



Agents give insurance cos. higher scores in PIA Company Performance Survey

October 1, 2010

GLENMONT, N.Y.—Insurance agents in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and New Hampshire gave higher performance ratings to insurance companies in the 2010 PIA *Company Performance Survey*. Compared to last year, carriers earned higher performance scores in nearly every area. More than half of the companies that were rated in both years' studies earned better scores in 2010: 55 percent—higher score; 36 percent—lower score; and 9 percent—same score.

The Professional Insurance Agents of Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey and New York surveyed agents in each of the four states. Nearly 1,000 agents rated, on average, about seven companies each. Agents also commented on the companies' major strengths and improvement needs.

"We credit some of the 2010 improvement to the fact that, starting last year, we changed the design of the survey and the reports it provides. We now can give insurance companies much more information based on their survey results," said Donna Chiapperino, president of PIANY.

"Companies can ask for more than just their performance scores. They can see graphically how their scores compare to other companies in the same market. They'll also see their agents' comments, as well as how the type of comments they receive compare to a profile for all the comments in the survey as a whole," according to Donna M. Cunningham, CPIA, president of PIANJ. "We also tell them which of our 20 performance items are most important to agents, and show how well their execution aligns with agents' top priorities."

In 2010, 81 insurers (up from 77 last year) were rated by agents in one or more states. (This total includes separate business units for commercial and personal lines for many of the multi-line insurers.) Agents rate each company on 20 performance items using a scale of 1 to 10, for a maximum possible score of 200.

Compared to 2009, this year's results produced a higher overall average performance score per item (7.5 versus 7.4 out of 10). Companies earned a higher overall average total score (150 versus 148, out of 200). Also, a higher percentage of agents' comments were positive this year (55 percent versus 54 percent).

Seventeen of the survey's 20 performance items showed an up-tick in their 2010 average score, while no items declined. Three items stayed the same.

Goals for the PIA *Company Performance*, now in its ninth year in Connecticut; its eighth year in New York; its sixth year in New Jersey; and its fourth year in New Hampshire, include: publish industry information on agent-company trends; provide companies feedback based on their own agents' responses; offer PIA members information on their companies' performance; and recognize company excellence in meeting agents' business needs.

Agents' top priority sees big gain

"As part of a research upgrade for 2009, PIA tested 35 potential performance items for their 'importance' to agents," said Howard S. Olderman, president of PIACT. "This year PIA continues to use the data to determine how companies rank, regarding the key issues that affect agents' relationships with their carriers."

Companies' average score for agents' highest priority, "Adjusts claims fairly," rose by 0.2 in this year's survey (8.0 versus 7.8 in 2009). "Download works well" also shows one the survey's biggest improvements (to 7.2, versus 7.0).

"PIA supports the Real Time and Download Campaign, an all-industry effort spearheaded by AUGIE," said Lisa Nolan, CPCU, president of PIANH. "Better download scores proclaim great news for the campaign and the professional independent agency system."

In addition to the individual reports available on request to PIA member companies, PIA member agents may request information on performance of companies they represent, and the October editions of the associations' *PIA magazine* contain state-specific results, including the top-performing companies for each of the survey's 20 items.

PIACT, PIANH, PIANJ and PIANY are trade associations representing professional, independent insurance agencies, brokerages and their employees throughout the state.