MICROSOFT PERSPECTIVES

EMPOWERING THE DIGITAL INSURER

CREATING OMNI-CHANNEL EXPERIENCES
Optimising channels to drive customer acquisition, retention and premium growth

DELIVERING INSIGHT
Liberating data to improve business performance and risk insight

ENABLING DIGITAL WORK STYLES
Driving employee efficiency and effectiveness for improved sales
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A digital transformation

We live in a world of digital experiences that have transformed the way we work, socialise and buy. Each of us is at the centre of our own connected network that includes mobile, social media, internet, location, telephone and face-to-face interactions. For insurers who embrace this new way of thinking, there are tremendous opportunities to engage customers and agents, empower employees and boost productivity. But only if they can deliver the seamless, proactive and personalised experience that customers and employees now expect anytime, anywhere and on any device. The carrier who achieves that, enabled by powerful insight and productivity tools, is the digital insurer who will shape the industry.

The digital insurer knows that in order to deliver the best results, their customers and employees need to be able to get anything done, wherever they are, on any device they choose. This is about enabling a conversation across channels, apps and devices, amongst and across colleagues, intermediaries, customers and teams. Insight is essential to that conversation. That means not only giving customers, agents and service desk staff real-time access to all the information they need, but also gaining insights from the interactions and turning those insights into the contextual and anticipatory delivery of advice and offers. The insurers who can offer personalised services through the combination of mobility, big data, and analytics will show measurable differences from their peers in underwriting performance, loss ratios, lapse rates, and churn.

Digital is transforming the world around us and it is redefining the insurance industry. On the following pages you will find insights into how insurers can leverage technology as an enabler for a collaborative, intelligent and customer-centric business. I hope you find this informative and inspirational.
Creating the digital insurer of the future

By unlocking digital experiences for customers and employees, insurers can enable unique insight and engagement

DENNIS VANDERLIP, MICROSOFT

Digital has transformed the way we work, shop and socialise. Today, customers can research their products and services before contacting sales staff; they can continue a conversation across a growing range of devices and platforms; and they share their opinions and experiences with a global audience at the touch of a fingertip. They expect the same immediacy from the businesses they deal with. In this connected, digitally-enabled environment, businesses of all kinds are re-examining every aspect of their customer engagement and operations – and insurers are in a unique position to benefit.

Many insurers are working with disparate information silos and complex networks of agents, brokers, underwriters and claims adjusters. They're also increasingly under pressure from new entrants who have none of those legacy issues and can afford to compete on a cost basis. But cost isn't everything. In this fast-moving industry, true differentiation lies in delivering a unique experience that connects staff and agents with the resources they need to put the customer at the centre. It's not simply about transacting with customers anymore; it's about attracting and engaging with them, partnering with them to achieve their goals, and making it easy for them to do business with you. That is what we mean when we discuss the digital insurer.

The digital insurer is built on three pillars: creating omni-channel experiences for customers and agents; delivering insight to producers, sales teams and agent networks; and enabling digital work styles. Putting those pillars in place enables insurers to unlock the potential of customers, employees and intermediaries.

Creating an omni-channel experience means putting the customer at the centre of a seamless, interactive environment so they can pick up a conversation on any channel they choose. By digitising interactions across all channels, including mobile applications, consumer portals, call centres and social media, you can make that experience available in the anytime, anywhere mobile environment people expect.

This presents a unique challenge for insurers. Unlike banking, where customers typically contact the corporation direct, insurance often involves a middle tier of agents, some employed by the company and some working independently. Insurers know that in order to build loyalty and increase sales, they need to treat those agents like customers too.

Insight is the key to delivering that experience. Digital interaction yields unprecedented amounts of information about your customers, but too often it is locked in silos that prevent agents and service staff seeing the full picture. Breaking down those silos to enable a 360-degree view of the customer’s relationships, products and interactions will establish the customer as the focal point of sales and marketing efforts, turning data into insight that can empower insurance carriers to price their offer correctly, assess risk, and recommend the best products for that customer.

INTRODUCTION
A digital insight system will take interactions from the agent channel, customer web and mobile channels, the service centre, existing siloed back-end systems and from marketing and social interactions, bringing them all together to create that 360-degree view. The features in this publication explain how applying these principles and making that 360-degree view available to salespeople, agents and service desk staff will create an environment that supports proactive service to customers.

Enabling digital work styles is the third key pillar of the digital insurer concept. Many insurance companies have thousands of agents, some of whom are employed by the company while others are independent – and all of them need access to key information and productivity tools, wherever they are and whatever device they’re using. Providing familiar tools that can be used on any device is essential to enabling your people to collaborate more effectively and be more productive whether they’re in the office or in the field with customers. This is about setting agents, brokers and claims adjusters free on a mobile device and empowering them with mobile applications that replicate everything they can do in the office so they can engage, support and sell to customers wherever they are, on their device of choice. And with today’s technologies, the promise is to make that one single, secure, and easily managed device that supports business applications, and serves as a unified communication device, a slate or tablet with all of the necessary product information, forms and eSignature capabilities, and a laptop or desktop replacement in one.

The digital insurer is a customer-centric, proactive and competitive organisation that delivers a unique and engaging experience to customers and agents.

“The digital insurer is a customer-centric, proactive and competitive organisation that delivers a unique and engaging experience to customers and agents”

Dennis Vanderlip is industry solutions director for worldwide insurance at Microsoft.
Putting customers at the centre

In a digitally-connected world insurers need to focus on individual customers, not siloed products – and the latest technologies are enabling them to do just that.

