# Message from the Chair — Decision-Making ... Using the Right Skills and the Right Tools

by David L. Mowrer, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, ARM, AIM, AIT

**David L. Mowrer, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, ARM, AIM, AIT,** has worked in auto claims with State Farm for 35 years. He joined State Farm after graduating from Washburn University in Topeka, Kan., with a bachelor's degree in business. Mowrer earned the CPCU designation in 1990. He has been active in the CPCU Society's Central Oklahoma Chapter, having served as president, vice president and treasurer. Mowrer was a member of the Society's Intra-Industry Committee and the Sections Web Site Task Force. He is currently serving a three-year term as chair of the Information Technology Interest Group Committee.

I hope you've engaged in some sound decision-making by concluding that the best course for your personal and professional development is by attending the CPCU Society Annual Meeting and Seminars in Orlando, Fla., Sept. 25–28. The Leadership and Career Development Track consists of seminars and workshops on communicating, coaching, motivating, mentoring and other leadership skills helpful to decision-making and problem-solving.

We have to make many decisions and solve problems every day. Many of them are routine, require little thought and are quickly made. Others require more time and thought. A few will be of such importance they will require considerable time, research and thought before a decision can be made. However, on occasion we may not have time to gather all the available information to make a fully informed decision. Some important decisions may require immediate action. In these instances, we need to be able to have the strength and willingness to make quick decisions based on the information we have.

Some of our best tools for decision-making and problem-solving lay within us. Our knowledge of the subject will aid in making a decision or solving a problem. Our wisdom will help us apply that knowledge to make the best decision or find the most correct answer. Intelligence is where we use our ability to reason, learn and understand the subject or problem. Experience can help make the decision easier. If we have been in this situation before and our previous decision was not correct, then we won't make that same decision again. If the previous decision was correct then, barring a more correct or better one, we should make the same decision again.

I read "Creativity comes to those who work, not wait,"[1] by **Harvey Mackay,** in the July 4 edition of *Tulsa World*, my local newspaper. Mackay indicates you can't wait for inspiration to come — you have to get to work, and you have to continually cultivate creativity. Some of the hints he offers include the following:

- Get inspiration from your environment.

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## What's in This Issue

# Message from the Chair — Decision-Making ... Using the Right Skills and the Right Tools

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- Question everything to try to find a better way to solve a problem.
- Look for the opposite of what you want, for example, a worst case scenario, to turn the problem around.
- Bounce your ideas off someone.
- Expect to make some mistakes.

Mackay suggests you listen to your "inner child" by not always playing it safe and instead by taking a chance. He also recommends you occasionally turn your mind off and let the subconscious work. Don't always concentrate on work or problems — take time to relax and to exercise.

I realized his ideas would not only help with creativity but could also be used in making decisions. This led me to investigate how we make decisions and the tools we use. Some decisions we allow others to make. For example, you can let your spouse or friend decide where the two of you will eat or what movie you will see.

Those who are in a position of authority, for example, management and government officials, make some decisions for us — whether we want them to or not. Even machines make decisions. For instance, GPS systems and MapQuest tell us the best route to our location and traffic lights "decide" when we can proceed through the intersection. Of course, we make the ultimate or final decisions in the above examples by obeying or ignoring them and suffering the consequences.

Complex decisions or problems that are beyond our thinking — or would take long periods of time to solve — are often turned over to computers. However, some decisions we should only make for ourselves. Each individual must make his or her own decisions concerning ethics or ethical problems and what is morally right. We should not delegate this responsibility to others or to a machine.

In searching the Internet for information for this article, I found the website "Mind Tools." It has a wealth of information on decision-making and problem-solving. There are creativity tools, problem-solving tools and decision-making techniques, such as, for example, "A Systematic Approach to Decision-Making,"[2] which includes "six steps to making an effective decision:

(1) Create a constructive environment.
(2) Generate good alternatives.
(3) Explore these alternatives.
(4) Choose the best alternative.
(5) Check your decision.
(6) Communicate your decision, and take action."

