The Connections Project
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Identifying New Download Opportunities for Agencies

Since the introduction of ACORD-based interface, the industry has struggled to identify the overall penetration of download into the independent agency channel, as well as help agents identify the available, but unrealized carrier interfaces. In early 2013 IVANS began a project to measure the industry utilization of download, and to provide insight into areas of opportunity. The first results confirmed that ACORD and IVANS have been VERY successful in their efforts over the past 30 years. Today, over 250 carriers send over 120 million ACORD download messages to 25,000 IA agencies every year. That is amazing success for the entire industry.

Based on that insight, IVANS then turned the question around, and used data analytics to identify download opportunities available from carriers that were NOT being used by their independent agencies. The results were staggering! For all of the success in interface that IVANS initially found, IVANS also discovered over 40% of all potential downloads from carriers to their agencies were not setup for delivery. That is a lot of efficiency to be gained by agencies, and thus the IVANS Connections project was born.

Examining Agency Connections

In late 2013, IVANS began a test project with Westfield Insurance Company to roll out Activity Notes download transactions and, at the same time, provide Westfield's independent agencies with a Connection Report (example attached). The Connections Report for Westfield was a personalized company report used with agencies to identify any download connections from any of the agencies' carriers that were inactive or not "turned on" with the carrier. IVANS also began to work with agency solution providers such as NASA, Applied Systems, Vertafore and SIS, as well as the major software user groups, to provide additional agencies personalized connections reports.

Dispelling Misconceptions

The IVANS Connections Report has determined that more than 40% of the total available download connections from carriers are inactive, largely because many agencies have a misconception about the availability of download connections from their carriers.

"When we received our connections grid, it was an eye opener," said Casey Hearring, system administrator, Schultheis Agency. "I thought we were downloading EVERYTHING we possibly could. The IVANS Connections Report showed lines of business that we weren't downloading and alerted us to new downloads offered by carriers."

IVANS Connections Report is an agency's first step toward fully automating information exchange with carriers. By activating all lines of business available from carriers, an agency strengthens its carrier relationships and maximizes agency efficiency by reducing time spent on administrative tasks.

"This is such a great tool," said Christine Horne, system support manager, Bankers Insurance. "Seeing a real, tangible analysis of the download connections available to our agency has given us greater insight into our interface setups: where we are, where we want to go and what we need to do, strategically, to get there. This is a key part of leveraging interface to create greater value and efficiencies for our agency."

Maximizing Agency Efficiency

According to the ACT/AUGIE 2013 Real-Time/Download Survey, personal lines download saves almost an hour and a half per employee per day; commercial lines download saves nearly one hour per employee per day. However, there are more benefits to fully automated download than just time savings.

"Our report told me there were lines of business available from carriers that we weren't leveraging," said Debbie Miner, technical services manager and bond specialist, Henriott Group. "I was surprised to find out that we were missing commission download from a carrier whose statement has traditionally been difficult for us to manually enter into our system. One of the first things we did after learning this was to sign up for their commission download."

Agencies can begin to see the immediate benefits of turning on all available download connections by requesting a personalized IVANS Connections Report and activating on all available downloads. To request your personalized connections report, contact IVANS via email at connections@ivansinsurance.com, or register on the web at http://insight.appliedsystems.com/IVANS-Connections_Register.html.

About the author: Paul Warga is the Vice President of Product Management for IVANS Insurance Solutions, a division of Applied Systems. Paul has a wide variety of leadership experience on implementing solutions for business and technical issues across software and web-based products, using effective development methodologies.

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