave Daily. I share our story with potential Champions before they join us. It is not a presentation or a sales pitch, but a discussion to help Allstate agencies and other companies decide if this is a good fit for them. About 8 out of 10 companies that take the time to hear our story and understand exactly what it means to be a Community Champion join us. Quite honestly, it surprises me that 10 out of 10 companies don’t join us. I know that small business owners are inundated with companies trying to sell them the latest, greatest, next best product or service that will change their lives. The result is strong skepticism. That’s our biggest challenge – finding owners willing to take the time to listen to our story. We understand that, so all we ask is that you take the time to read and listen to what other Allstate agencies are saying about their experiences with The Kindness Revolution.

Brand Awareness
The Kindness Revolution is a non-profit organization. We are very passionate about our mission to raise the awareness of basic human values such as dignity, respect, courtesy, and kindness in schools and communities across America. We control our growth to focus our attention on helping our Champions be successful. We define success as making our Champions’ communities Kinder, and helping them grow their business. The insurance industry has done a lot in the last 5-10 years to make insurance a commodity. This has made the corporate brand less important and price has become the main factor in the consumer’s buying decision. Standing out from the competition is why owning The Kindness Revolution Brand in a community is so powerful. Other companies – such as banks, car dealers, real estate agents, apartment complexes and restaurants – will join in your Revolution of Kindness. Why? The entire community embraces the movement, and our Champions own it exclusively. It happens in every community where we start a Revolution of Kindness.

What do we look for in a Champion?
A like-minded Allstate agency – that’s it. We like agencies that are large or small. Our Champions tell us they love working with us because we are not a cookie-cutter approach. We work directly with each of our Champions based
The Kindness Revolution™ Welcomes its new partnership with NAPAA

Our goal is to start a Revolution of Kindness in every community. To do that, we need a local face to be our Community Champion.

Watch your sales skyrocket when you become the first and only agent in your community to represent the movement that will make people smile every time they think of you!

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For more information email us at: allstate@thekindnessrevolution.net
Or call Dave Daily at 404.384.6060
on their size and their specific needs. For instance, if an agent is particularly busy one week, he or she could pick up the phone and call Ed Horrell, our founder and your coach, and say, “Ed, I have three hours this week to spend on Kindness. What would you do if you were me?” Another agent may ask, “Ed, I just hired an employee to be our Kindness Revolution ambassador. Will you help me train her?” That’s the kind of personal attention we give our Champions.

What is important to insurance agents?

I speak to Allstate agents every day, both Champions and potential Champions. Almost all complain about the wasted time, money, and energy invested in hiring and training new employees that quit before they realize any return from them. The Kindness Revolution makes that process so much easier and fruitful. Find a young, engaging, fun person with a great personality. We will help you train them to spread Kindness in your community. We call them “Rain-makers”. They do not have to know anything about the insurance business, and they will make it rain leads and referrals into your agency.

It is so easy to mobilize a community around the cause of Kindness. Visit our website www.thekindnessrevolution.net. Click on the Community Champion tab and then click the interview link. You will hear from one of our Allstate Community Champion Rainmakers and how she mobilized her community with a Kindness Revolution Kickoff. In the interview, she describes how easy and fun it was to get other companies involved: the football team, the cheerleaders, the fire department, Cub Scout troops and on and on. For agency owners, here is the most important part: this Rainmaker is a support staff! The agency owner – who has her hands full running her Allstate agency – decided let this amazing staff person lead The Kindness Revolution initiative in her agency, and it is paying off.

I hope you will take a moment to listen to the interview. It will help you understand the possibilities that exist when you appoint a friendly, outgoing staff person as your agency’s Rainmaker for The Kindness Revolution. It is like nothing you have ever experienced.

You can own this cause for about the same cost as 10 medium-quality internet leads or 200 letters sent to random homes. Be the Community Champion for The Kindness Revolution in your market – because if you don’t, one of your competitors will. As many of you know, Allstate agents were the first to be offered this opportunity on a mass scale. That window will close soon as we seek to fill Community Champion slots in those areas that remain unrepresented.

There are still many good markets available; don’t let your spot end up in the hands of your major competitor.

Do something good for your community and your business. There has never been a better time for a Revolution of Kindness in this country. Ef

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INTEGRA Partnerships.
A few years ago, I received a request to support an organization called Adopt a Platoon. I read through the material they sent me and it brought back vivid memories of my service days during the Vietnam War. That was more than forty years ago, but it still seems like yesterday.

I was a college graduate with aspirations of going to medical school, but my 3.0 GPA wasn’t good enough to get accepted. Instead, I went to graduate school where I also earned a salary for teaching. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but I was unhappy and left after the first year.

Soon thereafter, Uncle Sam was knocking on my door and the draft board was closing in. Then came the day when I was informed I would be drafted the following week. The Vietnam War was peaking and the news was getting uglier by the day. Going to Vietnam as an Army infantryman was not on my bucket list of things to do before my demise. So, I began to contemplate my options—which didn’t take long—and signed up for a four-year stint in the U.S. Air Force. I went to Vietnam anyway, but at least I wasn’t crawling on my belly through mud and rice paddies.

It seems we are always fighting a war somewhere; today it’s Afghanistan. And depending on what happens around the world in the coming months and years, it is hard to say where we’ll be fighting next.

Those boys over in Afghanistan have it rough. Like Vietnam, you don’t always know who your enemy is. Individually, they must be on high alert at all times; never knowing if or when they will be exposed to deadly IEDs.

Besides having to remain vigilant at all times, most lack many of the basic comforts of home. After reading the infor-
Are you frustrated with your FSL for not providing you with “Proven” methods to write more Life and Annuity Business from your Book of Business?

Let me show you a proven plan to increase your sales when you join NAPAA. With my plan, you’ll keep your FSL off your back and make your EFS Happy – or you can do it yourself and put the $$$ in your pocket.

For more information, please contact:
Gerry Flores
Napaa Benefits Representative
563-564-1800

It seems to me that the price of a cup of coffee a day is chump change compared to the amount of money NAPAA/OPEIU has put in your pocket since the beginning of 2013.
I spent nearly 35 years with Allstate before retiring late last year. In my first 30 years, I was either a solitary agent or had one licensed staff. I was proud to have grown from scratch agency into a $2 million dollar “service first” agency. My agency was a money making machine for Allstate, with a loss ratio percentage that ranged between 30% and the low 40% range. My agency had an excellent referral system and my expertise in field underwriting earned me the coveted “senior agent” status. Because I avoided “bad” business, I earned Allstate’s Quality Agent award five years in a row and 12 out of 14 years total.

After earning eight Honor Ring awards, three Leaders’ Forums, many territorial and regional trips all over the USA and three National Champions Conferences, I relaxed some and began coaching my three children’s youth athletic teams. I also rejoined my golf club after a 10-year hiatus. With a retention rate of more than 92% and a loss ratio in the low 30s, I felt extremely confident that I could handle all of my clients and their changing needs in a responsible, honest, knowledgeable and professional manner. Service work, advising clients on proper protection, and answering client questions consumed most of my day.

I also wore a banker’s hat (for payments), a compliance hat (for T-docs), a claims hat, and an employer’s hat at different times during the day.

With only one staff and my CPR workload, there was little time left over for cold call sales. I had grown steadily over the years and consistently maintained profitable book of business within the Allstate system. While Allstate was earning huge profits from my agency – I was earning a comfortable six figure income each year. In addition, I was employing a full time staff person and they were earning an excellent salary, complete with a 401k plan.

My only E & O came in my 14th year and I even reported this one myself. It involved a claim on my next door neighbor’s son’s audio system in his car. If I recall correctly, the claim amounted to $250. After the claim was settled, Allstate backdated his coverage to the date of the stereo purchase and the increase in premium made it a wash. He called me.
and cancelled the sound system coverage the next week.