Some of the tools provided on Mind Tools include:

- "Paired Comparison Analysis" — finding the importance of different options.
- "Grid Analysis" — taking into account many factors.
- "PMI" — weighing the pros and cons.
- "Six Thinking Hats" — using different perspectives to view a decision.

Space and time do not allow me to begin to explain all the tools and information available on this website. If you want to improve your decision-making and problem-solving techniques or learn ways to increase your creativity, www.mindtools.com is one of many websites to explore.

Consider the importance of each key decision and realize that even small choices can have big results. Not making a decision is, in fact, making a decision and can show indecisiveness and lack of leadership. Give yourself adequate time, if possible; then make your decision and accept responsibility for the outcome. ■

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# Emergency Notification/Communication and Twitter?

by Brian Jilek, CPCU, ChFC, CLU, CBCP, ARM, AIAF

**Brian Jilek, CPCU, ChFC, CLU, CBCP, ARM, AIAF,** is a Certified Business Continuity Professional (CBCP), a designation conferred by DRI International. He has interests in risk management and disaster preparedness. Jilek also is an active volunteer for his local American Red Cross chapter. He may be reached at brianjilek@juno.com.

**Editor's note:** Other than personal usage, this author has no connection to Twitter. The author makes no specific recommendations for or against Twitter, and simply shares personal opinions that the service could offer beneficial functionality for professional communications. Organizations need to vet the service considerations through their appropriate legal, public relations, human relations and other organizational stakeholders. Any employees intending to use Twitter should be cognizant of organizational protocols their companies have regarding Twitter, including considerations for any employees tweeting in a professional, employee capacity and for employees tweeting purely in a personal capacity.

Wikipedia[1] describes Twitter as the micro-blogging social media tool where users "tweet" out messages of 140 characters or less to a specific audience of followers/readers. People seem to either love it or just don't get it. I've been tweeting personally since last summer. Initially, I thought, "What can one do with just 140 characters?" It turns out the answer is, "a lot."

My exploration into Twitter and its uses started by following a friend who is battling cancer. Twitter has an option that sends her tweets to my cell phone so I can stay informed about her health updates. I don't have to "pull" the information, and there's no need to review her profile continuously to see if new news is out there. Twitter can "push" the information out to me when she makes an update.

She didn't need my cell phone information; in fact, she didn't need any information about me or from me to establish this. As a Twitter user, I can "opt in" to those Twitter accounts where I want updates to reach me on my cell phone. All others simply appear in my Twitter timeline in my Web browser. By building my cell phone into my Twitter profile, I also was then able to update my Twitter real-time via text messaging from my same cell phone.

Earlier in my career, I was a business recovery coordinator (BRC) for a line of business. In that organization, this role has business continuity oversight for different operational areas of a company. Duties include facilitating business continuity acumen in operational areas; assisting areas' risk assessments and continuity planning considerations; and exercising and further enhancing business continuity plans. During that time, we had only the "good ole'" manual call-tree for emergency communications.

Children playing the "telephone game" highlight how the lines can get crossed and the communication messages can morph as they move from person to person. Also, when time is of the essence, even if the "span of contact" in the manual call-tree is very small (i.e., a given employee needing only to relay the message to a handful of other employees), by the time that employee tries contact point No. 1 and perhaps gets a voicemail, then contact point No. 2, and perhaps another voicemail, even contacting one additional person consumes valuable time.

Later, I was BRC for a different line of business in the same organization, and we had the opportunity to implement an automated communication system. It was fantastic. However, it required regular maintenance and frequent testing to work in and update all the different contact points as well as to ensure communications flowed to e-mail and cell phones as either calls or text messages, for example. Employees' contact information changes — even employees in their given assignments change. And, such automated systems come with a cost. The dollars for the company as a whole to subscribe were significant. For smaller organizations, this type of automated system would likely be cost prohibitive, and perhaps even for mid-size organizations as well.

## Does Twitter Present Some Opportunities for Organizations?

I believe Twitter presents opportunities as long as organizations consider the benefits, along with the risks, and perform their own due diligence in working through the analysis.

