

Help Your Broker Make You Look Good

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Previous Tips have discussed [Broker Basics](#) and the [Top 10 Services](#) you'll want to negotiate. Here, we'll examine what you need to do to be a great – educated and savvy – customer.

A broker needs key information to be able to get you the best coverage and price. You need to be timely and provide accurate, up-to-date information the first time. Brokers and underwriters hate “wasting” time with last-minute changes or corrections. When that happens, it's easy for them to “give up” and just give you the standard quote.

Here's a short checklist ~

The devil's in the details because contract law trumps tort law everyday in court. For example, you may not be negligent for an accident or injury, but if the contract contains a hold harmless clause you will be responsible to pay for what happened. As a business person, you are *expected* to understand – or get help. It's real hard – and expensive - to argue that you didn't get it.

- Schedule and start this process 90 days before the renewal date – your broker needs at least 60 days to do a complete job.
- Start with a strategy or planning meeting with your broker – take the initiative to set this up if they do not.
- Provide prior-year actual numbers and your estimates for the next insurance year. Your fiscal year may not match, but make your estimates based on the insurance period if you can.
- Set up a spreadsheet to accumulate these numbers – it's easy to update once it's created. Be conservative on the first two and complete on the rest!
 - Revenues or sales – 12 months, gross figures;
 - Payrolls by employee classification;
 - Values of buildings, business personal property, equipment, etc. Create an inventory sheet for these, make sure you match the values with the coverage – replacement cost or actual cash value, and update each year;
 - Updated vehicle lists and driver information;
 - Be sure to note any new locations, equipment, leases (buildings or equipment), contracts, plans, international affiliations or travel.
- Think carefully about any “incidents” that could become claims – especially with regard to coverages like Employment Practices, Directors & Officers, or Errors & Omissions liability. These “claims-made” policies require that claims or incidents be reported during current policy periods – if you don't, a claim could be denied.
- If you've had other losses – fire, water damage, auto claims or general liability –write a brief story about what you've learned, and what you've done to avoid having the same thing happen again. Insurers expect losses but get anxious when there is a frequency of claims. Show them you understand and have a vested interest in prevention.
- Finally, if you are satisfied with your broker's service, advice, attentiveness and accessibility, offer to introduce him/ her to another business colleague. A referral is golden to your on-going business relationship.

Do you have additional ideas or concerns? Let me know; I'd love to hear from you!