My other mistake was attending Allstate’s voluntary meetings. I attended them in order to show support for my FSL, which would have been a good brown-nose move if I had only kept my mouth shut! I often asked questions and frequently spoke up to ask “why.” So, instead of being called a “team player,” I was pigeonholed as a potential troublemaker for asking too many questions, which can oftentimes lead to being labeled a “disgruntled” agent. In hindsight, instead of spilling the corporate Kool-Aid, maybe I should have chugged it down, smiled and remained silent. But had I done that, I might not be able to look at myself in the mirror. Indeed, why should anyone be uncomfortable for raising valid questions regarding issues that will affect their family’s income?

Family came first for me and I enjoyed my time with them. I wrote life when my clients needed protection and averaged nearly $9000 per year for the next 15 years. This production level earned me the title of “scum line agent” in the eyes of regional management. Here I was thinking I was a good profit center and a valued agency owner, but apparently, that wasn’t good enough to stay in the good graces of management. Besides, I forgot that I was now over 55 years old, which automatically increased the probability of being terminated for the slightest of reasons. Well, pilots and cops have expiration dates, and geezer CEOs should too – especially given that Tom Wilson is now a member of the 55 and older club.

In the spring of 2009, a pair of managers paid me a visit and stated that having a positive RFG score no longer mattered and that I had better not “take a haircut” on my year-end RFG scorecard – or else. Doing so, they said, would put me in my own office. I rejected the first four they sent me, and let me tell you, they were a joke. All of them had failed at their last job and I could see why. Believe it or not, Allstate hired two of them and they predictably failed within their first year.

Finally one morning, a scruffy looking gentleman appeared at my office door and announced that he was my new EFS. He informed me my manager had said I would house him and that I was to show him his new office. He then proceeded to make himself at home in the 12’x16’ furnished office I had for reserved for the next EFS. So much for my say in the EFS selection process!

Almost a full year went by and my new EFS had only been assigned to work with 2½ other agents. He said 2½ because one of them was a newbie who was failing badly and would soon be out the door. Unfortunately for both of us, he did not understand our product lines or our slow-as-molasses underwriting process, and despite my assistance, no one else offered to help him. He was unable to close sales because he never had time to gain sufficient product knowledge, which didn’t do anything to help his confidence level. Sound familiar?

Claiming he had been misled by Allstate management about the amount of support we would receive, he informed me one frigid January afternoon – at a
meeting where we were to discuss our strategies for the new year – that he had resigned from Allstate that morning. He said he was sorry, but that he saw little opportunity working with only one cooperating agent. Of course, I was dumb-founded, especially when I found out that he left Allstate to go sell cemetery plots! You can’t make this up and is living proof that truth can be stranger than fiction.

Naturally, I would be blamed for losing yet another EFS, even though his year-end figures showed my agency as his top performer. Together, we had written $14,970 in financial that year. Now here is the rub; I needed to write $15,000 in order to avoid incurring the wrath of middle management and, of course, losing my bonus. Unfortunately, I had placed my trust in this EFS, assuming he would keep track of my production totals. The lesson here is that the agency owner must be the one to watch production totals. The other lesson is to be sure you submit more financial than you need. If you don’t and come up short, you could lose big bonus dollars, and get a browbeating from management.

Management has a name for what I had now just become and thus, I was dubbed as the dreaded “EFS killer.” What was I to do? Run and hide? Roll over and just give up? I decided if I allowed myself to become depressed, they would surely win and that was not an acceptable outcome for me. I was not willing to let them tarnish me personally or the agency that I nurtured and grew for more than 30 years. As my resolve strengthened, I found myself bound and determined not to fail.

Almost exactly 18 months to the day after that “come to Jesus meeting,” I had gone from zero to hero. My agency had earned two Top Dog awards, Honor Ring, Leaders’ Forum, National Champions, Chairman’s Conference and, last but not least, Chairman’s Elite Inner Circle. It was a real Bill Gough/Jim Fish kind of year.

Now for the great part of this story. You, too, can accomplish this transformation! Here is the formula on how you can also rise to the top, like I did.

First and very important: try to make it appear as though you have changed your mental attitude toward management. Paraphrasing multiple sources online, the definition of a desirable employee is one that possesses a positive attitude towards the organization and its values. Please note the phrase “its values.” Most Allstate agents I know would have to swallow their pride and cover the mirrors in their homes before they would stoop low enough to begin to master the not-so-subtle art of ass-kissing! Trust me; it’s difficult to pretend that you’ve evolved into a cloaked management suck-up. But then again, we all know that good salespeople must also be good actors. So, just become a YES person and put away your cold and/or questioning face and replace it with a big happy face. Arrange early at meetings and be sure to memorize all the managers’ names and firmly shake their hands. Develop a warm, friendly demeanor and address them by name and repeat frequently. Let them talk about themselves. Feed their egos by spouting off compliments. Always smile at all corporate meetings and act positive all the way to your car, where you can scream all you want once you are out of sight. Understand that you must always keep your questions and comments to an absolute minimum, and when you speak, say something positive and supportive of management initiatives no matter what they are. This must be done convincingly to the point where you begin to piss off your fellow agents for not taking their side. They will start to loath you when part of your plan includes agreeing with anything and everything management says. Management will sense the dissatisfaction of your fellow agents, which will fill them with glee, while acknowledging you with nods of their appreciation and approval.

The spring 2013 issue of Exclusive-focus contained an article on greener pastures. It stated that the top two companies have their “favorite agents,” so why not be one yourself? We’re all salespeople, so start selling yourselves to management. If you are young and have not yet reached your “expiration date,” then you have a chance here!

Now a word of advice for anyone planning to sell their hard-earned agency (under duress or not) – do not leave your bonus money on the table! Schedule your closing at year-end in order to get your well-deserved bonus; it is there for the taking.

Second, your FSL will most likely not be a great help in advising you about details of your bonus. They may have ulterior motives that include using your bonus money as an incentive to hire your replacement. This is especially true for anyone who is forced to sell. After all, management has been known to interfere with agency sales, as has been alleged in at least one California lawsuit. They have also been known to give buyers “helpful hints” on what to offer for books of business and/or what concessions they should ask for from sellers. If you’ve never sold a book before, you should get some solid advice. Joining NAPAA will afford you access to the knowledgeable, voluminous and honest advice of Nancy Fish. You will come out money ahead like I did!

Membership is around a dollar a day and well worth every penny.

Third, a low loss ratio and good retention will be the bedrock upon which you can and will build your bonus money house. If you have been a good field un-
derwriter, honest, picky and honest (did I repeat myself?), you will likely have great retention and loss ratio numbers. Although I feel that profitability and retention are the two greatest positives that any agency can have, Allstate has shown that it could care less about them. Upper management only respects us as “insurance peddlers,” so start peddling! To do that, you must first understand the components of your bonus and then use Allstate’s game plan to achieve it. If you do not believe theirs is a good long-term corporate strategy, you need to park that attitude at the door. You must remember that you are not being led by seasoned insurance managers at Allstate. I know, because I have personally spoken with most of them, and few, if any, have any hands-on experience working in or operating an Allstate agency. This absence of real insight into agency operations is perhaps Allstate’s biggest mistake. Management prefers not to soil their hands with the finer points of running an agency because they sincerely believe they know all there is to know about it, when, in fact, they don’t. As you’ll see below, they also have great disdain for all but a small segment of the Allstate agent population.

Those on Allstate’s current senior management team rose through the ranks of retail, automobiles, computers and even pineapples – anything but insurance. Jim Cramer would be spot-on if he was to rant, “They know nothing about the business of insurance!” One exception might be Patty Van Lammeren, who came up through various management positions.