Twitter currently is free, which makes it a great choice for smaller and mid-sized organizations without a lot of budget to spend on emergency management. Each person setting up a Twitter account is effectively opting-in to be out there on www.twitter.com; however, Twitter

provides a privacy setting where users can designate that they are "in the public timeline" or not. This same privacy setting also permits a determination of whether any other Twitter account can simply "follow" and see an account's postings, or whether other accounts have to request access to follow (and can therefore be denied and not allowed any access).

Twitter may have its place for both "internal" organizational communications (as a secured, nonpublic account) and "external" communications that an organization wants to share with customers, stakeholders and the public (as a publicly viewable account) through two distinct Twitter accounts (one account cannot function as both private and public at the same time). Tweets can also be deleted, so a tweet posted that has lived past its needed time frame can be removed from an account's timeline. (However, the question of whether this deletion is complete or permanent from the Internet as a whole is questionable.[2]) The onus is on each Twitter account user to keep his or her communications information updated, for example, updating cell phone and/or e-mail addresses as they change to support their access. Message senders do not need recipients' contact information to send information via Twitter.

The Internet is what the Internet is, so I am not suggesting that any/all levels of private or sensitive data be shared even on a secured, nonpublic account. Also, for those Twitter accounts that are locked down, I would suggest a measure of discretion in what information is posted. That being said, high-level, broad, more generic/less sensitive-type communications surely could still provide value for connecting groups of employees, including regarding an emergency.

Twitter can also help with situational awareness. Tweets that are in the public timeline are searchable through Twitter's internal search engine and through other Internet search engines. As the Haiti earthquake unfolded early in 2010, numerous agencies tapped Twitter for real-time information.[3] As Haitians and other multinationals in Haiti personally tweeted about what they saw, where they were, what they experienced, etc., a collective picture of the Haitian crisis emerged that was unavailable through conventional media because of the loss of infrastructure. Searches don't require that the searcher have a Twitter account, simply going to the site or to a search engine and keying in the terms desired will at least generate a snapshot of the public timeline available.

All that being said, Twitter is not without its challenges, including Twitter's own availability and reliability. There have been periods (sometimes hours) where the Twitter service is completely down and unavailable.[4] At times, blocks of tweets "disappear." (Tweets over a certain period that were posted to Twitter and that were live on Twitter simply vanished — I had a block of tweets from multiple users over about a two-week period last winter that just "fell off." There were enough unique users that I'm sure all of them didn't delete their prior tweets at about the same time, and I never did hear a root cause for the vanishing tweets). Even when the service as a whole is "up," there are periods when, due to heavy usage, it is not available to multiple users — what Twitter users call the "fail whale".[5]

Any organization considering Twitter as a possible communications medium (see hypothetical scenario on Page 5) needs to have additional plans and options selected and available as a "Plan B." While Twitter is great for the flexibility it offers, companies considering it need to be aware of not only the benefits, but also its shortcomings. Twitter has attracted its share of spammers and bogus accounts, and any users ought to at least pause and consider the "trust" factor of any other Twitter account and tweeted hyperlinks and URL redirects. ■

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## A Hypothetical Use of Twitter for the Needs of ABC Office Inc., a Small Organization

The organization has already done its due diligence, determined designated Twitter usage is acceptable and outlined appropriate social media protocols for its employees. The business recovery coordinator (BRC), who in the current, pre-Twitter state of preparedness kicks off the manual call-tree, creates a Twitter account and sets the profile to "Private." The other employees are strongly encouraged to set up their own Twitter accounts, also set to "Private."
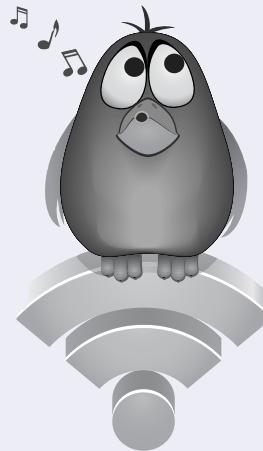
All employees with Twitter accounts "follow" the coordinator's account (and as the BRC's account is set to "Private," before each employee has any access, the BRC must accept his or her request to follow the BRC account). The employees also can choose to set notifications from that account to reach them through text messaging. Likewise, the coordinator follows the different employees' accounts, thereby ensuring their tweets appear in his or her account timeline. Any account user that has enabled a cell phone in his or her overall account is then also able to tweet "on the go," adding real-time new information without need for a computer with Internet.