Today’s consumers are at the centre of their own digitally enabled network. With a smartphone or tablet to hand, their interactions might include websites, mobile apps, social media, call centres and face-to-face discussions – and at every touch point they expect the business they’re dealing with to know who they are, and to be able to pick up the conversation where they left off. For insurers, delivering that omni-channel experience is critical to engaging customers as well as enabling agents to sell more and provide better service.

“We’re seeing an evolution in the insurance industry towards customer-centricity,” says Chad Hamblin, global industry director of financial services at Microsoft Business Solutions. “Insurers have realised that they need to fight to gain and retain customers. They need to make every aspect of their business – from risk to policies, pricing and claims processing – more customer-centric and that means understanding their customers as individuals, partnering with them to help them achieve their dreams by providing better services with more options, and tracking the communications that transpire along the way.”

“Consumer expectations move fluidly from one industry to the next, so when consumers have a great omni-channel experience with one provider, they expect all providers to deliver that experience regardless of the industry,” says Erik Sandquist, managing director in Accenture’s Insurance practice and leader of the company’s Insurance Distribution and Marketing business service in North America. “Insurance has traditionally been a very transactional, low customer contact category, but insurance companies are now considering how they can become more relationship-focused, and how they can prevent and protect against losses rather than just providing indemnification when they occur.”

In an increasingly competitive market, defining a richer relationship with customers is critical to differentiation. “Customers are willing to pay for great levels of service,” says Bruce McKee, financial services industry manager at Microsoft UK. “They’re buying insurance products from non-insurance companies such as retailers that have a reputation for great customer service. They pay little attention to which company is underwriting the policy, only to the one they’re buying it from. The long-term threat is that insurers could be substituted out by those brands and in order to avoid that, they need to provide the service their customers want.”

Delivering that service means bringing together information from traditionally siloed processes to enable a seamless experience for agents, as well as customers. In an industry that includes independent agents and brokers as well as direct employees and call centre staff, insurers face the unique challenge of providing an omni-channel experience for all. Because just like consumers, an agent who sells the products of several insurers will choose to do more business with the one that makes it easy for them.
“Agents and brokers need to get electronic data and documents across as quickly as possible, with all the information required from the insured, so they can provide comparative quotes that suit the customer’s budget,” says McKee. “If the quote is too high the sale could be lost. But if the broker can have a rich conversation and gather all the information around the customer’s requirements, and can use an online portal to tweak the product to the right price point or search the market and provide comparative quotes while they’re talking to the customer, that can enable them to conclude the business there and then.”

“Creating an omni-channel experience is about thinking from a customer interaction perspective and linking different data sources so that the customer can discuss all the products they want and get the advice they need without having to be passed between different departments, wait for information to be found, or repeat themselves,” says Mark Margolis, senior technical sales manager, Microsoft Business Solutions UK.

By harnessing the latest technologies, insurers can join up the data from those systems and deliver the information, tools and service capabilities that customers and agents need, across any channel. “Customer relationship management solutions are playing a big role in omni-channel,” says Sandquist. “These solutions are helping insurers to achieve a single view across different product lines, which is especially critical if you’re a multi-line insurer that is looking to deepen customer penetration and increase retention. They are enabling insurers to look across channels and fulfil customer needs through a seamless experience.”

“Every customer’s journey is different and we can’t know which channels they’re going to use at any point,” says Mark Floisand, vice president of product marketing at Sitecore, which provides insurers with portal solutions for customers and agents. “By separating content management from presentation using a single platform, insurers can gather all the customer’s interactions with different touchpoints in real time and join the data up into individual consumer profiles. That provides a single view of the consumer that can be used to personalise content on any channel the consumer chooses to use.”

Once they have a view across channels, insurers can collect data that enables them to deliver personalised content to customers, and to serve up the tools and insights that agents need to sell better. “Even if an anonymous user is browsing a site, the links they choose will still imply what they’re interested in,” says Floisand. “The system can gather that information and surface more relevant content to that user based on what they’ve been looking at. If an individual logs into the system, they might be identified as a long-standing, profitable customer who is eligible for certain discounts. If they’re an agent or broker, their profile might give them access to certain prices and rates. All of that information contributes to an increasingly personalised user experience, with a high degree of flexibility.”
That personalised experience needs to flow seamlessly into the call centre. With an increasing amount of information at their fingertips, consumers expect more from their conversations with service desk staff and it’s imperative that those people have a 360-degree view of the customer and of the company’s products, so they can provide proactive service. “Our research has shown that 76 per cent of people have already researched the website or done a web search on their query, before they call the insurer,” says Margolis. “By the time they’re on the phone to the call centre, they already know a lot about the products they want so they’re likely to ask more difficult questions and expect increasing levels of expertise from staff. Call centre staff need insight into where the customer is in their cycle, and real-time information is critical to achieving that. Microsoft Unified Service Desk is designed to bring in information from the legacy systems that many insurers still have and provide a single view, not only of the customer but also of the different data repositories.”

The same principles apply to enabling a seamless experience for agents and brokers. By combining data from different channels and systems with familiar productivity tools such as Office 365 and SharePoint, insurers can empower field workers to access standard information and prepopulate forms, streamlining the process of identifying the right products at the right prices. “If the customer’s information is accessible in one place, you can provide a single view of the customer so the agent can see all their requirements, spot related products and create cross-selling opportunities,” says McKee. “For example, if the broker can see that a customer buys professional indemnity insurance from them but not directors’ liability insurance, they have an opportunity to open a conversation about that and create a competitive package that includes both, saving time and money for the customer. That single view of the customer, combined with access to all the ratings from insurers, is essential in enabling agents to provide those quotes quickly.”