Whether you have a 24% loss ratio or a 59% loss ratio it will not save your job. What will save your job is befriending a knowledgeable sales leader and having them walk you through all the new bonus qualification factors. They know the formula and where the land mines are. So, brown-nose up to them and use them to set up your goals. To max out your bonus, you’ll need to focus on the products Allstate wants you to sell. Your FSL may even help you market to these products. If you realize that most Allstate managers are human beings, then most will reciprocate when you show that you are working toward the same set of goals. I was blessed that two of my last four FSLs were stand-up human beings. One even stood up to protect me from a fellow FSL bully, when he could have easily joined in and thrown me under the bus. A good FSL will give their best agents: their attention, lead lists, possible access to Home Office marketing employees and even postage money for certain mailings. And this is just a partial list of goodies that you could receive. But, if your FSL doesn’t return your calls for long periods of time, you’ll likely have your work cut out for you.

Longer-term managers are best, but the few that remain have learned how to work within the grey areas of production. Personally, my conscience wouldn’t allow me to sustain or condone such a persona, so I ended up selling my agency, albeit on my terms.

30 years of me being Mr. Goodie Two Shoes Allstate agent almost got me fired. As a result, I decided to hire a highly motivated, but seemingly morally-challenged staff member. Three years after hiring this ambitious individual – who could fit a round peg into a square hole – I decided I’d had enough. I shouldn’t have been surprised because this particular staff member’s application integrity was learned while working for a “mega legacy” agency that consistently produced huge numbers. I should be embarrassed to admit this, but in order to keep up with the Jones; I tolerated some of these “grey” behaviors from this staff member. This led me to correcting occasional bad applications containing blatant infractions, and issuing stern reprimands for questionable practices. But when I should have fired a certain staffer, I didn’t, because in today’s “grow or get out of the way” environment, there was no way I could lose a stellar producer. As a case in point, when I personally asked Tom Wilson if he wanted “quality business” or “any and all business,” he hesitated, signaling that he had to think about it. Jim Fish and Nancy Fish – and NAPAA as a whole – wouldn’t condone such an attitude, but I say that sometimes one must fight fire with fire to survive and even flourish. The fact is upper management wants sales, no matter how they are achieved. Quite simply, this attitude translates into quantity over quality. If you don’t like it, you need to get out as soon as Allstate agencies become salable again.

To rationalize this mentality, I look back on Leaders’ Forum three years ago. In one of our regional breakout sessions, the SRVP, RVP and their #3 had all of us salivating like Pavlovian dogs. They claimed that our region was full of slack-agents who would soon be terminated. We were all going to be grown to “scale” – which meant agencies of $3 million or more – so we would become more like State Farm agencies. These regional managers proclaimed there were going to be “fire sales” galore. Senior regional management had us worked up like sharks circling around a dying whale just waiting to rip into it. I must say, it really was an intoxicating atmosphere. That is, until I caught myself and realized how diabolical their plan really was! This was the point where I was nearly overcome with my own guilt. These regional managers were actually talking (gloating) about firing my agent friends. We’re talking about good, respectable, long-term agents who deserved much better.

In hindsight, it was a surreal and unbelievable meeting. This was my introduction to the Allstate Leaders Forum. One would have thought I had an obsessive-compulsive disorder if they had observed me repeatedly washing my hands after the meeting – I just felt contaminated after that experience.

Fourth, Allstate management has shown that they do not appreciate or even appear to care about your retention numbers. Any intelligent insurance professional knows that PTL clients vote for their agents with their check-books, not on lengthy surveys. Retention equals MONEY! Surveys can easily be fixed by hiring a professional telemarketing firm to call your book before Allstate sends their surveys out.

Allstate management only cares about sales, period. An Allstate company president loudly proclaimed to a close friend of mine that, “we are a sales company, not a service company.” This sales-first management mentality comes straight from my personal conversations with four out of the top six officers in the company. You, too, can win the opportunity of hearing this information directly from the horse’s mouth. All you need to
If you are among those agents being threatened with the loss of your agency, remember that to save it, you need volume and quantity now, not quality. But remember, when quality is sacrificed to the point it is today, the company and the agents who remain may pay a hefty price once the house of cards that Tom Wilson built comes crashing down.

do is hire ambitious staff and you’ll repeatedly achieve top agent honors and travel to exotic locations where you’ll be able to hobnob with the company brass. After a few drinks, they tend to be even more loquacious (think Joe Lacher).

Finally, once you let management know that you want to sell your agency and retire, you instantly become persona non-grata, regardless of how much you have achieved throughout your career.

Even after I signed the sale papers for my agency, I worked very hard and finished out the year with a bang. Also note that by working through year-end, I was able to cash in on the huge bonus that I worked all year to earn, which amounted to slightly less than $90,000 – not bad for someone who three years earlier was threatened with termination. Therefore, by continuing my contract through year-end Allstate was contractually obligated to pay me the big bonus money they owed me.

So now for those of you who remain, I suggest that you get out there and hire two salespeople. Incentives can include a percent of your bonus. The larger the agency’s bonus, the more you can pay them. With the right incentives in place, you might even be able to steal staff from Allstate’s pet agent in your town; God knows they would do it to you if they could – sorry, Jim and Nancy, but we are talking livelihoods here.

Advertise your agency and make the phone ring. Use social media. Work the local car dealerships. If you are real desperate, you could even set up a card table “booth” in front of the city’s impound lot on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Do this if you are allowed to write no need/no prior in your state.

As for that new staff person: well, because territorial management may have been reluctant to take any disciplinary action against their high-producing pet agents – whose app integrity is suspect – you might be pleasantly surprised by the many little dirty tricks that their staff were taught. Give them free license to write any and all business that comes through your door. You can take solace in that they can’t possibly be as loose and morally challenged as Allstate’s great and lovable CIC sales team. And even if you cheat and get fined by your state insurance commissioner, do not fear. The agent in the suburb next to mine was fined $1,000 for deceptive advertising by the insurance department in my state, and there he was the very next day, giving an inspirational talk to the rank and file at a Territorial meeting. If you doubt me, check your own state insurance department for a list of agents who have been penalized; you might be surprised who’ll you’ll find.

The stench of that Leaders’ Forum may still be affecting my once-noble thought processes. Some of the tactics described in the last few paragraphs above are despicable, and I only suggested them in jest. I am sure NAPAA knows that real winners should be able to win without compromising their standards. It is just much tougher today – due to current management – to be an honest winner than it was 15 years ago. Unfortunately, such practices go on every day amongst the more ethically challenged agents and managers in our midst. It seems strange to me that agents who care about their customers and who value honesty, integrity, retention, and who take pride in their low loss ratios are those who are being persecuted, threatened and ultimately forced out of business.

If you are among those agents being threatened with the loss of your agency, remember that to save it, you need volume and quantity now, not quality. But remember, when quality is sacrificed to the point it is today, the company and the agents who remain may pay a hefty price once the house of cards that Tom Wilson built comes crashing down. Furthermore, in some instances, flight may be a better alternative than waging a long-term fight.
Allstate Agents: We’ve Got Your Back

One constant you will find is that through thick and thin, NAPAA has always been there to support the agents of Allstate. Our organization takes a stand to help ensure the success of Allstate agency owners.

Let us count you as one of the many voices we represent. To learn more or to join NAPAA, call 877-627-2248 or visit us at www.napaaUSA.org.

www.napaaUSA.org
P.O. Box 7666, Gulfport, MS  39506
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As insurance agents, business owners and individuals, we are bombarded with plenty of marketing options. Then in our fervid zeal to grow our agencies, we sometimes find ourselves signing up for more of them than we can handle. Many are time-consuming to set up, impossible to determine if they’re working, and the information they provide is sometimes inaccurate.