An event happens (snow and ice storms have blocked off the roads until they can be cleared), and the main facility cannot be reached by car. The BRC sends a text message from his cell phone to Twitter. As Twitter posts the text to the private twitter.com account timeline, it kicks off automated notifications to those who have opted in for automatic notification from the BRC's account. The same text body is now cascaded to the other employees' cell phones.

In light of the company's considerations about "the Internet," the message is simple but meaningful, such as "office event, please see your business continuity binder. Status call-in at 22:00 CT." Employees who have received the message, but perhaps cannot make the status call-in for whatever reason, can generate their own text reply back to Twitter. "Message received, unable to call in. Will reach BRC, ETA ASAP."

Employees all receive word nearly instantaneously, and can focus on any information they can gather and provide for the situational intelligence. They also can engage their time in business continuity considerations, when previously they would still be working through their call-trees. While the status call will take place completely outside of Twitter, at least the initial emergency alert and opening crisis management communications were enabled by Twitter.

## The Institutes Announce New Elective Component for CPCU Program

Working in close cooperation with industry professionals, designees, training experts and the CPCU Society, The Institutes announced on July 7 that they have modified the CPCU program to ensure that it continues to meet the industry's needs in an ever-changing and competitive marketplace.

Effective immediately, the CPCU program will include an elective component as a part of its education requirement, which consists of four foundation courses, one elective course and three concentration courses (personal or commercial).

Individuals pursuing the CPCU designation will select one elective course from among 10 options in seven functional areas. The elective choices are as follows:

- AAI 83 — Agency Operations and Sales Management.
- AIC 34 — Workers Compensation and Managing Bodily Injury Claims.
- AIC 35 — Property Loss Adjusting.
- AIC 36 — Liability Claim Practices.
- ARe 144 — Reinsurance Principles and Practices.
- ARM 56 — Risk Financing.
- AU 65 — Commercial Underwriting: Principles and Property.
- AU 66 — Commercial Underwriting: Liability and Advanced Techniques.
- CPCU 560 — Financial Services Institutions.
- ERM 57 — Enterprise-Wide Risk Management: Developing and Implementing.

# iThink iNeed an iPad for Work

by Celeste Allen, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, FLMI

**Celeste Allen, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, FLMI,** has 28 years' experience in the insurance industry, having worked in claims, underwriting, business analysis and information technology. She currently is a manager with State Farm. Allen's leadership experiences led her to strengthen her community service participation and make a difference in the lives of young people in her community, including those at-risk. Allen also is a member of two major public service organizations. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Temple University, a master's of business administration degree from Illinois State University and a master's degree in executive leadership from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

I will confess to being bedazzled by the latest and greatest technology. And I'm becoming quite fond of the iPad for personal use, but would be really jazzed if it were available as a workplace tool.

## Features

The iPad integrated with Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 or 2007 provides the ability to securely access one's e-mail, calendar and contact information via built-in security that can encrypt data over the air. An entire Web page can be viewed in portrait or landscape orientations, and secure access to an intranet is afforded through the built-in support for Cisco IPSec VPN and SSL/TLS networking. Seventy-one thousand business applications are available, and businesses can build custom applications via participation in the iPhone Developer Enterprise Program.

## Benefits

**Tony Bradley** of *PC World* indicates that some reviewers of the device see it as having the potential to replace an "adequate" laptop and that careful review and consideration must be given to potential security limitations of its operating platform.

**Matthew Josefpwicz,** director of the insurance practice at Novarica, investigated business applicability of the iPad in the insurance industry, especially with regard to streamlining the sales process and increasing interaction between an agent and client, as well as potentially being a solution to overcome desktop maintenance and security issues.

