INSURANCE NETWORKS SPECIAL SECTION

9th Annual Meeting Agenda

MONDAY, JANUARY 26

1 - 5 PM	**Registration, Networking Lounge Opens, Trade Show Opens**
1 - 4 PM	Dedicated Business Development Time
4 - 5 PM	**Opening General Session & Keynote Presentation:** *It's Your Ship, Mike Abrashoff, Former Commander USS Benfold and Author*
5 - 6:30 PM	**Welcome Reception**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27

7:30 AM	**Networking Breakfast, Registration, Trade Show Opens**
9 - 10:30 AM	**General Session:** *State of the Insurance Networks Alliance* **Industry Presentation:** *Navigating the E&S Market - Strategic Insights and Operational Solutions for Networks, Tim Turner, CEO, Ryan Specialty*
11 AM	Dedicated Business Development Time
12 PM	Networking Lunch
1:30 - 4:00 PM	Dedicated Business Development Time
4 - 5 PM	**Workshop:** *Data-Driven Decisions: What to Measure and Why it Matters*
5 - 6:30 PM	**Networking Reception**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

7:30 AM	**Networking Breakfast**
9 - 10 AM	**Presentation:** *How Insurance Agency Networks Can Help Their Members Identify New Business Niches*
10 AM - 12 PM	Networking and Business Development area available

MASTERING THE INDEPENDENT AGENT MINDSET: KEYS TO LEADERSHIP, GROWTH, & SUCCESS

Independent agent success goes beyond sales—it's about adopting the right mindset to lead and grow your agency. Many insurance networks focus on you being a successful producer, because you're only a producer for them as opposed to your own agency owner. At ASNOA, we focus on enabling you to be a successful owner and building your legacy. Doing this requires a different toolset and mindset than being a successful producer; different hurdles exist. Lets break down some of those differences and how you can work towards bringing your agency to the next level.

Step 1: Embracing a long-term growth mindset

A long-term growth mindset is the foundation for long-term success. It's not just about sales in the moment, it's about finding sustainable ways to grow your agency that don't require you being "locked in" 24/7, 365 days a year. It's about finding ways to fail-proof your agency so that carrier changes and industry changes don't topple everything you've built.

Staying on top of industry and carrier changes. This can involve regularly attending industry-related workshops, webinars, and conferences. Carrier and industry webinars might not be the most exciting, but they often are breaking points for new changes in coverage, rates, or more. These help you plan accordingly for remarkets and renewals before they become problems for you and your service team.

Developing resilience. Accept that setbacks and failures are part of growth. Sometimes industry changes are going to hurt the bottom line, but almost nobody has growth lines to go up every single month. Long-term growth will always include making adjustments, making changes, and approaching these with a collected approach.

Step 2: Leveraging peer collaboration and mentorship

No independent agent succeeds in isolation. Surrounding yourself with like-minded professionals can provide invaluable insights that help you think strategically and lead your agency with long-term vision. Here are some ways to do just that.

Participate in industry associations and conferences: Organizations like the Big "I" (Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America), PIA (Professional Insurance Agents), and local insurance groups offer networking and leadership training. Some networks like ASNOA even host their own Peer-to-Peer groups, Conferences, and VIP Events.

Seek out mentorship and coaching: Connecting with an experienced insurance agency owner can provide valuable guidance on scaling an agency. A mentor can help identify blind spots, offer leadership strategies, and share personal experiences of transitioning from producer to CEO. ASNOA has a whole program for mentorship, called Peer To Peer, which helps connect you with successful agents.

Step 3: Utilizing technology for efficiency and growth

Technology is revolutionizing the insurance industry, and agencies that leverage it effectively can gain a competitive edge. Key areas to focus on include:

CRM and automation: A CRM like InsuredMine, Hubspot, or Zoho CRM can help track leads, automate follow-ups, and manage client relationships. Automating reminders for policy renewals and client check-ins improves retention and customer satisfaction. Though it's not a good idea to automate all of your servicing, you still want to ensure that those touchpoints get started for you.

Digital marketing tools: Client self-service portals let policyholders manage accounts, file claims, and access documents online. Our discounted partnerships with vendors like Canopy Connect, Back9, and others help make every part of the sales process easier for your team and clients. Social media automation tools can schedule and manage content effortlessly. A big part of growth is ensuring that the leads keep coming in, and you don't have to rely on cold-calls forever.

Step 4: Taking charge of finances and profitability

Taking charge of finances and profitability is a critical step for independent agents transitioning from a producer mindset to a CEO mindset. Instead of focusing solely on selling policies, successful owners prioritize financial management, long-term profitability, and sustainable growth.