So where do we begin to formulate our Secret Marketing Sauce? First, you must determine your message and how it should be conveyed. With multiple products to sell and too many messages to count, many of us attack the market using a shotgun approach. We spray buckshot far and wide, but have little to show for it.

So, what should your message be? To help figure it out, we should ask ourselves some questions. Here are a few to start with:

1. Are you the best agent in town and stand above the rest?
2. Do you provide service that is superior to all others?
3. Do you continue to educate yourself, your staff and others about changes in the industry?
4. Do you do exceptional things in your community?

The secret is identifying the How, What, When, Where and Why. When you figure that out, you’ll be ready to share it with the world. And when you think of it, there are only five things to define.

Andrew Szabo, The Marketing Chef, and good friend of mine, says, “Marketing is Everything you do (and don’t do).” He elaborates by saying, “Everything you do, (and don’t do), sends a message to the marketplace.”

So what does he mean? It means that all of the tools you choose, such as business cards, car wrappings, involvement (or uninvolvement) in your community, how you dress, how you answer the
phone, the amount of time you spend per day on Facebook... all of these send a message to the people you interact with.

Even e-blasts and robocalls send messages about you. Yes, it is expensive to make calls or to send First-class Mail to your clients and prospects, but you must be careful of what your customers might take away from their experiences with you. Could someone perceive you as being too busy to make personal contact with them?

In today’s world, we are inundated with information, including unwelcome political calls and sales pitches of all kinds. We’re in the sales business too, but we must make sure we are doing it in a way that doesn’t offend our clients.

There are many agents who do all these things and they are highly successful. So it’s not like these techniques don't work, but they may not work for everyone. In my case, personal interaction has always worked best, even though I recognize and understand that utilizing new and different technologies is necessary for agencies to move into the future.

Remember, it is vital for you to track where your business is coming from. Re-evaluate your processes from time to time and get rid of things that do not produce successful outcomes for your agency. It can be a process, an organization or even a person that no longer fits into your plans for success. This takes time, introspection and can be discomfiting to you and those around you.

It seems when I consider using all the available options at my disposal – such as NetQuote, Coles, SaleGenie, eAgent and all the rest – I become more scattered, which causes a sense of being overwhelmed and ineffective. I'm sure I'm not alone here; every agent probably has moments like this.

Bottom line: if there are too many ingredients in your Secret Marketing Sauce, it won't taste right and adding more won't help. This is when you must take the best and leave the rest.

Closing Tips
1. Determine your message. Narrow it down if you need to; sometimes less is more.
2. Track your time and where it is going each day.
3. What message are you sending with the tools and processes you are using?
4. Evaluate and reevaluate your tools, processes and organizational involvement.
5. Rid yourself of energy zappers and/or things that are ineffective

As the requirements in our lives and businesses change, we must adapt. Keep yourself moving forward and view changes as necessary challenges.

My mom always taught me that although it may sometimes be hard to do, it can also be refreshing to prune off some of the “branches in our lives” so we can flourish again. It will help you “Create your Own Recipe for Success!”

Smaklig Maltid (Swedish for Bon Appétit)  Ef

Lezlee Liljenberg is an active Allstate agent in Arlington, Texas and is a proud member of NAPLA Board of Directors.
I wish I’d given a lot more thought to retirement some fifteen to twenty years before the fact. But my personal financial situation is not nearly as bad as some folks I know. I’m acquainted with an Allstate agent who sold a ton of annuities and variable and fixed interest tax-qualified plans during his career. Then at age 65, he sold his book to a private buyer and retired. Last I heard, he was a groundskeeper at a golf course. It’s not the weeding and mowing he likes, and he’s not trying to absorb more vitamin D. He needs the money. He might as well forget his so-called golden years, unless you count that golden tan he’s developed while working the grounds and dodging golf balls.

So what happened? For one thing, he never sold a tax-qualified plan to himself and only bought term insurance on his own life. He never bought long-term care insurance for himself and his wife. He had a bunch of cash at various banks but went through it fairly fast, as he found it necessary to hire in-home help for his now invalid wife. Four thousand bucks a month – plus expenses ancillary to this type of care – can eat up your life’s savings in a hurry. Running out of money because of health care expenses, even for those with large resources, has become a legitimate concern.

I don’t know the details of the private sale of his Allstate business, but I understand there were problems. Anyone depending on Social Security and the sale of their book of business as their sole means of financial support is taking a big risk. An unfortunate side-effect of selling a book with a large number of life-only policyholders is that they generate little renewal compensation for the buyer, which, of course, deflates the purchase price of the book. That’s a bad deal for the seller, but a huge boon for the buyer, especially when purchasing a mature book.

Annuities and life policies aren’t subject to the vagaries of the marketplace and mortality costs haven’t changed for years. Many of these mature policyholders no longer have their P&C accounts with Allstate because competitors have lured them away with lower rates, but now that the company is focused on growth, that may be changing. With a competitive rate, most of these clients should be receptive to a P&C quote from the new agent. And while he’s at it, he can convert their term life policy to a permanent plan that’s indexed to the S&P or sell a variable life product underwritten with mutual funds.

But that’s not the real beauty of buying a book with a large number of life policies. As the older folks die off, their beneficiaries need guidance as to what to do with the money they’ve received. They likely need life insurance themselves and a tax-deferred vehicle where they can stash and grow their inheritance. These are grateful people with a lot of money suddenly on hand – and their newfound wealth was made possible through the sale of life insurance. There is an immediate sense of trust when an agent delivers the death proceeds. For that reason, they may be open to having the same agent handle their P&C needs. The agent who bought my book, for example, is well on his way to selling $100,000 in production credit this year and some of it has come from the aforementioned policyholders and their beneficiaries.

Allow me to digress to share another anecdote with you. We get many winter visitors here in Arizona. Not too long ago, a retired agent from Minnesota dropped by the office to say hello. He said he was ‘wintering’ in Arizona to escape the cold. He mentioned an address east of Mesa. Curious, I looked the address up; it was a rundown trailer park in Apache Junction. I’m betting that he never sold an annuity to himself either.

Aside from the hypocrisy of selling...
annuities which you advocate to others, but don’t buy yourself, there’s the issue of personally believing in the products you sell and transferring that belief to your clients. Over the years, I sold a ton of annuities and long-term care products to my clients in collaboration with my Exclusive Financial Specialist partner. One technique I used was to bring up my own plans along with me to show the client how I’d done personally. I was honest and forthright and customers could sense it. They also could see that I believed in the products enough to buy them myself, which gave them the confidence that my advice was in their best interests.

When your clients are age fifty or older, tax-qualified annuities become a godsend. These enrollments can transfer existing IRAs, 401(k)s, stocks, bonds and mutual funds into a tax-qualified annuity that has a guaranteed provision. Additional monthly automatic checking deposits into this account will produce almost unbelievable results – and in fewer years than you would expect. My favorite annuity – both to sell to clients and buy for myself – was Prudential’s ASAP III. With this plan, you buy a mix of Special Equity Funds, International Equity Funds, Bond Funds, Mid Caps and Large Caps. And best of all, it has a guarantee provision should we encounter another recession. Of course, as we learned in the AIG debacle, a guaranteed interest rate is only as good as the soundness of the company. But if the worst happens, you still own the underlying funds.