My desk oft times appears as though the paper fairy arrived and had a very bad accident. The iPad as a tool for paperless productivity truly warms the heart of my stockpiled credenza. Instead of printing slides to take to a meeting, one could instead take the iPad and pass it around or ask attendees to cluster around it to review documents. This could lead to cost savings in an industry as paper laden as the insurance industry. Capture of signatures electronically would definitely cut down costs of printing forms for insureds and claimants to affix their signatures.

## Applications

Examples of applications available to businesses in need of a mobile business platform include the following:

- WebEx, which enables anywhere anytime attendance at meetings at no cost to the attendee and a small cost to the meeting organizer.
- Instapper Pro, which provides the ability to cache Web pages for reading at a later time.

portion of meeting attendees less engaged because they're reading e-mail and attending to a myriad of other tasks. Wilson also provides an interesting description of tablet devices in general: " … tablets are stuck between the power and utility of the notebook and the size and features of a smartphone. But they also create a middle place in terms of usability."

## iConclude

Businesses continually search for means to increase flexibility, mobility and productivity of their workforces. Perhaps consideration should be given to the adoption of the iPad as a complement to existing mobile hardware or as an alternative to laptops, especially for those who only use one to read e-mail. Companies should take a risk and launch a proof of concept to assess its value as an innovative approach to allowing employees to work anywhere any time, with just the essentials. I, of course, would be the first to line up for the test. ∎

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- Memeo Connect Reader, which provides the ability to view documents from different platforms using Google Docs.
- iWork for iPad, which consists of office productivity tools akin to Microsoft Office. iWork includes Keynote, which is more graphically appealing.

CiTrix Receiver is a free application that allows the user to run a virtual desktop, and MobileIron Sentry is another free application that enables remote tool management on an enterprise basis, including wiping devices clean, blocking services and tracking devices.

## For Some … The Jury's Still Out

For some early naysayers, the iPad is subject to being overrated and not worthy of the hype, as it is merely existing technology available on a larger screen. **Fred Wilson,** a partner at Union Square Ventures, advises that he missed the ability to multitask on the device from a personal perspective. From a business perspective, perhaps this is not a bad thing, especially since we spend a lot of time in meetings — a focused team is more efficient versus having a good

# In the Loop

by Nancy Doucette

**Nancy Doucette** is senior editor for *Rough Notes* magazine and has been associated with the insurance industry for more than 35 years. She writes extensively on technology issues.

Claims download enables agents and carriers to better serve their mutual client while increasing efficiencies and reducing expenses.

When your client has a claim, that's your opportunity to deliver on the promise you sold, isn't it?

But if the client reports the loss directly to the carrier, you might not know about that claim for several days. That could prove embarrassing if your agency calls the client to discuss the upcoming renewal of the family auto policy, only to learn that one of the vehicles was totaled days earlier, leaving the client's teenaged son seriously injured and in the hospital.

A growing number of carriers are working to speed up delivery of vital claim information to agents by offering claims download. Since the capability was unveiled in late 2007, more vendors are making it available as well.

Applied Systems was the first vendor to offer it to users of its TAM system. (See "Ready Answers" in the May 2008 issue of *Rough Notes*.) It is now available to users of Applied's Epic system as well as users of the North American Software Associates (NASA) management system. Vertafore expects to deliver it to users of AMS 360 and Sagitta in the first half of 2011.

Claims download can do more than prevent embarrassing situations such as the one mentioned earlier. Like other real time and download capabilities, claims download can boost an agency's efficiency and productivity, while enhancing customer service.

According to **Jim Jensen, CIC,** "efficiencies are king" in his three-person agency located in Indianapolis, Ind. Jensen is president and third-generation principal of A.H. Jensen & Sons Inc. Additionally, he is a member of the Download Committee for ASCnet (Applied Systems Client Network) and participates in several ACORD working groups.

"We started using claims download as soon as Applied Systems made it available," he recalls.