Track and analyze key financial metrics: Break down income sources (commissions, fees, renewals, etc.) to identify growth opportunities. Many agents leave a lot of opportunities in their books by focusing on gathering new clients, instead of cross-selling and optimizing the clients they have. Having the right reporting and analytics can help you stay on top of all of these numbers and are worth investing.

Diversify revenue streams: Expand into niche markets like excess & surplus (E&S) lines, cyber liability, or business insurance. Offer additional services like risk assessments or policy audits for consulting fees.

Step 5: Building a high-performance team

Lastly, instead of handling everything yourself, every successful agency will need to build a team. For an agency owner, your agency will only be as good as the team that runs and represents it, and is also key to eventually being able to retire.

Define your agency's vision and core values: Establish a clear mission and set of values that guide decision-making. Communicate this vision consistently to ensure team members alignment. Business models like EOS help you form sustainable plans to create not just an agency, but a company.

Hire strategically for growth: Hire individuals who share your agency's culture and long-term goals, not just good salesmen. If you're confident in yourself and your sales team, then start Identify roles that will improve efficiency, like customer service reps and account managers who can keep your retention high. Having other roles like digital marketers, office managers, or even developers can help take your agency to a new level also.

Final Thoughts

At ASNOA, our goal is to enable you to grow your agency and build your legacy, which is why we offer support for you to do exactly that. Between our ongoing training for you and your staff, discounted solutions for industry-leading software, and collaboration through every stage of your growth, we enable you unlike anyone else. Don't settle for anything less than the legacy you've always dreamed of. ■


Every network wants to show you their *numbers*. They have more carriers, more agents, more premium.
...Yeah, and there are more seats in economy than there are in first class.
Don't settle for big — give yourself ***better.***
ASNOA®
The Independent Insurance Network for agents reaching above the rest. Talk to us to start your journey.
asnoa.com/firstclass
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(630) 908-4246

THE KEY DYNAMICS THAT DRIVE VALUE IN AN INSURANCE AGENCY

When insurance agency owners think of the value of their company, they most often think of it in terms of "What will it be worth when I sell it?" But most agency owners don't launch (or run) their business with an exit strategy in mind. The fact is, most owners don't consider how to create value until they're thinking of selling.

But an agency is likely the owner's largest asset, and its value impacts virtually every aspect of the owner's life. Even if a sale isn't imminent, understanding how to build value in an agency can help guide capital allocation, inform strategy, and support buyouts.

Ultimately, an agency's value is more than a number. It's a lens through which an owner can assess and improve the business, which then further increases value.

What buyers really look for

A standard multiple of revenues is no longer a legitimate guideline for valuation. Strategic buyers in the insurance M&A space are now evaluating the sustainability, scalability and risk profile of an agency. Here are the primary dynamics that contribute to value beyond financials:

1. Strong leadership and talent bench—with ongoing adoption of automation

A deep and balanced talent pool is essential, as is a focus on incorporating tech efficiencies. Agencies with aging producer-profiles, no clear succession plan, and outdated platforms are less valued than those that:

- Invest in recruiting and retaining top talent
- Invest in the right technologies
- Have compensation structures that encourage talent growth
- Demonstrate leadership continuity and development

2. Diversified lines with organic growth among multiple carriers

Revenue concentration is a red flag, as is growth that results primarily from "hard market" rate increases. Agencies with a large portion of income tied to a small client base, aging clientele, a single line and/or concentration among a few carriers may struggle to sustain growth. Value is enhanced by:

- A balanced client mix
- Multiple revenue sources
- Multiple carriers
- Demonstrable organic growth

3. The inclusion of a niche focus

Agencies that serve specific markets or client segments—whether geographic, demographic, or industry-based—are often more attractive. Specialization signals expertise, loyalty, and pricing power.

4. Institutionalized client relationships

If most client relationships hinge on the owner or a few key advisors, the agency faces "key person" risk. Buyers want to see:

- Distributed client relationships across the team
- Systems and processes that ensure continuity
- A scalable service model

Valuation as the basis for better decisions

While financial metrics like EBITDA and revenue are foundational, they don't tell the whole story. Two businesses with similar financials can have vastly different market values depending on all the factors listed above—and more. Owners who regularly assess the value of their agency not only know their company's worth but gain insights into the areas that are strong as well as those that can be strengthened.

