

Own the Future

By Tom Barnes, CPCU

Current economic conditions dictate that our thoughts change, and our vision become sharper and more focused in order to have continued success as an organization. The recruiting of new CPCU candidates and recruiting of new employees by the insurance industry have a unique parallel. The most successful are the entities that engage these recruits and show the value of the relationship between the person and the entity. So how do we get there, and are we prepared for the journey? It is always good to know where you are at before you chart a course for where you are going. It is hard to get directions from Map Quest if you do not enter your starting point. In order to understand where we are at we must ask some questions. Ask people why they are not interested in becoming a CPCU? What barriers are there causing you not to consider being a CPCU? Survey the folks that are not involved to gain insight into their thought process. Surveying would allow the opportunity to gain valuable information around the issues and thought processes of people not involved in CPCU. The survey should include colleges with insurance studies as well as those already employed in the industry. The survey alone should provide solutions, or even eliminate areas that may have been perceived as problem areas and possibly re-direct some of the current efforts to make them more effective.

Which companies are most successful in marketing CPCU to their employee base? This view should not look at only the companies with the most CPCU's, but should look at the companies that have the highest percentage CPCU's. How do they reach out to their employees, and what is it they are doing to place emphasis on CPCU? Easily could be done with a survey, or by reaching out to their leadership. Understand generational attitudes and differences and the impact this may be having with recruitment. How does a Gen Y view CPCU as compared to a Baby Boomer? How are we appealing to the next generation? How do Baby Boomers relate the value of CPCU to Gen Y's or Gen X'ers? What are we doing to build relationships that these different generations value?

Communication takes on so many forms in today's world of social media that the message often gets lost because we have limited the ways we

communicate. This is especially true with our newest generation of people. Have we maximized the value of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media to message the value of CPCU to one's future? How do we build relationships in this new world of social media? Have we asked people their perception of our message? Have we asked about the effectiveness of our communications? Yes, we have changed, but are the changes good? What do the folks we are recruiting think about our message? Are we reaching a diverse group of people through our communications?

Education is another component that is essential to recruiting CPCU's. The connection with college credits and the use toward credit in MBA programs is a great way to connect some people to the value, but what other areas are we missing? I think that there is a potential to start with high school students that are looking at their future? Can we build relationships with this group and assist them in owning the future. This is an opportunity to increase awareness early, and also to peak interest in insurance industry employment opportunities.

The economy and the future can be filled with anxiety for some, and opportunity for others. Those of us with our CPCU should be advocates of our industry and leaders in our communities to help others see the fulfillment of their dreams by "Owning the Future" and assisting people in seeing the opportunities available through being a CPCU. Our world is one where the ever present question of "What's in it for me" is being asked by many people. We should help them answer this question by helping them "Own The Future".

A colleague recently shared with me their view on being a CPCU as follows: "There are people that work in the insurance industry and there are people that have made the commitment to be a CPCU, these people are committed to being an insurance professional versus an insurance employee." How do we get people there? How do we move them to action? How do we understand those we are trying to reach? What message do we send them? How do we educate them? The answer is building relationships and engaging these groups in a program called "Own The Future".

Let's start with the high schoolers. Many high school students are now earning college credits during their junior and senior years in high school. There is an opportunity to reach out to this group that could have a significant impact on the future of the insurance industry and CPCU by talking about the value of being an insurance professional, and competing for jobs in the future. Chapters could develop high school mentoring programs, and build relationships that assist the future insurance professionals of tomorrow gain better understanding of what it is like to "Own The Future". A mentoring program through the chapters could effectively gain the diversity needed for success into the future. Development of career path brochures and videos

that could be used with social media could be a great marketing tool. This is perhaps an opportunity like none other given our economic times and the use of social media in society today.

How are we doing in colleges and universities? Do we have the visibility we want? Do these folks understand the impact a CPCU designation can have on the course of their careers, or even getting in the door for an interview? Imagine what potential employers would think if their candidates possessed a CPCU designation when they presented their resumes? While there are some colleges that recognize the value, are we available to all schools that have business courses? What if we conducted "Own The Future" presentations on college campuses and discussed the value of CPCU in the industry. The presentation could be in Power Point format with speaker notes for any CPCU to utilize. This could be placed on You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites.

Our current industry agents and employees, for the most part, know about CPCU, but the competitive climate for jobs and positions today is such that a CPCU designation can be the difference maker. I often refer to CPCU as a great insulator, as the commitment and effort needed to obtain the designation speak to great lengths of an individual's knowledge and professionalism when there are layoffs or cuts in the workforce. How do you distinguish yourself from others, CPCU offers the best way to do this with the advantage of keeping current in news and information, as well as a potentially huge network of fellow CPCU designees.

Leveraging social media to present our message is crucial to our future. Each chapter could utilize Facebook and Twitter to further extend the message of "Own The Future". Chapters could be a core to reaching out to high school students, college campuses, and co-workers.

The opportunity is abundant, the time is now. Our vision should lead us, our focus should be sharp. People want to learn, to be successful, and to be the best they can be. If we reach out to the future industry professionals, if we are more visible on college campuses, if we show our peers that we own the future, then we can ultimately build relationships that assist us in engaging others in owning the future.

This solution does not have one huge aspect that solves our question, but looks at one theme and many combined features to make this a successful solution. This solution will take our combined efforts to be successful; this is what being a CPCU is about. Rallying to an effort, using our combined skills and energy to conquer a barrier, having the commitment and dedication to make this a reality. Are you ready to climb this mountain? Do you own "our" future?