Currently, Indiana Insurance (a member of the Liberty Mutual Group) and Auto-Owners Insurance provide claims download to Jensen's agency. "Of the five carriers we represent, they are two of our largest carriers," he notes. The agency also just started piloting claims download for Pekin Insurance Company.

In terms of efficiencies, he says there is much less manual work for his staff thanks to claims download. The day after the carrier receives notification of the loss, Jensen's TAM system is automatically updated with a description of the loss, the claim number and adjuster assignment.

Claim payments and reserves are also reported via claims download, he says. In the past, the agency would receive a copy of the check and staff would have to manually enter the line, the amount and the payee. "Getting the payment detail via download is a real time savings," Jensen says.
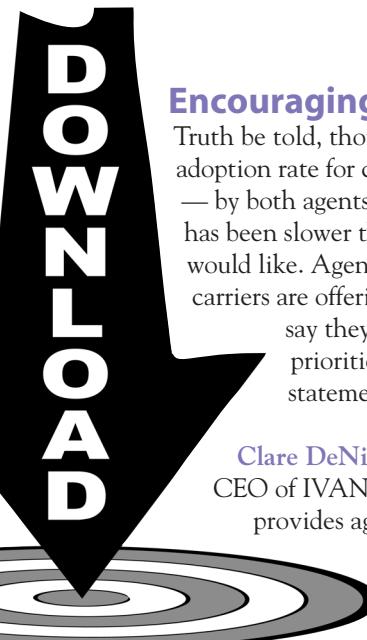
**DOWNLOAD**

## Encouraging Signs

Truth be told, though, the adoption rate for claims download — by both agents and carriers — has been slower than both factions would like. Agents say too few carriers are offering it. Carriers say they have competing priorities. Both statements are accurate.

**Clare DeNicola,** president/CEO of IVANS, which provides agency-company interface solutions to the property-casualty industry, says there are trends which suggest that's about to change.

Throughout the year, IVANS surveys its 350 P-C carrier customers as well as its 30,000 independent agent customers. In its "Carrier Automation Trends for 2010," IVANS reported three near-term goals for carriers: cut expenses, do more with less and increase efficiencies.

"Carriers are telling us that they are increasing their investments in technology initiatives that serve those needs," she reports.

Some of those investments are being made in the area of claims download. In a recent six-week period, 12 more carriers began offering the capability. "Carrier adoption of claims download has been a steady build in the last six to eight months," DeNicola says.

That aside, carriers have to decide which transactions to roll out, and when, she notes. "A lot relies on agent demand in a particular carrier base. It changes from carrier to carrier. Agents need to speak to their carriers about moving claims download closer to the top of the priorities list."

DeNicola observes that agents share the same near-term goals as the carriers and,

therefore, more are implementing claims download as well. She says that about 50 agents begin using it each month. "There is no better time for an agency to enhance its relationship with a customer than at the time of a claim. Having claim information readily available in the management system is an important first step in the effort."

She credits the industry's Real Time/ Download Campaign with raising agent awareness of the capabilities that are already part of their management systems, and the importance of taking advantage of those capabilities to service their customers better. But using these new capabilities requires change, and change isn't always readily embraced by staff.

For its part, IVANS has a menu of services available to carriers that want help in implementing claims download. "We can do the whole project for a carrier, which includes data translation, consulting services and use of our e-commerce server that allows data to flow from the carrier systems to the agency management system," she explains.

"Or if the carrier prefers to do its own translation, we would still operate as the hub in the middle," she adds.

Overall, she reiterates, "The carriers that we're working with have definite long-term plans to improve the electronic flow of information with their distribution channels."

## Plenty of Resources
This is music to the ears of Donna Barr, AIT, who was instrumental in getting an ACORD standard in place for vendors and carriers to use in their claims download development efforts. Barr owns Premier Insurance Consultants of the Treasure Coast in Palm City, Fla. She also offers insurance technology consulting and is chair of the ASCnet Download Committee.