But you know what they say about the “best laid plans of mice and men” – stuff happens in life: relatives get sick and need money, the paid-for car blows an engine, and so on. And it happened to me. I needed to boost my cash flow but I didn’t want to touch my annuities because of surrender costs and penalties. I’d originally timed it so their maturity dates coincided with the expiration date of the sale of my book of business. And unlike my aforementioned example of the retired agent/groundskeeper, the buyer of my book is an honest broker that pays like a clock. Our contract expires in eighteen months. But that private sale contract became a problem, just as it did for the erstwhile agent I had previously mentioned – but for a different reason.

If you have any ideas for an article you’d like to see in a future issue of Exclusive Focus, I’d love to hear from you. You can email me at Daverotundo901@msn.com.

I have a fifteen-year mortgage on my home. To increase my cash flow, all I had to do was refinance for 30 years, which would lower the payments by a thousand bucks. But the existing lender refused to recognize the income from the private buyer of my book, mainly because the contract would expire in eighteen months. They insisted I begin monthly annuity withdrawals immediately, which meant I would have to pay taxes on money that was earning more than ten percent, tax-deferred. Thanks but no thanks. Their loan suddenly became too expensive.

Ah yes, those best laid plans of mice and men. Fortunately, I have some cash lying around and a couple of cash value life insurance policies I can hit. The lesson to be learned is that sometimes a private sale of your book is not worth the risk of earning the extra income derived. And the bigger lesson is to always expect the unexpected. Cash talks, BS walks. Ef

Summer 2013
From Fear to Joy!

Submitted Anonymously

Never underestimate the fear that an Allstate agent feels. I should know; I was an agent for 32 years. You might wonder why it took me so long to say good-bye.

In the early 80s Allstate was a pretty good place to work; agents were all employees and we had a good contract and employee benefits. Then in the mid 80s the Neighborhood Office Agent (NOA) program was introduced. It was the beginning of Allstate’s long-range, cost-shifting plan to transfer its expenses to the agency force. As they’ve done with every other agent program since then, they began to hype the benefits of the NOA program. Many agents bought into it and soon discovered that the company's Office Expense Allowance (OEA) formula was not enough to pay their expenses. Prior to the NOA conversions, the company paid agency related expenses in full.

I won’t go through all the cost-shifting programs the company has implemented since then, as they have been covered time and again in the pages of this magazine over the years. Suffice it to say, there have been many; the latest of which is the 10% commission cut that began this past January.

Through it all, the company has had one goal and one goal only – to squeeze as much as possible from the agents. Oh, you may make more this year and another year, and the next under the new variable compensation plan, but I guarantee it will become more difficult with each passing year, as your quotas change and the Agency Success Factors become more burdensome and harder to attain. That’s just how it is when you are dealing with a corporation that must find ways to increase profits it can’t seem to accomplish any other way.

Then there was the constant intimidation and job-threatening letters informing us to produce or lose our contracts. This unrelenting stress caused many agents to fall into ill-health and led a few to take their own lives. This kind of torment is unpardonable and inhumane.

Now you know a couple of the reasons why I finally decided to leave the company. I put my book up for sale, but after two years of trying to sell and no buyer approvals from local or regional management, I opted to exercise the Termination Payment Provision (TPP). It was a good decision, but I wish I had made it two years earlier.

Jumping off into TPP is scary, especially when you want to start an independent agency. First, you have to abide by the terms of your non-compete agreement by moving your office at least a mile or more from your Allstate location and making sure you don’t solicit your Allstate customers for a year. Then there is always the fear of the unknown, causing you to wonder if you will make a go of it in the independent agent world.

Well, I am here writing this to tell you that you can make it! It is not easy, but neither was Allstate. In my first two months as an independent I had many 12 to 18 hour days and worked Sundays after church. Now, I am working a normal schedule. I am not saying that I have made it yet. I am not saying that I have made it already, but the processes are in place and the results just get better and better.

Here are the results for my first 100 days: new business premiums of $151,535. That is over $45,000 a month. Even at this pace, it won’t take long to build a sizeable book of business, but I don’t feel as though I’ve hit my peak stride yet. I am so energized by my newfound independence that I can’t wait to do more. I know another ex-Allstate agent who is two years ahead of me, and he is doing $100,000 a month in new business. The sky’s the limit and I own the renewals, so if another company ever treats me poorly, I can roll the business to a more appreciative carrier.

As I mentioned earlier, starting an independent agency is not easy; there is plenty of red tape, a learning curve, and lots of hard work. But, there are no managers and I share commissions only with my employees.

When I quote a deal, I can usually find better policies with competitive rates and companies that provide good service. That makes the selling process fairly easy. We close 75% of the prospects we quote. So, this is my new reality: better policies, lower premiums and no managers breathing down my neck. It sounds too good to be true, right?

Now, here is the key reason for my joy: everyone is a prospect! When I find someone who wants to do business with me, it is only a question of finding a company that wants to insure them. My biggest limitation is time. Imagine, everyone is a prospect; you work up an insurance proposal, and close 75% of them. In my first 100 days I only lost one sale because of price and after it happened, I called that company and got appointed with them. I am now beholden only to my customers because there are no corporate managers. The company reps that come to my office are courteous, respectful and very helpful. Sure they want business from me, and they kill me with kindness to get it – which is something I never experienced in all my years at Allstate.

It’s a great life after Allstate. I wish you all the best. I have gone from fear to joy in 100 days! Ef
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Social Media Glossary

By Robyn Sharp

So you’re decided to start using social media. Maybe you have hired someone to setup your accounts or asked your staff to do it. Once your social media outlets have been created and are ready to go, you may be still be hesitant to get started because initially it’s a little daunting and a bit confusing.

The problem is typically the lingo. There are a lot of words thrown around with social media that tend to add more confusion. In this article we’ll break down some of the common terms and clarify what they mean to you and your agency.

**Facebook**

Facebook, as the largest and most popular social media network in the universe, is up first. You probably have the most experience with Facebook, but understanding a few key terms will make it easier to follow how-to articles and make the most of your marketing time.

**Profile/Timeline:** A Facebook “Profile” is a personal account. When you login to your account, you are posting under your own name on your profile page. Now, with some of the recent design changes, your profile is also called a “Timeline.”

When you click your name in the upper right corner, you’ll go right to your Profile/Timeline. By clicking on the small lock icon on the top menu, you can adjust your privacy settings and view what is visible on your profile at the same time.

**Page:** A Facebook “Page” is different from a profile. It is created to represent a business and this is what you should have for your agency.

You can create a page by visiting www.facebook.com/pages. If you already have a page, you’ll find it by clicking in the Pages Option on the left side of your Home screen.

It’s very important to create a page for your agency and not a profile. Facebook’s terms of service are very specific and require that all businesses have the proper type of page or risk getting shut down.

You can tell the difference between a Profile and a Page because pages have the “Like” button at the top.

**Newsfeed:** This is located on the Home page, and is what you see when you first login. When someone you are friends with (or a page you have “liked”) share an update, you’ll see it listed in this section.

**Friend:** “Friends” are the people you connect with through your personal Profile. Establishing someone as a friend requires a mutual acceptance between the two parties and, once the relationship is set up, your friend can typically see more of your posts, depending, of course, on your privacy settings. The number of friends you have is displayed at the top of your Profile.

**Like:** A “Like” is someone who has clicked the Like button on your page.
THE INSURANCE MARKETING BLOG FOR ALLSTATE AGENTS

Get A Free Copy Of Robyn Sharp’s “59 Ways To Attract All The Clients You Need” Checklist!

Social Media How-To, Internet Marketing Ideas, Staff Training Tips, And Much More!

MEGA AGENCY MARKETING

AGENCYUPDATES.COM
Think of the like button like a subscription. When someone “Likes” you, they are choosing to subscribe to your Page Updates and see what you’ll share on a regular basis in their newsfeed.