FirstChoice, a MarshBerry Company

FirstChoice is your go-to resource to build agency value through our investments in carrier relationships, increased revenue, education, and technology. Learn more about FirstChoice growth solutions (marshberry.com/solutions/aggregation/about-firstchoice) if you are not already a member and are interested in the nation's number one agency partner. ■

Keith Captain, President, FirstChoice, a MarshBerry Company

Keith Captain is President of FirstChoice, a MarshBerry Company. Keith brings his experience as a leader in the insurance industry where he builds strong and effective relationships with agents, carriers, and strategic partners. He's committed to helping agencies increase revenue through education, strategic planning, and leveraging technology.

Keith Captain
President
FirstChoice, A MarshBerry Company

FIRSTCHOICE
A MARSHBERRY COMPANY

The Only Choice for **Growth-Minded** Agencies

#1
Top Agency Partnership as Recognized by *Insurance Journal*

715+
Members Across 43 States & District of Columbia

$19.1B+
in Agency Controlled Property & Casualty Premium

90+
Personal Lines, Commercial Lines and E&S Carriers

FirstChoice, a MarshBerry Company, caters to insurance agency owners who want to create a path forward through strategic planning, technology enablement, market access, and education & resources to build their business.

Recognized as the #1 top agency partner by *Insurance Journal*, FirstChoice is available nationwide.

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MARSHBERRY
LEARN. IMPROVE. REALIZE.

The Evolution of the First Agency Network

Changing our name to Ironpeak® reflects our 45-year evolution from a small network of like-minded agencies to a national powerhouse with over 3,000 Members approaching $4 billion in written premium with our carrier partners.

An Independent Network for Independent Agents

The story began over four decades ago with a simple mission: help independent agencies become stronger and grow profitably, without giving up their independence.

"When we started, we were focused on solving a problem that still exists today—how can local agencies compete without losing control? We built a model based on trust, shared growth and strong carrier relationships," says Matt Ward, managing partner and executive vice president of Ironpeak.

Local Experience and Dedicated Service

Today, Ironpeak is stronger than ever.

- 21 years of record profit-sharing distributions, including $100 million earned this year!
- Over 55 dedicated advisors serving 48 states.
- Over 26,000 Member Agencies and carrier consultations each year.
- A no-equity, no-interference model.
- Market access and bonus opportunities.

"We've never lost sight of what makes this work: being close to our Members, listening to what they need and offering real solutions. Our team is deeply embedded in the market." -Matt Ward

Strategic, Data-Driven and Independent, Always

While the fundamentals remain, Ironpeak is evolving to meet new challenges with a future-oriented approach—one rooted in strategic planning, data analytics and long-term advisory support.

Key initiatives moving forward include:

- Enhanced business intelligence tools to identify growth opportunities.
- Advisory services for perpetuation and expansion planning.
- Stronger carrier partnerships built around performance and profitability.

Ironpeak has also taken deliberate steps to remain independent and family-owned, ensuring that the focus remains squarely on serving independent agencies — not just today but for generations to come.