"Claims download is my baby," she admits. "I spearheaded it through the industry from the time it was just a dream of mine to seeing Applied implement it in August 2007."

A 25-year industry veteran, Barr has been active in a variety of interface initiatives. As with policy download, claims download should be adopted by agencies as soon as their carriers make it available, she recommends.

"It's one of those transactions that offers immediate efficiency benefits, even if you have only one carrier sending it," she points out. "It's one less carrier that you need to follow up on or go to their website and pull information. Everything flows right into your Applied or NASA management system."

To find out which carriers are offering claims download, Barr suggests that interested agents contact their vendor.

She notes that there are also efficiency gains for carriers that offer claims download. "They aren't getting as many inquiry or follow-up calls from agents; they aren't processing and mailing claims-related paper," Barr says.

Barr says there are plenty of resources available for agents who are considering claims download. The "ACORD Claims Workflow Implementation Guide" is a 26-page PDF available at the ACORD website that goes through all the scenarios of a claim — whether the insured calls the carrier directly or the insured reports the claim to the agency. "It's two different workflows," she indicates, which means that the download that the carrier initiates is based on how the claim was received.

If the insured reports the claim to the agency, the agent keys in the claim detail to the agency management system. The agency either faxes, e-mails, phones or sends the loss report via real time to the carrier. The claims download would reflect only information that has changed.

If the insured reports the loss to the carrier directly and the agent is not involved, the download creates the claim in the agency management system. The agency receives a download report each morning which reflects policy and claims download activity. The report will specify the type of claim activity: claim notification, adjuster assignment, payment or closing of a claim.

Barr says the ASCnet Industry Solutions Download Subcommittee is another good resource for TAM or Epic users. "Agents can send questions to download@ascnet.org," she explains. "Committee members will review the questions and respond."

She also encourages agencies that are having difficulties with any of their download activities to communicate those concerns to the Industry Solutions Download Subcommittee. "If there are issues or problems, we want to know about them so we can address them with Applied or the carrier," Barr says.

## Steady Progress
"We're chipping away at a big iceberg," quips Angelyn Treutel, CPA. She is vice president for Treutel Insurance Agency Inc., in Bay St. Louis, Miss., and reports that the eight-person agency is gradually building the number of carriers that send claims download. She says the agency began using claims download as soon as Safeco (a member of the Liberty Mutual Group) made it available.

Since then Travelers has begun sending claims download to her agency and, she says, Progressive "is close."

Treutel adds: "Even if there's only one carrier in your agency that is offering claims download, that's a good way to start. It's a good test case. You can grow into the other carriers. And when you can see the results and the benefits of having the information automatically loaded into your system, you're better

## In the Loop

able to demonstrate it when the next carrier rep visits."

As chair of ACT (the Agents Council for Technology) and a member of the ASCnet Download Committee, Treutel is passionate about the need for greater adoption of claims download. "We agents absolutely must have this information downloaded into our systems. Some carriers will say: 'We have the information at our website.' Since independent agents write with multiple carriers, we shouldn't have to go looking for this information. Our carrier partners should send us the information for storage in our agency systems, without our needing to re-key the data.

"We inform the carriers when we receive a claim," she points out. "The carriers need to inform us when they receive a claim directly. This helps us both serve our mutual client." ■

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# *Your Information Technology Interest Group presents*

## Personal Insurance Technology — Usage-Based Auto Insurance*

**Sunday, Sept. 26 • 2:45–4:45 p.m.**

Telematics provides the auto insurance industry with the ability to gather driving-behavior data from inside a vehicle and to transmit it to an outside database. It can form the basis of improved risk-assessment models and claim-handling efficiencies in personal and commercial auto insurance. This seminar provides a discussion on the current use of telematics; potential regulatory oversight and restrictions; assumed pitfalls; and how some insurers are overcoming major obstacles to gain advantage over their competitors. Any insurance professional new to telematics technology or considering the use of telematics data in underwriting, rating, claims and agency management processes would benefit from attending this seminar.

*Previously entitled "Technological Advances of the Future — Bridging Risk and Reward for Insurers through Telematics."