More “Likes” mean more visibility and more opportunity to reach potential clients.

**Poke:** Have you ever received a notification that someone had “poked” you and you had no clue as to what it meant? Well, it really means nothing. A poke is just a way of getting someone’s attention, like a friend in the real world who physically taps you on the shoulder to get your attention. It doesn’t do anything other than send a notification.

**Status Update:** A “status” is something that you share on your Profile or Page. It could be text only, a photo, or a video. You’ll see the status box at the top of your Page and at the top of your Newsfeed. When you write on your page, it is only shared with people who “like” the page. When you write a status on the newsfeed, it is shown to everyone who is your friend.

**Share:** Under each status, you’ll see an option to like, comment, or share that particular status. A “share” allows you to re-post that status to your own Profile/Timeline or Page. Just change the option at the top of the box and share!

These, shares, and comments all help your page grow so you want to get lots of these!

**Group:** A Facebook group is a small private area where group members can create discussions and share information without it being on their profile or page. Groups are a great way to network and share information in a forum-like setting. For great Allstate-related posts and discussions, search for the ALL Agents Page, NAPAA’s private, agent-only group!

**Message:** A Facebook message is similar to an email, but it is delivered through your Facebook account only. The messages area is shown in the left home menu as well as at the top left of the screen. There will be a red notification indicator when you have a new message. Messages can be sent privately to one person or to a small group. Your Page also has the ability to receive messages from people who like it, just make sure you turn on the appropriate option in your settings.

**Twitter**

Now that you’ve got all the Facebook basics down, it’s time to move on to Twitter. Twitter can seem confusing at first since it is much shorter and faster than Facebook. The terminology, however, is similar.

**Username:** Once again, you’ll set up your account and have a page dedicated just to you. It will list your contact information and have all of your recent tweets, which are posts or status updates.

**Tweets:** A “tweet” is just like a status update on Facebook, only it is limited to 140 characters. This means that you must be short and sweet when sharing on Twitter!

**@:** The @ symbol is used to send a tweet to a specific user. Place the @ before the username of the person you want to contact, and it will show up in that user's “Mentions” section on Twitter.

**DM:** A DM is a direct message. It is the only way to send a private tweet directly to another user. Just put DM before their username to send the message, but remember, it’s still limited to 140 characters.

#: The pound sign is called a hashtag on Twitter. You’ve probably seen them popping up everywhere these days. The hashtag is included as a way to group tweets into a certain topic and make them easy to search. You might include the “#insurance” hashtag at the end of a tweet if you want someone who searches for insurance to find it. People also use them to be funny, so they don’t always make sense!

**Other Social Networks**

There are a few more terms you might need to know as you grow your social media marketing.

**LinkedIn** is very similar to Facebook with its profiles and groups, but instead of “friends” you’ll make “connections.” Your profile is also very similar to an interactive resume.

The newest social network, Pinterest, also has some confusing lingo.

**Pin:** A pin is a picture or image shared on Pinterest. It's similar to a bookmark and is linked to a specific page on the Internet.

**Board:** A board is created on Pinterest. It is full of pins, similar to a real-life bulletin board. When you click on a pin image, you're taken to the Internet bookmark associated with it.

**Pin it:** Find something online you want to remember? Click the Pin It button in your browser and save it to a Board. It's basically a visual bookmark service!

All of this should give you a great introduction to these social media platforms. The best way to get comfortable with the terminology is to start using it on a regular basis. Commit to updating your social media profiles daily and using them to brand your agency and reach new clients. Ef

Robyn Sharp is a social media and insurance marketing expert. Visit www.agentcyupdates.com for more tips and a copy of her free checklist “59 Ways To Attract All The Insurance Clients You Need.”
Affiliation with OPEIU

It Pays to Belong!

NAPAA has affiliated with the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU), AFL-CIO to help provide our membership with reliable communications on issues that affect Allstate Exclusive Agency Owners and their customers by promoting professionalism and ethical practices.

OPEIU will also assist NAPAA in its mission of being dedicated to the success of Allstate agencies and to advancing the independence and entrepreneurial spirit of its members.

The affiliation means real benefits to NAPAA members, who are eligible to participate in all OPEIU membership benefit programs at no additional cost. These benefits include:

- E&O deductible reimbursement of 20% of the deductible for any paid E&O claim up to $500 per member per year.
- A healthcare and Rx discount program through WellDyne.
- Up to $50 payment for continuing education every two years.
- Up to 2 towing/service calls per year (valued at up to $100 each) for all family members living in the same household.
- An identity theft service through Aon Benefield.
- Welcome Home – a real estate commission rebate program that includes first-rate real estate companies such as Century 21, Coldwell Banker and Sotheby’s.
- Eligibility for three scholarship funds that could mean up to $6,000 for children and dependents.
- Participation in the AFL-CIO Union Plus program that provides a better than competitive MasterCard rate, travel and entertainment discounts, legal services, auto discounts, and a financial education service.

OPEIU brings NAPAA the strength of its membership base, making our voice even louder in the legislative halls at the national and state levels, and in our efforts to affect Allstate’s behavior and treatment of agents.

We urge all Allstate agents to join NAPAA, not only to receive great membership benefits, but also to help us grow stronger and more effective in our industry.

Please fill out and complete the NAPAA application form in this magazine or sign up online at www.napaaUSA.org. Regular membership dues are $375 per year, which pale when you consider the benefits and protections it provides.
Confidential NAPAA Membership Application

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Super Supporter Membership
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Authorization Signature: ______________________________ Date ______________

PLEASE FAX or MAIL APPLICATION TO:
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P. O. Box 7666, Gulfport, MS 39506-7666
Call Toll-free: 877.627.2248 • E-Mail: HQ@napaausa.org • Fax Toll-free: 866.627.2232

Please consider including a generous donation to the NAPAA Action Fund!
I just read the latest NAPAA publication cover to cover and found your article about Nancy fascinating! What a great way to honor your wife and business partner. Great job!

Thank you for giving Nancy her due. Not only does she champion agent issues, but she demonstrates her commitment with her tireless efforts on their behalf. Unfortunately, she does have a few detractors who try to bully her (and NAPAA) on certain forums. It amazes me that these types don’t seem to get what NAPAA is all about, which is to help agents – all agents. What NAPAA is not about is kissing Tom Wilson’s backside.

As agents, we have to face the fact that Allstate has fired thousands of our brothers and sisters with little justification. My question is: if you’re an Allstate agent and you’re aware of the firings, how can you stand there and think this is a caring company?

Please tell NAPAA President Bob Isacsen, that the “sleeping giant” is not just Farmers. In my opinion, the “sleeping giant” is all of the wrongfully terminated agents who are staying in the business just to get back at Allstate. They may join Farmers, or another carrier or cluster group, but they are bound together by the common thread of revenge. Revenge for being dishonored, disrespected and discarded! Trust me; if and when I open another agency in a warmer state, I will pursue Allstate clients with a vengeance!

I apologize for the venom in my words, but thousands of good Allstate agents have been treated with scorn and disrespect. They need to be avenged for the wrongs they were dealt.

I have attached a document that’s been going around our region and wanted to know your thoughts on its validity and/or authenticity. It’s a filing with the IRS from Allstate, and it clearly spells out that quotas are off-limits. If this is authentic, how do they get away with what they’ve been doing?

Editor’s Response:
At first glance, the document you forwarded appears to be a cleaned-up version of the IRS Private Letter Ruling (PLR) document that we’ve had on our website for many years (our copy was redacted to hide the name of the company before we received it). In the PLR agreement, Allstate pledged to treat its agent workers as true independent contractors; a commitment they have failed to keep. The PLR has been the basis of our frustration with Allstate for many years and is the reason why we have called upon the IRS to intervene on the agents’ behalf. Unfortunately, we are still waiting.