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Anytime, anywhere access is essential to any omni-channel experience, and in a world of ubiquitous mobile connectivity that has to mean any device too. “It’s no longer good enough to build a technology and then consider how it might work on a mobile device,” says Margolis. “At Microsoft we consider the mobile use case from the outset – including any type of device such as Surface, tablets or smartphones, in or out of the office, through the cloud or the internet. Anyone might research a product in the office and then use their personal mobile during their lunch break to continue the discussion, so it’s important that your apps and websites work on any device.”

As insurers seek to interact with customers and agents through a growing range of mobile apps, Microsoft is
enabling them to achieve that inclusivity. “Windows 10 delivers the tools and applications people need on any device, and enables insurers to create their own mobile experiences,” says Margolis. “We know that insurers want to build their own apps for internal and external use, and these are a key part of the omni-channel experience that customers want, whatever device they choose to use. With Windows 10 Universal Apps, insurers can build mobile-based experiences that will work on any device. These apps are part of an omni-channel experience that extends beyond portals and websites to include mobile-specific experiences.”

Mobile capabilities are undoubtedly having an impact on the industry, but as greater capabilities develop to enable new possibilities, we are only beginning to see their potential. “Mobile is having an impact across insurance, particularly in terms of companies approaching experiences from an outside-in, customer-focused perspective,” says Sandquist. “For example, around a claim event, insurers are not just thinking about the capturing evidence of loss and being able to access proof of insurance on the mobile device. They’re also looking at how they can quickly order a tow truck and communicate when it will arrive, because somebody who needs a tow truck might be in a dangerous situation on the highway. They’re helping consumers find the nearest rental car agency and reserve their car. There are even some emerging opportunities around sensors that can recognise when an accident has occurred, and help shorten the time for help to be on its way.”

“Mobility is enabling new business models for insurers, including app-based scenarios such as telematics,” says McKee. “If a car insurance customer or prospective customer has an app that monitors their driving habits and how far they drive, that might enable them to get advice on how to reduce fuel costs, to compare their driving with that of their friends, or to get a tailored insurance product that suits their needs. But it also increases that consumer’s engagement with the insurer. Instead of communicating with the insurance company only when they buy their policy, when they claim or when they leave, they’re in contact on a daily or weekly basis. We’re typically seeing around five interactions per month on a telematics portal. That’s a level of interaction the company was not getting before, and it’s triggered by apps that are adding value. Insurers can use that information to provide offers, information and a whole digital ecosystem with other services that can be integrated, enabling the insurer to move from a product offering to a service offering that is focused on the customer.”

Insurers that enable an omni-channel environment stand not only to empower workers with insights from a growing range of systems, channels and applications, but also to provide an environment that truly engages customers and agents. The result is a business that is much greater than the sum of its parts. “Delivering an omni-channel experience enables the organisation to move away from a transactional, product-by-product connection to a relationship-driven one in which the customer is much more likely to buy – and the agent more able to sell – multiple products,” says Margolis. “In doing so, it brings the potential for new business models built on richer engagement and exceptional levels of service.”

**CASE STUDY**

**Aviva**

The UK’s largest insurer, Aviva, wanted to base its auto insurance quotes on the behaviour of individual drivers rather than industry statistics. It needed to collect telematics data from moving vehicles so it could better understand customers’ driving habits.

Deploying on-premises infrastructure was too costly and complex, so Aviva looked for a hybrid cloud-based solution. It selected Microsoft Azure to provide a flexible, highly scalable infrastructure that would integrate with its on-premises quote system, external web-based services, and applications running on mobile phones.

The company developed the Aviva Drive app, which works with users’ smartphones to collect telematics data and send it to Microsoft Azure. After 200 miles, it gives the driver a score that the quote system uses to calculate a personalised premium. It also connects to Facebook and Twitter so drivers can share scores and compete with other motorists.

Aviva can now deliver personalised quotes based on telematics data. It is gaining exposure through social media interaction, and the rapid development lifecycle enabled by Microsoft Azure empowers it to respond quickly to new technology trends.

“The agility we gain with Microsoft Azure is just what we need going forward for delivering a solution that exceeds our customers’ expectations,” says Jason Vettraino, application architect at Aviva.
Insurers are privileged to have vast amounts of customer information from online, mobile, telephone and face-to-face interactions. The insights that information can generate represent tremendous business benefits – as long as the insurer can pull that information together to create a comprehensive picture.

As today’s insurers move away from a transactional business model and refocus their strategies on differentiating customer engagement, it’s more important than ever for them to enable a full, rich picture of the customer’s relationship with the company. To achieve that, they need to provide workers with real-time information on the customer’s interactions, the products and services they’ve bought or shown interest in, and most importantly, who they are. That vision might seem to be a business basic, but it’s an area where some insurers struggle to compete. Disparate data sources and legacy siloed back-end systems, not to mention the challenges of a diverse and complex network of agents and intermediaries, can present challenges when it comes to providing a single, 360-degree view of the customer.

“Customer service suffers when carriers and their agents don’t have a single, comprehensive view of the customer,” says Dennis Vanderlip, industry solutions director for worldwide insurance at Microsoft. “Insurers work with a complex ecosystem of intermediaries and agents, and coordination between them is often not as strong as it should be, which can mean that insights about the end customer may be lost. The issue is compounded by the fact that customers want to interact with the insurer using any channel they choose. Not only do they expect to receive a consistent level of service at any time, on any channel; they also expect the person they’re dealing with to know exactly where they are in a conversation that might have started online or through social media.

Any offering that falls short of their expectations can lead to disillusionment and, ultimately, lost sales.”