**Moderator: David L. Mowrer, CPCU, CLU, ChFC,** State Farm

**Presenters: Allen Greenberg, AICP,** U.S. Department of Transportation; **Richard Hutchinson, MBA,** Progressive; **Steve McKay, J.D., MBA,** Crimson Informatics Inc.; **Christopher Sirota, CPCU,** ISO

*Co-developed with the Personal Lines Interest Group*

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# Tech Bits & Bytes

by Celeste Allen, CPCU, CLU, ChFC, FLMI

## Automobile Internet Access

**A**ra Trembly informs us in his July 8, 2010, *Insurance Networking News* blog about respondents to a Consumer Electronics Association report and their desire for in-car Internet access (68 percent respondents — 35 years of age or less). Cadillac rolled out Internet access with a wireless Internet option in its CTS Sports sedan in April 2010 in the U.S., while BMW is offering same in its BMWs in Australia.

In January 2010, Intel and Google showcased 10-inch "infotainment systems" at the Consumer Electronics Show. Audi is slated to offer services accessible while the vehicle is in motion this fall, while Jaguar is developing dual functioning access — voice activated with screens for the driver and movies for the front-seat passenger. While this may appear to be a cool thing for those who crave constant and immediate Internet access, think of the implications in terms of the potential for an increased number of accidents due to distractions. The price we pay for distractions may far outweigh the price for cool. We are interested in hearing your thoughts on the matter.

## Social Media

### Digital Marketing

Craig Beattie noted in his July 15 *Insurance Networking News* blog that a few companies are foregoing traditional e-mail marketing campaigns in favor of using social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Celent, a research and consulting firm focused on the application of information technology in the global financial services industry, is going this route.

Celent conducted a digital marketing survey of insurers regarding their customers' use of digital tools within the next three years. The projections are as follows:

- Forty-five percent will use digital tools to become aware of new products.
- Sixty percent will use them to search for information.
- Forty-three percent will use them for comparing prices.
- Thirty-two percent will use them to buy products.
- Forty-four percent will use them for services.

Catherine Stagg-Macey, author of the Celent report, notes that despite the "cool factor" of digital tools, metrics surrounding these tools must be business driven and address their value of increasing revenue, efficiency and customer loyalty.

## New Sites

Just when I thought I was pretty savvy about the most current social networking sites, my eyes are opened to yet a slew of new (or enhanced) ones, a few of which are featured here — test your knowledge.

- Foursquare — accessible via mobile devices, this site lets you know where you are, lets you know of nearby places of interest, and lets you broadcast your location to your friends — plus you can garner game points by checking in. Two million users are noted so far.

- Google Me — rumor or fact? Several blogs reference the potential release of a new Google social networking site. Google is no stranger to launching social networking sites, but has yet to launch one to rival the likes of Facebook or MySpace. In February 2010, Google launched Buzz to compete with Twitter but ran into privacy issues surrounding e-mail integration; and prior to that it lost a bid to obtain a portion of Facebook. Perhaps this new potential launch will result in a successful super social networking site soon, as failure can serve as a very fruitful foundation for success.

- LinkedIn — new enhancements to LinkedIn groups were recently added. They include features such as a new way of experiencing groups; a new in-box; LinkedIn connection with Twitter; and LinkedIn for BlackBerry.

- Yelp — with 11 million users so far, provides reviews on a large database of shops, hotels, physicians, museums (all replete with directions, hours of operation, phone numbers, etc.). Good info for road warriors!

## Mobile Applications

Microsoft's Windows Phone 7 System is an attempt to compete with its rivals Google and Apple, so Microsoft is pulling out the big incentive guns in order to lure developers to develop applications for phones that use its mobile operating system. This is a task that looms large, considering that Apple has 225,000 apps for the iPhone and Google has 65,000 apps for the Android. Nonetheless, Microsoft's incentives include cash, funds to assist with development and revenue guarantees

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with outlays potentially significantly larger than outlays for development of prior versions of its mobile operating system. ■

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