Since leaving Allstate, my stress level is non-existent. I am a much happier person and a better father and husband as well. I sincerely believe my health would have deteriorated if I had stayed.

I am plugging along in my new agency, although I am not yet making what I did at Allstate, I am well on my way. In my state, I have heard from my Allstate agent friends that the company has gone from 115 agents to 40. I feel lucky I saw the writing on the wall and was able to sell, when many of my old colleagues were forced to take TPP. This is very sad.

I have a routine in my new office; whenever I write a prior Allstate customer, I dance a little jig to celebrate. I
feel bad for the agent who lost the business, but I know they'd take it from me if given the chance. Besides, I can never forget how management treated me, nor can I forget that when Richard Cairns, the territorial leader, came to my office he lied to my face and tried to intimidate me.

Thanks for your hard work. You've always been a beacon where some thought there was only darkness.

I'm tired of fighting the system and beginning to despise my life at Allstate. I can't stand all the stupid crap that doesn't work properly. Then when we call our support departments, they have no authority to resolve our issues. What a way to run a company! I find myself swearing to myself way too often these days!

And then there's Connexus - OMG! It's a daily issue with that beast! They renewed a commercial auto policy effective 7/3/2013. The renewal was processed in mid-March. I needed to amend the lienholder on one of the vehicles, so I fumbled my way through the endorsement and when I'm halfway through it, I get a message that says, "This endorsement will not be effective at the renewal date of 07/03/2013." Naturally, I call, and I'm told that since the underwriter already processed the renewal, I have to recreate the endorsement on the renewal date or it will simply fall off! I know this sounds preposterous, but it's true. I can't tell you how many hours I've spent bickering at people over this one!

Just another day at the typical Allstate agency! Ugh! And this is a Fortune 100 company?

Being human, managers want to hear when they are doing a good job. Everyone likes to be thanked and appreciated when it is deserved. My last manager was very helpful to me. He is honest and instead of doling out the corporate Kool-Aid like most managers, he does his best to turn it into lemonade. It helps that he is young, smart, honest, and has a wife who is a doctor.

I strongly feel that Allstate's many problems are the result of putting their emphasis on the wrong priorities. Currently, managers' bonuses are based on how many warm bodies they hire. There is no reward for helping to make new agents successful. To illustrate this point, I was told by a tenured manager in my state, "We are paid to hire these people, not make them successful." To me this is the wrong approach and a recipe for disaster. What needs to be done is to make financial rewards for managers dependent on agent success, say after two or three years. The current system can never work because managers are always looking for their next hire, leaving newly-installed agents without any real help or guidance. Keeping the current system will only ensure that the carnage will continue.

I'm not sure if you can help me, but here goes. I took TPP in February 2012. My accountant says it's ordinary income and that I'll pay approximately one-third in taxes. This just does not seem correct, but I found out today the IRS has ruled it is ordinary income in a court case involving a State Farm agent. Have you heard this from others? I'd appreciate your input

Association Manager's response: We are not aware of any IRS ruling pertaining to the Allstate TPP. State Farm's agent termination payment is NOT the same as yours. Your TPP is definitely not subject to self-employment tax; see page 6 of the IRS instructions for 1099Misc http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1099msc.pdf.

Also, the last agent who reported to us that he was questioned by the IRS over this issue was allowed to file the TPP payments as capital gains – not ordinary income.

After selling my agency, and after a brief stint as an IA, I went back to work for the agent who bought my book. He kept after me, telling me that my customers are loyal and that they loved me. I was hesitant because I did not think Allstate management would approve, but they did, which surprised me.

During my seven week absence from Allstate I really missed the customer relationships. I did not know how important they were to me until I no longer had them. It appears to me that Allstate wants this young new agent to make it. He is very nice fellow and is highly thought of.

I enjoy working again and I am under no pressure to sell. If I make a sale, I am paid a commission on top of my salary. My wife says this is ideal, since she knows that I enjoy being of service to my customers, but that I don't have the desire to "pound the pavement" anymore. So far, she is right.

The new owner seems very optimistic, but they have set high expectations for him. Management told him in January that they want 77 autos by the end of April, and to make bonus, he needs to produce $35,000 in financial. I'm glad I'm not in his shoes. He does not understand variable comp and he did not know that his comp could be different every month. He stated they never told him. I don't know what else they haven't told him, but I fear it could be plenty.

"The high balance sheet of leverage inherent in running a life insurance operation caused the poor performance of this group to dominate results during the credit crisis," said Drew Woodbury, analyst at independent investment research firm Morningstar Inc., in an online note.

In part, this is because life insurance plans don't sit easily within Allstate's captive agent business model. Unlike its competitors, Allstate has a network of 9,000 captive agents who exclusively sell Allstate policies and products.

"In 2005 we said this annuity business doesn't look like it's giving us the kind of returns we'd like," Tom Wilson said in a conference call with analysts last month. The company started slowing down the size of our annuity sales. Had I been prescient enough, I would have stopped it all and sold it then.

This retrospective comment is quite revealing. How many excellent, consc-
enthusiastic, professional agents were terminated as a result of his lack of vision? And how much harassment did agents have to endure because they did not, or could not, produce the life/financial numbers the company said it needed?

Like most agents, I read the agent letters that appear in this magazine and in the NAPAA newsletter. Time and again, they describe the nasty, vitriolic attacks they’ve endured at the hands of Allstate management over their life and annuity sales results.

I wonder how many agency owners have departed Allstate as a direct and consequential result of Allstate’s misguided attempt to change Allstate from being known as a casualty-only insurance company into a financial wannabe. These were the same agents who grew Allstate Insurance – a CASUALTY insurance company – into the second largest auto insurance company in America. Those agents are now retired, fired, deceased, working for other carriers, or have changed professions. It was they who developed the level of production, service and customer loyalty that were the envy of the industry.

Within Allstate management ranks, a jealous envy of the agents eventually developed. They came to resent the gross incomes of successful Allstate agents. They could not tolerate that a lowly agent could earn more money, even though the sales department would have gladly let them trade down and become an Allstate agent at a booth in a Sears store.

Unbeknownst to the agency force, a salary war had been declared by management. It really started in the 70s. By the mid 80s, Bob Sheppard, then Chairman of the Board, alluded to the “problem” obliquely during a conversation with some agent attendees at a Conference of Champions event. He suggested that Allstate needed to “reduce its cost of distribution.” He was speaking in reference to information from a study by Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc., a national (Business) Strategy consulting firm. The Neighborhood Office Agent Program and the Exclusive Agent Program were the progeny of this study. It would be difficult to find anyone who would disagree that Allstate has greatly reduced its “costs of distribution” since the rollout of those two sales programs.

Instead of shoudering the responsibility for their ineptness – especially since Allstate went public – upper management pinned the blame squarely on the agency force. They could deceive Wall Street by convincing the analysts that the older agents were compliant and content to live on the renewal income generated by their casualty books. Of course as agents, we know that renewal income is a just reward for the hard work it took to acquire the business and the hard work it takes to keep it on the books; it’s not a free lunch by any means.

It was because of the last generation of agents that Allstate grew into the second largest P&C carrier in the country. Now, because of the war it has waged on its seasoned agents, Allstate has slipped from second to third place. Today, the alarms are going off in every nook and cranny in Home Office – as if they couldn’t see this day coming. Acts of desperation: such as widening the moat to let more prospects into the best IS tiers, opening the door to operators with more accidents, and violations - including majors – and bringing on more independent agents at higher commission rates.

Perhaps what they should have done was to venerate their older, experienced agents and measured their successes with a different vision. The combination of firing thousands of agents and forcing countless others to resign under pressure may very well be the most significant contributor to the decline of Allstate Insurance Company.