To give agents and intermediaries the insight that enables exceptional levels of service, insurers need to break down information silos across the organisation and establish the customer, not the product, as the focal point of their sales and marketing efforts. “Insurers need to provide everyone with the insight they need to increase sales and improve customer engagement,” says Vanderlip. “That means managing the performance of agencies and enabling agents and brokers to manage leads, improve sales effectiveness and leverage insight so they can upsell and cross-sell. It means empowering claims adjusters and field engineers to process claims faster and conduct comprehensive inspections, and giving call centre agents the insight they need to serve customers efficiently and cross-sell additional products.”

That’s all very well, but most insurers don’t have the budget or the time to commit to replacing the systems they’ve already invested in. Nor do they want to add yet another new system to the collection they already have. The answer, says Vanderlip, is to think outside the silos. “Insurers who are open to innovation are finding efficient, intelligent ways to bring together their siloed data and provide a 360-degree view of the customer for the people who need it,” he says. “For many, a modern customer insight system holds the key to operational excellence, great customer service and long-term success.”

By implementing an insight system, insurers can take interactions from the agent channel, the customer web and mobile channels, and from the service desk, as well as data from external sources, existing siloed back-end systems,
marketing efforts and social activities, and bring them all together to form that 360-degree view of the customer. "There’s no need for complex engineering work to connect disparate systems, because people can now access the functionality and the information in their systems through an application programming interface," explains Vanderlip. "So if an insurer wants to connect to an external weather data system to understand what the weather was like at the time of a particular accident claim, they can do that."

Increasingly, insurers are turning to modern insight systems, powered by customer relationship management (CRM) solutions, to enable the experience that customers demand. “Solutions like Dynamics CRM can provide a mechanism to capture information about those customer interactions that can be then used to drive insights," says Erik Sandquist, managing director in Accenture’s Insurance practice and leader of the company’s Insurance Distribution and Marketing business service in North America. “In addition, they actually become the tool through which insights are presented to the producer or the contact centre representative, either at the point of customer interaction or to help drive campaigns and other marketing activities.”

Recent research points to the role of these technologies in delivering the experience customers demand, as well as the insights employees need. In its 2014 report, ‘Insurance CRM: Keys to Implementation’, Celent found that 90 per cent of insurers are using the technology to drive the creation of omni-channel experiences for their customers.

“For insurance companies, an omni-channel strategy involves unifying their online, mobile and contact centre channels, and directly integrating these with their core insurance systems;”

“A modern customer insight system holds the key to operational excellence, great customer service and long-term success”

DENNIS VANDERLIP, MICROSOFT
says Vanderlip. “All of this can be done through a modern insight system. From the customer’s point of view, this enables a consistent experience on any channel they choose. But key to providing that consistency is the system’s ability to give agents and intermediaries a single version of the truth about the customer they’re engaging with. By integrating an insight system with transaction, collaboration and productivity functionality through Office 365, agents and underwriters can gain a comprehensive view of the customer and their interactions across all channels — using it as a tool to gather information and centrally store it.”

For example, carriers can streamline the claims process by using solutions such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Unified Service Desk and Office 365 to deliver the insights staff need to assess, monitor and process claims quickly, provide automatic updates for the insured, find information and check progress against key performance indicators. By implementing an extended CRM system that is fed by customer interactions across contact centre, branch, customer portal, email and SMS, insurers can consolidate information to enable better insight, more effective marketing, improved sales and services, and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

“We’ve seen great results in the agent channels where both the producer and the insurer are able to align around a true single view of the customer from a product standpoint,” says Sandquist. “They can then drive insights by looking across their book of business to see what additional products or offers would be relevant to that particular insured and how specifically to message that customer, through what channel and at what point in time. Leading insurance companies have become increasingly sophisticated with respect to predictive modelling and micro-segmentation. They can get down to very specific segments of the market that have distinct profiles in terms of needs, life stage, behaviours, customer value and so on.”

“Leading insurance companies have become increasingly sophisticated with respect to predictive modelling and micro-segmentation”

ERIK SANDQUIST, Accenture
With the right technologies in place, insurers can harness data from a growing range of channels, devices and applications that are engaging customers and changing the way they do business. For example, telematics apps include gamification and assessment activities that attract existing and potential customers – and in doing so, they enable insurers to gather insights that can be used to develop new products and target audiences more effectively. "Telematics is essentially a different way for insurers to sell their products, based on actual behaviours in terms of driving, health and so on, rather than relying on traditional demographics," says Tap Haley, insurance industry director at Hitachi Solutions. "Collecting all this great data into a system that can provide true insight enables insurers to more accurately segment and target their products to prospective buyers. In terms of how this impacts the distribution channel, the data and segmentation a carrier can capture through telematics can help them to better distribute the right prospects to the right agents."

By integrating data from diverse sources such as core and supporting systems, customer interactions, social channels, mobile apps and marketing, insurers can generate insights, enable a 360-degree view of the customer and identify the leads that will help agents maximise their productivity.

Sandquist notes that enabling orchestration and cooperation between insurers and producers in the marketing domain can yield some great opportunities. "As CRM platforms have matured, a number of solution providers have really broadened their capability sets to include elements of marketing, sales and service," he says. "They are bringing those distinct functions together in a way that enables them to be better integrated. Whether it's a service event that leads to a cross-sell opportunity or an intelligence gain from a sales interaction that then drives a future marketing-driven dialogue with that customer, these are great examples of technology enabling the leveraging of insights across what historically have been distinct functions within an organisation. This is vitally important because, while agents and brokers play a very important role in sales, many of them also drive some level of marketing activity. These producers are not just sales people; they are often small business owners who need to generate demand."

