



Spotlight on

Young AGENTS

Levi D. Crawford, AAI

Anderson Insurance Associates in Charleston

The question I get most often is "How is someone whose main focus and background is in Information Technology able to be in insurance sales at the same time?" It is true that it is not an obvious match. In a joking way I usually give my standard I.T. answer of "You never know" because that is usually a lot easier than explaining a bunch of techno-stuff that people probably don't want to hear about anyway! But if they press on, after thinking about it seriously for a moment I usually will just say something along the lines of "just let technology work for you and not against you," because there is a lot to gain from embracing technology, especially in the insurance business.

Not knowing anyone in the insurance business growing up, I decided to pursue a degree in information technology. After graduating I did not find a job right away, so I thought if I went out and got a few IT designations it might help. I'm not sure if that really did it or if it was just luck, but shortly after I updated my resume I was contacted by a fellow looking for someone to handle IT for a local insurance agent. That local agent turned out to be Jules Anderson's agency, Anderson Insurance Associates, in Charleston. I've been with them since 2003, and I have to say I wouldn't rather be anywhere else.

When I started, Mr. Anderson told

me to do whatever I needed to make sure we had everything we needed, and that we were using the system to its full capabilities. Knowing nothing about insurance I thought the best way to understand how the system needed to be utilized was to understand a little more about insurance and the processes involved. I sat down with different folks in the office to get a feel for what they do, like servicing the accounts, documenting the system and talking to clients.

Then I started reading about insurance, so when someone was talking about an endorsement or a change request I would know what they were talking about. I figured if I was putting in all the time and effort on figuring out insurance that I might as well go ahead and get my license and be done with it. In 2004 I got licensed for Property & Casualty and went on to get my Life & Health license later that year. I think getting licensed is what closed the communication gap between all of the "insurance people" and me.

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A lot has changed in the short amount of time that I have been in the business. Insurance seems to have almost become a commodity. More and more people are going online to research insurance and shop for the best price! We now have to compete with all the major advertising campaigns of these online and 800-number direct writers spending millions of



Young Agent Levi Crawford aimed for a career in IT and ended up selling insurance along with managing the technology needs of his agency. He initially started learning about insurance to better understand the agency's needs, but ended up getting licensed as well.



dollars to drive people to them. Now a person can go online, get their own quote, bind coverage and print their policy. We often discuss in my agency how we are going to overcome the challenges of "today's consumer," and I'm sure others have also.

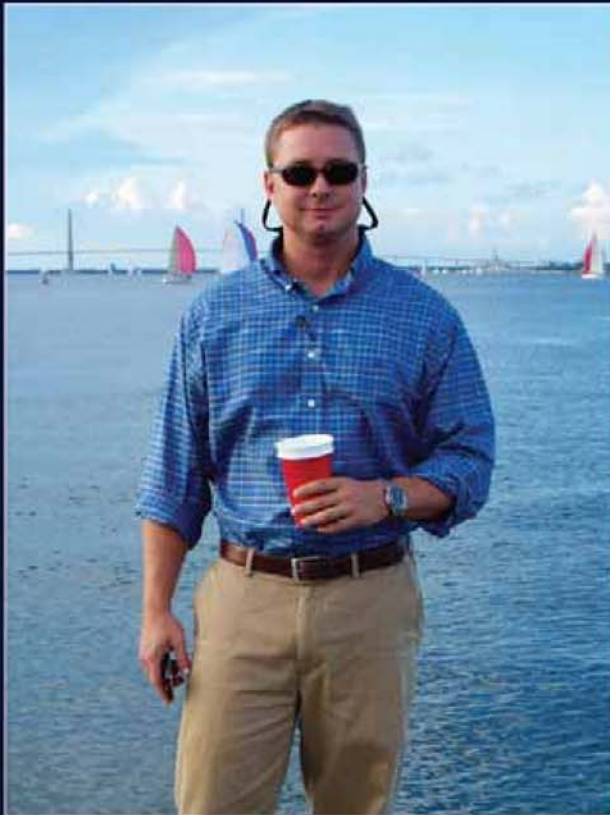
I think there are several things we can do in our agencies to help us compete with these companies. Live the Trusted Choice® branding, get behind Real Time, use tools provided by your association like Virtual University and the Virtual Risk Consultant, make sure staff is using your agency management system to its full capability and use social networking along with other tools to create/enhance your online presence.

I think the future for Young Agents will be utilizing the internet, for example social networking, using services that will automate the way you look for business and furthering the enhancement and implementation of Real Time. The independent agent now has the opportunity to be efficient when it comes to prospecting, quoting, writing and servicing business with many carriers.

Getting our agency and other agencies, companies and brokers on board with the idea of automation was one of the major reasons I got involved with the new IIABSC Technology committee. We had our first Technology Conference in Spring '08 and the 2nd annual conference last spring.

I encourage all agents, companies and brokers to come out to the next Technology Conference (May 12 in Columbia) and get behind the idea of streamlining the way we do business. If you would like to know how to get started utilizing new technologies I'm sure any of the members would be happy to help. See the Agents Technology Conference page of the web site, www.iiabsc.com (under "Events" menu), for details. I hope to see you there next spring.

If you know a Young Agent who should appear in a future Spotlight, please email to Anita Trevino at atrevino@iiabsc.com.



Young Agent and Technology Committee member Levi Crawford (Counterclockwise from left:) shows us life in the Low-country by fishing along the coast and hanging out across the Cooper River bridge, represents agents on a panel during the 2008 Technology Conference in Columbia and works a teambuilding challenge during the 2007 Young Agents Conference in Charleston.