After all, it was the “Allstate Vision” which committed itself, more than 20 years ago, to “Extraordinary Customer Relationships, The Allstate Employee, To Society, And Community ...”

In retrospect, talk is cheap. It is a real pity all they did was “talk the talk,” because they sure as hell didn’t “walk the walk.”

A recent article in Exclusivefocus had me thinking about the unequal compensation between agents and the effect it has on their incomes. I always thought workers should get equal pay for doing the same tasks as other workers. I also believe workers should not be discriminated against for the number of years they’ve spent working with a particular company.

I have observed that new Allstate agents are typically writing more business than agents with more than five years tenure. The “Start-up Agency Tiered Compensation Program System” provides a huge compensation advantage for new agents, paying up to 42% in commissions. When I see new agents getting paid more for the same work I do, I feel discriminated against and disadvantaged.

My agency has lost more than 1000 policies since HRM, SRM and My Work Items (MWIs) were introduced. I was fortunate not to get terminated as a result of Allstate’s lofty growth goals.

Many seasoned agents were targeted for termination because of their own keen business skills. They refused to spend marketing money to chase new business because of the poor ROI per piece of new business. Agents realized that finding new prospects was harder than finding the veritable needle in the haystack. Also, agents were quick to learn there were not enough qualified prospects in the company’s target market for all agents to make their quotas.

I find it hard to understand why long-term agents would be let go as a result of the unreasonable and unobtainable metrics and economics put upon them by Allstate. And, of course, when terminated, the TPP’d agent’s policies were used to seed new agents on the Start-up Comp plan. This seems to make no sense unless the reason was to terminate older agents in the first place.

The agent under the Start-up Comp plan is being provided a robust economic advantage that is causing many long-term agents to be compared with new agencies. Everyone, including Allstate management, knows that growth comes from smaller agencies that do not have to provide hours upon hours of customer service. It is easy to see the proof, as most of the market-leading agents are on the Start-up Comp plan; it provides these market leaders an economic advantage in new business production. I see it as discriminatory and disadvantageous to long-term agents. It’s pretty obvious
that Allstate is choosing who is going to make it and for how long. This leads me to wonder: is the agent cycle now just 4 years and that’s it?

The disparity in pay fails to consider the added individual work hours that are needed to service a larger, established book of customers. By implementing My Work Items as an office process for all agencies, Allstate has effectively given those under the Start-up Comp plan a clear advantage. Not only are the differences financial, but new hires with beefed up comp have less service work and more free time to solicit new business and are able to pay higher comp to acquisition specialists. Allstate understands this advantage and knows that new hires will produce more new business because they are blessed with very generous financial incentives and, in the absence of service work, have much more more prospecting time on their hands.

With all the hats we wear, it is difficult for established agents to stay 100% focused on new business. We have agencies to run, customer service we must provide and staff to manage. Of course new agents have staff and offices too, but it’s not the same. The volume of service work is way less, which allows the agent to focus his attention on new business acquisition.

Allstate dumped thousands of agents and now wants those of us who remain to pick up the slack by increasing our life production. Now we get to earn back the 10% they stole from us by making our PPS numbers. Now are we supposed to bend over and say thank you?

I see this as a way for the company to target long-term agents to pressure them into business practices that may not be in best interests of their clients or themselves. If you miss a few months of your PPS requirement and have low auto production, you are history.

Start-up Comp, HRM, SRM, MWI, and PPS have unequal consequences for long-term agents. It starts with unequal pay, but also affects awards, recognition and other company measurements, as well as variable comp and termination. I say, “Equal Pay for Equal Work!”

Farmers Agent Wins Big in New Mexico

Farmers Insurance Exchange agreed that Farmers had discretion to terminate the contract “at will,” regardless of whether its decision was fair. But, under New Mexico law, a company can still be liable for taking steps that would otherwise be lawful if the plaintiff proves that the decision was made with malicious intent.

After an eight-day trial, a six-person jury concluded that Farmers had in fact been motivated by the malicious desire to get rid of a senior agent -- not by legitimate concerns over his employee’s misconduct. The jury awarded $1 million in compensatory damages and an additional $2.5 million in punitive damages.

Unfortunately, few states have a law like New Mexico that allows agents to pursue compensation in the face of a 90-day termination where the company can argue that it had discretion to terminate “without cause.”

Farmers agent in New Mexico, whose contract was terminated due to misconduct by his employee, successfully sued the Farmers Insurance Group of Companies for $3.5 million. The trial judge in Beaudry vs.
**COLORADO**

**Colorado Springs**
Carl Turner
carlturner@allstate.com
719-226-0057
Asking Price: $265,000
PIF: 1,278 Premium: $1,120,000

**FLORIDA**

**Saint Cloud**
Marilyn Cochran
MaJaPa10@AOL.com
407-922-9471
Asking Price: $450,000
PIF: 1,500 Premium: $1,500,000

**INDIANA**

**New Castle**
Janet Begley
jbegley1127@att.net
765-237-8219
Asking Price: $600,000
PIF: 1,375 Premium: $1,200,000
Number of Staff: 2
L/R 51 - Retention 82.2 / 25 Yr agency

**LOUISIANA**

**West Monroe**
Amy Dunn
adunn0700@GMAIL.COM
830-739-3992
Asking Price: Contact for Price
PIF: 4,900 Premium: $4,100,000
Number of Staff: 4
30 year agency with 2 locations, best place in TX to live and raise a family, Inner Circle winner. Agent willing to stay in a commission sales position.

**MARYLAND**

**Several locations**
Ed Hogg (Rep)
ehogg9@gmail.com
703-862-8168
Asking Price: Negotiable
PIF & Premium: Call for details Seller Rep, several locations

**NEW YORK**

**Bronx**
Daniel Bosque
danielbosque@allstate.com
917-834-2326
Asking Price: $1,500,000
PIF: 4,740 Premium: $6,000,000
Number of Staff: 3
Price includes assigned risk auto business, same location 26 years

**UFTAH**

**Taylorsville/West Valley City**
Neil Whicker
NeilW@allstate.com
801-968-6852
Asking Price: $240,000
PIF: 1,175 Premium: $1,200,000
Number of Staff: 0
LR 37.9, Retention 89.7. 35 year agent retiring. Qualifies for enhanced commissions.

**VIRGINIA**

**Roanoke**
Betty Kosko
bettykosko@allstate.com
540-362-4806
Asking Price: $225,000
PIF: 1,107 Premium: $1,096,927
Number of Staff: 1.5
Good location, call for updated numbers

**Several locations**
Ed Hogg (Rep)
ehogg9@gmail.com
703-862-8168
Asking Price: Negotiable
PIF & Premium: Call for details Seller Rep, several locations

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**the NAPAA market place**

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**Exclusive focus — 61**
NAPAA is dedicated to the success of Allstate Exclusive Agency Owners and to advance the independence and entrepreneurial spirit of our members.

NAPAA’s Goals
- To provide an organization specifically tailored to benefit Allstate Exclusive Agents
- Monitor legislative and legal issues pertinent to Agents and their clients
- Maintain an Action Fund to support issues beneficial to agents and clients
- Provide reliable communications on all issues that affect Agents and the ability to call upon our members to act
- Provide Agents with a distinct voice on issues that affect them, continually exploring options and solutions
- Make tools and resources available for members in an effort to increase agency value and success.

For more information, please visit www.napaausa.org
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Farther, Faster, Together.
If you are a Texas or California insurance agent and interested in joining our team, please contact Megan Bailey at:

1.877.532.6324 [Toll Free]
megan.bailey@goosehead.com

www.goosehead.com