The insights insurers deliver to their producers are the foundation of their future success. As increasingly sophisticated channels, technologies and apps generate richer customer interaction, it will be more important than ever to support producers with the insights that can help them achieve truly differentiating levels of sales, service and engagement.

"Having a 360-degree view of the customer is invaluable for boosting profitability and increasing productivity," Vanderlip concludes. "With all the information they need at their fingertips, agents can communicate with customers more efficiently and effectively, price up policies more easily and identify upsell or cross-sell opportunities. At the same time, they have the opportunity to develop their business by generating and tracking leads, and creating tailored offers that will capture sales."

CASE STUDY

If P&C Insurance

If P&C Insurance was formed through mergers that combined four national insurance companies, leaving business units in different countries operating somewhat independently. The company aims to standardise processes and operations as it rolls out Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online across all countries, languages and business units. By basing it all in the cloud, it will be able to increase agility and support various channels and endpoints while reducing operations and maintenance cost.

"We need to give our agents more time to provide a better customer experience," says Lars Karlsson, If P&C Senior vice president and head of IT Commercial and Private. "We can do this if they spend less time navigating through multiple complex systems just to provide a quote or set up a customer account."

If P&C is using data to move from a product-centric to a customer-centric approach throughout the business. "We need to offer clear information with no jargon so customers understand our offering and how we work with them," says Karlsson. "Our tools need to be designed to provide a set of best-practice processes so agents have answers that solve the immediate customer need."

Embracing digital self-service will also enable the company to put more control in customers’ hands. "Self-service channels will be equipped with the same best-of-class interfaces and processes," says Karlsson.
Managing a network of agents and brokers brings its own challenges. As well as staying informed on the performance of agents, insurers need to develop relationships with their strongest performers and provide the resources that will enable all agents to sell more. That’s no small feat, especially when your agents are geographically distributed, they’re using their own mobile devices and you’re competing with other carriers for their attention.

It’s a familiar challenge to Tap Haley, insurance industry director at Hitachi Solutions. “Surprisingly, a lot of carriers still struggle to achieve a 360-degree view of the agent, as well as of the insured,” he says. “Some of the carriers we’ve worked with have really struggled to understand who their key agents are, until they implemented an insight system. They don’t know which agents are doing the most business for them, how to track their agents’ communications or how to make sure their meetings with agents have real substance. That makes it very difficult for a carrier to be effective at marketing and selling to the insured. It makes them ineffective at managing how they are perceived by the agents they depend on to sell their products.”

In addition, Haley says that disconnected sales, marketing and customer services information is impacting many insurers. “If an agent is unaware of the advertising campaign a customer is referring to, that hurts their credibility and could lose the sale. It also means that insurers can’t see whether their marketing investment was worthwhile. By joining up those systems, insurers can make sure agents have up-to-date information on...
the latest campaigns, and they can track return on investment on those campaigns from lead to revenue."

"Insurance carriers are trying to stand out in a crowded market and differentiate themselves in the eyes of their customers and agents," says Chad Hamblin, global industry director, financial services at Microsoft Business Solutions. "An independent agent will not necessarily be loyal to any one insurer, and insurers are realising that they also need to treat agents like customers. This is a two-part process: insurers need to better enable the agent to sell their products and services, and they need to help the agent to develop."

Increasingly, insurers are using distributor relationship management solutions to pull together data and deliver a 360-degree view of their agents, giving them a clear picture of how they can best support them. "Carriers have a lot of data stored in different systems and the last thing they want to do is add another one," explains Haley. "But they do want to bring together all the information from their existing systems and that’s where solutions built on customer relationship management (CRM) technologies provide real strength. They act as an aggregator for all that data that is locked away in disparate systems, putting it in the hands of the people who need to act on it."

"For example, Hitachi Solutions’ CRM for Insurance solution, built on Microsoft Dynamics CRM, includes a distributor relationship management module that can capture agents’ performance such as submissions by month, premiums by month, loss ratios and hit ratios, which are all data elements that traditionally live in other systems. A territory manager can quickly identify all the agents in their territory that are above or below the stated goal for the year. They can start doing something with that data and taking action on it."

As well as ensuring that they have meaningful insight into agents’ performance, insurers need to provide agents with the information and capabilities they need when they visit their customers. Anytime, anywhere, any-device applications can drastically cut administration time and ensure that the latest information is immediately available to those who need to see it. "By implementing CRM-based distributor management solutions, customers have transformed their business from being very manual, paper-driven and inefficient to a digitised environment in which applications run within Outlook and dashboards deliver the insights managers need," says Haley. "Those carriers are now much more effective at interacting with their agents."

By connecting disparate data systems, insurers can gain the insight they need to improve the efficiency and quality of broker relationships. Those who have already implemented an insight system are illustrating how digitally-enabled distributor management can streamline operations through better knowledge transfer on customers, products and services, as well as empowering them with real-time insight into sales performance across the broker network.

"By making customer data available to brokers through familiar tools such as Outlook, and accessible on any device, insurers can provide the tools and support their agents need, enrich their relationship with customers and enable them to be more productive," concludes Hamblin. "Ultimately, carriers are able to support the channel and make it easier for agents and brokers to sell their products – and as a result, those agents and brokers are more loyal and write more business back to the company."

