

Assessing an agent

Bill Smith: 'What we talk about when we talk about agents.'

Let's face it: buying insurance for your crane and rigging or heavy haul trucking operation can be confusing. Between companies, policies, coverage choices, terms, conditions, claims scenarios, legalese, loss control and risk management efforts, there's a ton (pun intended) to think about.

This is because crane and rigging insurance is a lot different than, say, your homeowner's or term life policy. Heavy construction insurance – regardless of whether it's for third or first-party coverage – is much more nuanced and complicated. So much so, in fact, that most state governments mandate that you hire an agent to represent your interests when you're buying a policy – for your own protection.

But I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, and what I truly want to focus on is this: What you should look for in an agent, and what makes an agent a good one.

Anatomy of a good agent

In the heavy construction universe, every company, situation, every need is different. Businesses are located in different parts of the country and companies work on different types of jobs. A good agent knows this, and a good agent also knows exactly how each one of these factors affects your business, and ultimately, your insurance needs.

On the flipside, an uninformed or inexperienced agent might not know exactly what's right for you. Dennis Ianovale, of ECBM Insurance Brokers & Consultants in Pennsylvania, advises buyers to beware.

"We continue to be surprised by the coverage limitations and exclusions many crane and rigging companies have in their existing policies when we review them," said Ianovale. "Far too often, it becomes clear they have been working with an

agent who provided a low-cost premium with limited coverage, leaving the insured with excessive costs when they have a claim – and a [resulting] exponential increase in premium that could have been avoided."

Kevin Forbes, also an agent at ECBM, focuses on understanding the business operations and exposures first, and then defining the coverage necessary to protect the policyholder.

"Having the experience we do within the specialized transportation and crane and rigging industries, we know what coverage terms are needed to make sure the policy you paid for will back you up when it is needed," he said.

What Ianovale and Forbes, and the rest of the ECBM team, brings to the mix is understanding – an understanding of your business, your industry, and the insurance products that will most effectively meet your needs. But understanding alone isn't enough – because agents also need to be in the "relationship management" business. They need to have good, solid relationships with insurance company underwriters so that when they submit your information for renewal, the expectation is that the underwriter receives a meticulously prepared file that's ready to quote.

Good agents develop high levels of credibility with market partners, and because of those relationships, underwriters often feel comfortable that they are getting accurate, complete and current information they can then use to build a competitive quote. Knowledge, relationships, understanding – it all factors into the experience you will have if disaster strikes and you have a large claim.

Which brings me to my next point: there should never be a time where you're left without coverage. And since I'm going to take a guess that reading insurance policies word-for-word likely isn't something you want to do, your agent should understand exactly how your policy will respond to every loss you have to the potential to encounter.

The relationship between the agent, the insured policyholder, and the insurer is really more accurately defined as a three-way partnership. And like all partnerships,

it works best when each of the parties knows the most productive ways to work together.

Dave Wittwer, of Hays Companies, one of NBIS's specialized transportation brokers, thinks about how they bring value to the insured client in each of their deals.

"We pride ourselves on timely, expert, and knowledgeable consultancy. Advising CEOs, CFOs and risk managers on a variety of risk management and insurance issues is a prime example," Wittwer said.

Wittwer's experience and knowledge in heavy construction is formidable on its own, but he also sees his relationship with NBIS, his market partner, as a value-add for clients.

True relationships

"NBIS's breadth of services and depth of knowledgeable personnel are unmatched in the industry. We collaborate with NBIS in marketing, underwriting, placement, claims management, risk management and legal resources," he said.

Likewise, Jeff Haynes, national construction practice leader for USI, cites NBIS's expertise as a reason why he enjoys working with us.

"We've always been impressed with NBIS's specialization," Haynes said.

"They're not the typical "big box" insurer.

Top Five 'must haves'

Dave Wittwer shares his Top Five Agent Must Haves:

1. Heavy construction industry knowledge and a strong commitment to the heavy construction industry.
2. Working knowledge of contractual terms such as indemnity, anti-indemnity statutes.
3. An understanding of the interplay between a construction contract and an insurance contract (policy) and the applicable endorsements.
4. Knowing which non-premium bearing endorsements can meet contractual requirements.
5. Working knowledge of how to resolve claims in a timely and appropriate manner.



THE AUTHOR

Bill Smith is executive vice president of claims and risk management for NBIS.

“When everyone’s goals are aligned, and when everyone understands the business they are in, the result is an insurance experience that works for you.”

We know that no matter what our concerns relate to—claims, underwriting, or risk management – NBIS has an industry specialist dedicated to that specific expertise.”

Haynes goes on to explain that both organizations have a “customer comes first” mentality.

“At USI, we’re committed to doing the right thing for the client every time, and NBIS supports us in that regard,” he said. “Our joint resources have been tested over time under demanding circumstances and they have always come through for our insured’s. There’s no better feeling than knowing your market partner believes and cares just as much as you do.”

Perhaps Haynes sums it up best when he talks about believing and caring. When it comes to selecting an agent, or even an insurance market for that matter, it’s important to pick one who believes and cares just as much as you do. Because



Crane and rigging companies need an insurance agent who knows their business and the risks they face.

when everyone’s goals are aligned, and when everyone understands the business they’re in, the result is an insurance experience that works for you.

When time comes to review your policy for renewal, ask questions and make sure

your agent is working for your business’ best interest.

Contact the experts at NBIS today to learn more about managing your risk the right way, 877.860.RMSS.

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