

The right broker is a good partner

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Our previous Tip, Pain and Suffering, talked about the torture of having the “wrong” broker. Here we’ll discuss how one plus one can equal three when you have the “right” broker.

First, let’s define right and wrong in our context – I am not talking here about competent or inept, honest or crooked. A competent, honest brokerage office can be “wrong” for your business. Unfortunately, it happens all the time. Some of the reasons include: you become too big (or too small); your growth focuses on a special niche where the broker has limited expertise; key broker staff have retired or left.

What can make a broker “right” for you? ~

- They really know your industry and other companies like you – probably your competitors. They “talk *your* talk,” and there’s a familiarity and a comfort level. Your reference calls indicate they work hard on long-term relationships.
- They are genuinely curious about you and make an effort getting to know a lot about your operations, people, goals, and financial situation.
- They are pro-active, and you hear from them regularly – not just with a “canned” newsletter, but with valuable, relevant information.
- They have strong, profitable relationships with the best insurance companies for your industry or niche.
- They have competent help and backup – other professionals who can answer questions and take charge of a problem and get it resolved.
- They take the initiative with renewals, coverage changes, and information updates – they’re “all over it,” and you don’t have to follow up or wonder.
- They provide no-hassle services you need, including certificates of insurance, auto ID cards (and these first two happen automatically before your renewal), claim management (not just reporting to your insurer), loss control oversight and perhaps even safety training, advice about leases and contracts, subcontractor coverage reviews, risk financing, etc.
- You know exactly what they are getting paid for their services, you have discussed it together, and both sides are happy with the value.

How do you get to this level of nirvana? ~

Be clear about your needs and communication preferences. Schedule meetings well in advance; invite your broker to your workplace several times a year, even if it’s just for an update meeting over a “power turkey sandwich.” Show interest. Take notes. Ask questions. Invite others to meetings – from inside or outside your organization – to help you broaden your understandings. And make a referral – that will always be remembered.

Getting the “right” broker in the first place will be the topic of our next Tip – a review of the broker selection process and how to make it work for you. Stay tuned.