**CASE STUDY**

LV=Broker

LV=Broker, a division of UK friendly society Liverpool Victoria, was launched seven years ago and has a £700m turnover. It worked with Pythagoras to implement a Microsoft Dynamics CRM agency management system that salespeople can log into securely, wherever they are. Delivered through Microsoft Office products that are familiar to users, the system has enabled powerful business intelligence and maximised sales performance for the company. The average time spent on administration has been cut by 66 per cent, from 1.5 days per week to just half a day, giving salespeople an extra day to focus on selling and generating leads.

"To have one view of our relationship with a broker allows us to see improved quality of business and hence improved profitability because we can target the brokers who have profitable accounts and cross-sell other products to them," explains Phil Bunker, managing director at LV=Broker. "The system has helped us to be much more efficient, much more dynamic, and have information at our fingertips," says Michael White, director of broker strategy and performance at LV=Broker. "I feel much more informed and educated about our brokers now and the information that we have at our fingertips is absolutely priceless!"
Social media and mobility have transformed the way people connect. Every minute, millions of users across the world are sharing experiences, advice and opinions across an increasing array of social platforms and devices. Insurers who harness this trend stand to benefit from real-time intelligence and a proactive, customer-centric way of working.

Social channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide a rich seam of up-to-the-minute information about the requirements, expectations and sentiments of current and prospective customers. Interacting with consumers and tracking their interactions with the company across these channels is essential to gaining a true 360-degree view of the customer. "Insurers are starting to more aggressively use social media," says Chad Hamblin, global industry director, financial services at Microsoft Business Solutions. "They’re using it as a vehicle to interact with customers at an individual or household level, enabling personalised communication that is especially important to younger people and millennials. They’re also using it as an early warning system that can alert them to an issue or an imminent request, so they can take a proactive approach. Third, insurers are trying to better understand social sentiment and better gauge consumer feedback on anything from new products and campaigns to the brand and its competitors. In doing so, they are harnessing social media as a powerful, real-time intelligence tool."

Dennis Vanderlip, industry solutions director, worldwide insurance at Microsoft says that sophisticated software solutions are enabling insurers to gather, analyse and present.
all that information in a meaningful, actionable way. “Using solutions such as Microsoft Social Engagement and Dynamics CRM, insurers can set up a search for a product, brand or other item. The software will then monitor all the discussions around that across the different social channels and present the information on a dashboard. It automatically assigns a sentiment to each piece of information so the insurer knows whether consumers feel positively or negatively about it. It provides location insights to show where those views are being posted from, and tells you who is influencing the discussion and what language they are using.”

That insight can be put to work in many ways to monitor campaigns, identify leads and build competitive intelligence, as well as enabling staff to deliver the proactive service that is essential to a truly customer-centric business. “An insurance agent who uses these tools can gather insights about what their customers care about, their situation and the help they need right now,” says Vanderlip. “For example, an agent might search for the term ‘hail damage’ across social media. When there is an increase in negative sentiment on that subject, the agent can investigate further and identify where the posts are coming from. If they originate in an area where the agent has customers, there’s an opportunity to reach out to those who might be affected and ask what help they need. That early-stage, proactive service can enrich the relationship with the customer while helping to minimise disruption, damage and subsequent claims pay-outs.”

But engaging with consumers outside the organisation is only half the story. By adapting their internal processes to this digitally networked world, insurers can empower their people to be more productive and deliver exceptional levels of service.

“Social media is not just an external focused tool but something that can be used to improve internal collaboration,” says Hamblin. “Tools like Dynamics CRM, Yammer and SharePoint can be used to improve collaboration and communication, to connect isolated or disparate groups and departments that don’t collaborate well – in turn leading to improved productivity and allowing those groups to better serve their customers.”

The more sophisticated social media becomes, the more urgently insurers need to reflect that networked connectivity across the organisation. “The apps and services available in our personal lives – the ones that help us make new connections, engage in open discussions and discover new information – look nothing like the tools we use at work,” observes Vanderlip. “Many companies still rely on traditional hierarchies and legacy tools that leave people and information trapped in silos. Companies that are not built to respond effectively to a networked world are finding it difficult to keep up with changing customer needs and market landscapes, and in the future they will find it hard to attract and sustain the next-generation workforce.”

Leading insurers are now putting in place integrated collaboration software and business applications to enable networked connectivity and engagement, and there are already signs that this will become a key differentiator.

“We’re going to start to see separation between the insurers who are enabling this customer-centricity and those who lag behind,” says Hamblin. “If customers are not getting the level of service they want they will look elsewhere. Those insurers that are enabling a 360-degree view of the customer through collaboration and networking technologies are creating something powerful and empowering right across the business.”

### CASE STUDY

**Nationwide**

Nationwide offers a full range of insurance and financial services across the United States. When it decided to replace its intranet with an internal collaboration platform it turned to Microsoft SharePoint and Yammer, which staff were already using as a social channel. The result was SPOT, a one-stop shop where employees can work together on documents, share information and discuss ideas.

“SPOT came about from trying to engage our associates with a technology solution that was compelling for them,” says Greg Moran, SVP and CIO, IT infrastructure and operations at Nationwide. “We want to put solutions out there that our users love using, and find a way to implement them at a cost point that’s reasonable. That’s exactly what we were after with SharePoint and SPOT.”

Throughout the development, users were able to give constant feedback through Yammer to help create the platform they wanted. “This new collaboration experience is an environment created by employees for employees,” says Jeff Schumann, enterprise applications leader at Nationwide. “It’s a single space where employees can go to use Yammer and SharePoint. It’s created an environment where people go to get work done.”
Digital differentiation

Digital technologies are enabling insurers to implement a differentiating business strategy – and prepare agents to support tomorrow’s customers.

