



Survey Reveals Insurance Carriers' Top Gen Y, Training and Knowledge-Management Concerns Amid Talent Crisis

BEDFORD, MA, March 30, 2010 – The shortage of qualified and experienced underwriters is growing as senior underwriters retire. The issue is keeping carriers up at night and driving industry attention. [FirstBest® Systems, Inc.](#), provider of [insurance software](#) solutions that help Property & Casualty carriers write more business and write better business, conducted a survey about training and knowledge sharing during the [2010 NAMIC Commercial Lines Underwriting Seminar](#) last month. The findings reveal that few insurers have leveraged technologies that appeal to Gen Y, facilitate real-time training and collaboration for new hires and teams, and capture underwriting expertise for knowledge-sharing purposes.

A 2010 [McKinsey report](#) states that the number of insurance workers 55 or older has increased by 74 percent in the last 10 years, compared to a 45 percent increase for the overall workforce. This means 20 percent of the workforce is near retirement. The insurance industry will need to hire 25,000 new underwriters by 2014. The top challenges for P&C in attracting high-quality talent, says McKinsey, are poor reputation, lack of understanding about career opportunities and a limited pool of trained talent. As the generation gap in the makeup of industry underwriters increases, the industry will need to change the ways it captures the experience and best practices of senior underwriters and trains junior underwriters.

Of the 50 underwriters who attended the 2010 NAMIC presentation by FirstBest CTO Julian Pelenur titled *“Bridging the Gap with Collaborative Technology,”* most completed a brief open-ended survey about the talent crisis, staff development, and training. The responses show concentrations of challenges and that most use manual time-consuming methods for training and knowledge sharing. *(Underwriters could cite up to three topical responses per question.)*

FirstBest asked attendees about their **greatest concern for hiring and training new underwriters in the near term**. The most common response, offered by 35% of those surveyed, was “ongoing training, underwriting skills and knowledge sharing.” About 30% cited “finding and attracting qualified applicants” as a concern. “Generational expectations” was a concern for 15% of the underwriters surveyed and an equal amount felt “employee retention” was among their top challenges.

When asked about methods for **training and sharing best practices among team members**, “meetings” (primarily weekly) were cited by 38% of the respondents and another 38% referenced “ad hoc collaboration and information sharing.” A close third was “ongoing training and personal mentoring,” and 15% percent reported still using paper-based internal manuals. Only 20% reported using technology, such as Instant Messaging, Intranets, blogs, or email to collaborate with and educate underwriters on their teams.

“Our survey findings reveal that intranets, shared drives and other pre-web 2.0 technologies are serving as workarounds and only some carriers are using true web 2.0, collaborative technologies. Today, P&C carriers need automation, knowledge management and real-time collaboration tools such as screen sharing, alerts, chat, and workflow management,” said Julian Pelenur, CTO of FirstBest. “A combination of these approaches can transform the underwriting process and help solve these challenges in a unified, holistic manner. Companies can capture their experienced workers’ valuable knowledge, as well as make the job more exciting and attractive to the younger generation, with a better simplified, automated and modernized process that remains relevant as attitudes and expectations continue to evolve.”

About FirstBest

[FirstBest® Systems, Inc.](#) delivers [insurance software](#) solutions that help commercial-lines carriers write more business and write better business. Our solutions enable Carrier-Agent collaboration, improved underwriting efficiencies, market growth, and knowledge capture and sharing. They include an Underwriting Workstation, Agent Portal and Agency Connectivity. Our flagship product, the FirstBest UMS™, combines a next-generation [underwriting workstation](#) with FirstBest Agent™, a Web 2.0 agent portal.

Companies such as AMERISAFE, Inc., a specialty writer of workers' compensation insurance for hazardous industries, as well as ICW Group Insurance Companies, a multi-line super regional insurance company, are leveraging FirstBest insurance software to expand their book of business, improve ease-of-doing business with agents, and capture and share underwriting expertise in their organizations.

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