Everywhere you look, mobile devices are empowering people with anytime, anywhere connectivity that allows them to access, share and discuss information. Consumers expect the businesses they deal with to be just as connected, but for insurers, enabling digital work styles is about much more than keeping up with the latest technologies. They need to choose the right platforms and devices that will support a differentiating business strategy, within the organisation and beyond.

“All insurers have accessible mobile devices and ways to connect with clients and manage their business,” says David Chalmers, global black-belt for enterprise devices and mobility at Microsoft. “But staying ahead of the competition is not simply about providing anytime, anywhere working. Insurers need to think about the business principles they’re focusing on to differentiate themselves from the competition, and how the technologies and devices they put in the hands of their agents can support those strategic goals.”

Within that strategic picture, choosing the right technology is hugely important. “When we talk about digital devices such as tablets, smartphones and two-in-one devices like the incredible Surface Pro 4, the key question is how they can maximise productivity,” says Chalmers. “With these devices, insurers are enabling an agent who would normally go into the field with a few different devices such as a camera, a notepad, a smartphone and a rugged laptop, to collect all the information they need, take photos and notes and upload that information to the web using one or two devices. That’s why finding the right digital device to enable them to manage their business priorities is key.”

In particular, insurers face the unique challenge of ensuring that their choices work for independent agents as well as direct employees. “Decisions that the insurer makes, such as where to invest, where to build custom applications and so on, are very impactful downstream because the insurer’s partners and independent agents also need to interact with this ecosystem,” says Chalmers. “Insurers need to deliver the same robust environment to those contractors as they do to their office workers. They need to make clear the company’s business process, the applications it consumes, how to connect to its networks, which operating systems it supports and so on, and then to extend that beyond their own employees to make sure independent contractors such as claims adjusters and field agents have the ability to work in that enabled, any-device environment. Those independent contractors are free agents who work for several different companies, so insurers need to provide them with the easiest path to success.”

“Microsoft is a trusted partner with an incredible portfolio of services to help the insurance industry,” says Chalmers. “For example, being able to put client data into an Azure cloud so it can be accessed securely anytime, anywhere, is hugely important. Independent contractors can be authenticated onto that framework to access client data and you can put the best productivity tools on the planet from Microsoft – with Office365, Dynamics, Skype for Business, Power BI and more – into their hands.”

Microsoft’s ongoing focus on enterprise-level security and manageability is enabling insurers to secure their digital assets with unprecedented simplicity across all use cases. “Microsoft is the leader in this space,” says Chalmers. “We enable device-level, application-level and file-level management and security, as well as multi-factor authentication so insurers can have 100 per cent confidence that the data that is being consumed, edited and shared within their entire supply chain will not be compromised, whatever new industry regulations and security
parameters and protocols arise. Most importantly, Microsoft is not only the best platform to keep pace with today’s challenges of data security, mobile productivity and increasing client demands, but we are the strongest partner when it comes to helping clients build frameworks that can exceed the future expectations of their customers.

“Having to worry about separate management for different devices brings more complexity and more cost, and these have been key issues for insurers” explains Skand Mittal, worldwide industry lead, Mobility and Devices. “For example, many organisations have to rely on third-party software for multifactor authentication, which also impacts the end user experience because it introduces additional steps in the authentication process. But most insurers already have Windows technology, so they can manage their new Windows devices as they would their old ones. With Windows 10, multifactor authentication is core to the operating system. All the insurer needs to do is enable it depending on the type of authentication they want to deploy, whether that’s facial recognition, biometrics or a pin code sent through a mobile phone. We also include key capabilities like automatic encryption at the file level, without the user having to do anything – so if the user loses a USB stick, for example, they know that all the information on it is secure. We’re bringing PC-like management to mobile device management (MDM) software and we’re opening Windows so third parties who own MDM software can manage their mobile devices from the cloud with much more granularity than before. That will be key not only for the end user experience, but also from an enterprise capabilities, security and management point of view.”

“It’s much easier to make compliance part of a digital solution than it is with a paper solution,” says Hasan Imam, director of customer success and solutions at DocuSign. “Paper process breaks compliance: as soon as a piece of paper is printed out it’s very difficult to enforce how a person uses it and what processes they follow. DocuSign has built-in workflow capabilities and when you combine that with a leading customer relationship management system like Microsoft Dynamics CRM and policy administration solutions like Accenture Duck Creek, you can create an end-to-end process that makes compliance easier and a lot more enforceable.”

Providing secure access to information for mobile workers can eliminate the time lags associated with information that can only be accessed from the office desktop, empowering agents to sell more, work more efficiently and deliver better service to their clients. “With the Microsoft platform, agents can now manage everything in real time, right in front of the client,” says Chalmers. “Insurance companies can now grant both agents, and independent contractors, access to corporate and customer data in Azure, through a very secure dual factor authentication process. Now everyone has access to marketing brochures, policy information, claim adjustments are more. Combine secure access with real time data, then add devices and apps that they’re familiar with, and the competitive differentiators within the market start to emerge. For the insurance companies, this means all clients are getting a very

“With the Microsoft platform, agents can now manage everything in real time, right in front of the client”

DAVID CHALMERS, MICROSOFT
high level of professional quality service, whether they have a direct agent or an independent contractor assisting them.”

Enabling those levels of service and engagement is key, as every agent, whether captive or independent, is a representative of the insurer’s brand. “When an agent visits a customer with a tablet, and can access all the information and functionalities they need on the spot, they can focus on engaging with that customer and concluding their business,” says Mittal. “Many customers can’t take time out to visit their insurance provider, or to arrange multiple appointments with their agent. If they can arrange their insurance at a meeting in their own office or another location, they get a much better experience as well as enriched engagement.”

Digital processes are enabling the engagement and speed of execution these agents need to close their business more quickly and efficiently. “Agents want to be able to quickly bind a policy agreement, making sure the agreement includes all the trading documents that are required,” says Imam. “To do that, it’s critical for them to be able to send proposals and countersigned documents. In-person, online and offline digital signing capabilities, such as those provided by DocuSign, enable agents to do business digitally wherever they are, even if they have no internet access – the solution will sync with the cloud to finalise the process.”

At the claims adjusters’ end of the business, having everything on a dashboard with claims queued according to priority can streamline processes and enable fast claims resolution. “It’s important for claims adjusters to process claims as quickly as possible and to keep the insured up to date,” says Imam. “Using one device to take photos and notes, upload reports, update the insured and approve aspects of the claim such as repair estimates, accelerates that process.”

Familiarity with the devices and platforms being used is as important for the customer as it is for the agent, since both sides need to use the technology. “In an industry like insurance, which involves sensitive information, familiarity helps users to feel more secure,” says Imam. “For insurers, using a technology like DocuSign that is already familiar to 50 million people gives them confidence that their own people are more likely to adopt it.”

Bringing together familiar platforms such as Dynamics CRM, Office 365, communication and line-of-business applications, and delivering those applications on mobile devices, has the potential to change the way agents and adjusters work – and this is what Windows 10 has been designed to do. “Using Windows 10 Universal Apps to develop applications means that insurers can preconfigure one app to adjust itself according to the size of the screen and the type of device being used,” says Mittal. “So users can consume it in a consistent way across different devices without any incremental development effort from the organisation.”

“Insurers no longer need to develop an app several times for different devices,” says Chalmers. “With Windows 10 they have a development framework that enables them to build

CASE STUDY

Liberty Mutual Insurance Group

When Liberty Mutual’s management team saw that paperwork and cumbersome laptops were affecting the productivity of territory managers at its Safeco division, it set out to find a mobile device that could deliver the capabilities their mobile sales professionals needed while being easy to support. After pressure-testing several devices they chose the Microsoft Surface Pro 3.

“The Surface Pro 3 had the right chipset to power our applications, started up fast, and had a nice-size screen,” says Mark Cressey, senior vice president and general manager of IT hosting services at Liberty Mutual. “The battery lasted all day, and it delivered the power of a PC with the convenience of a tablet.”

The device fits seamlessly into the company’s Windows-based landscape, simplifying software deployment and device management while enhancing security.

Safeco agent satisfaction scores have improved since the Surface Pro 3 was introduced, and agents report that Safeco representatives are more responsive and bring more value to meetings. Back at the office, salespeople dock their devices to a docking station, monitor, and keyboard for a full desktop computer experience. In its commercial property group, Liberty Mutual has seen a 36 per cent speed-up in claims processing when field staff are equipped with the devices.
applications on the Microsoft platform, that can be leveraged ‘across screens’, meaning the application can be used on a Surface Pro 4 or a Lumia smartphone (not to mention other Microsoft OS devices). That’s making a real difference – an agent visiting a client can access everything they need and do business using their phone, tablet or two-in-one device because with Windows 10, every device can now be using the same application – a quick learning curve for the field and agents, and the productivity and efficiency goes way up.”

This is not just about making new apps available – it’s about pulling together everything agents need to make them more productive. Ease of integration is key here, bringing together information from the traditional silos that exist in insurance to enable new applications that empower insurance workers.

“Both Microsoft and DocuSign are open, Software-as-a-Service platforms,” explains Imam. “That gives us flexibility compared to the old school, on-premise software model where it’s difficult to make it work with newer applications.”

“Many insurers have legacy applications that are built on Windows and they can be made available in different form factors without the need to rewrite or rip and replace the application infrastructure,” says Mittal. “Windows tablets have the ability to run those existing line-of-business apps along with modern apps that are more touch-enabled, built for an adaptive user interface. In addition, a Windows tablet with a detachable keyboard can be both your desktop and mobile device. Devices like Surface are completely changing the way workforces connect – Surface Hub, for example, has collaboration software built in to enable a next-generation conference room where people can work together on a big screen and take notes, connect with colleagues and put together portfolios and marketing materials, wherever they are.

“These tools bring huge efficiency for the organisation because they don’t have to procure capital-intensive multiple devices for different scenarios. And it means that employees and contractors don’t have to rely on multiple devices for different use cases. Connected to back-end systems, with access to all their applications from one device, they can engage with customers or catch up with emails and administration tasks wherever they are. That enables a significant boost to productivity.”

Enabling a digital work style that supports the organisation’s strategy is critically important to insurers today, and increasingly so as they look to the future. Today’s technologies have the capacity to support a collaborative workforce well into the future – but more importantly, insurers need to make sure they can support tomorrow’s customers. “In enabling digital work styles, insurers need to have an eye on the customer,” concludes Chalmers. “It’s the customer who is increasingly more educated, more situated with technology and whose expectations of service continue to increase because of that technology. We’ve seen ten times more technological advancement in the past ten years than we did over the previous 50. Customers want to engage on the level they’re accustomed to, enabled by the technologies they want to use, and insurers need to empower their workers to keep pace with that.

“The millennials who are in high school right now operate in a vastly different environment from what the current insurance company client base looks like, and in the next ten years these millennials are going to be the potential customers that insurers are going to want to land their services with. Thus, insurance companies need to make sure their collaborative workforce is ready to support that next generation of clients, and Microsoft and its partners worldwide are here to help them achieve that.”
Empowering the digital insurer

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