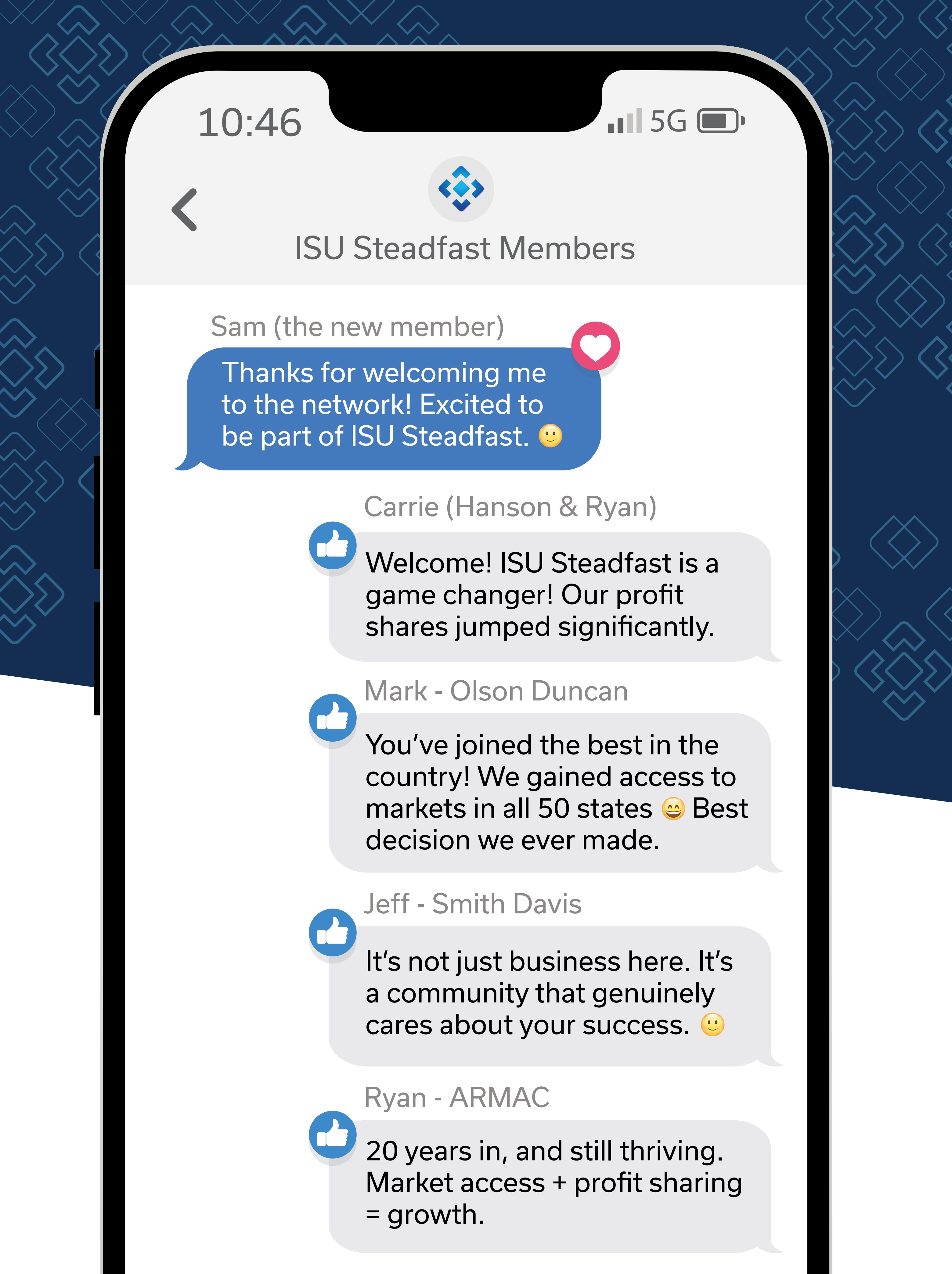
In a time when many networks are consolidating or pushing equity-sharing models, Ironpeak stands out for its commitment to agency independence, local presence and personalized support.

"We're proud of our past, confident in our present and excited about our future," Ward says. "Much has changed over the past 45 years, but our mission hasn't. We're still here to help independent insurance agencies reach their peak."

Matt Ward
Managing Partner and Executive Vice President of Ironpeak.

With deep roots, a powerful present, and a vision built for tomorrow, Ironpeak remains exactly what independent agencies need: a partner who evolves but never forgets where it came from.

Learn more at Ironpeak.com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5G
ISU Steadfast Members
Sam (the new member)
Thanks for welcoming me to the network! Excited to be part of ISU Steadfast. 🙂
Carrie (Hanson & Ryan)
Welcome! ISU Steadfast is a game changer! Our profit shares jumped significantly.
Mark - Olson Duncan
You've joined the best in the country! We gained access to markets in all 50 states 😄 Best decision we ever made.
Jeff - Smith Davis
It's not just business here. It's a community that genuinely cares about your success. 🙂
Ryan - ARMAC
20 years in, and still thriving. Market access + profit sharing = growth.

ISU Steadfast®

Learn more and become a member at www.isusteadfast.com


The Agent Alliance
SIAA®

STRATEGIC AGENCY PARTNERS

"Guiding an Independent Agency's Evolution & Prioritizing Human Connection"

For Independent insurance agencies, success today means more than writing policies. It means mastering technology, controlling costs, developing talent, and competing with larger firms—all while maintaining the personal relationships that define the business. Strategic Agency Partners (SAP) understands this balancing act. Through a consultative approach, operational support, and access to cutting-edge technology, SAP enables agencies to strengthen their independence and elevate the human touch that sets them apart.

Access to New Technology, Without Losing the Human Touch

Strong technology is no longer a "nice-to-have"—it's essential. Yet too often, tech becomes a distraction rather than an enabler. Agents are bombarded with companies selling them the "next best thing" for insurance processes, without giving them the structure to make sure success is attainable. SAP's model addresses this by offering member agencies access to advanced technology solutions, carefully selected to support and enhance agency operations. SAP's team conducts all of the due diligence required and offers members access to discounts on new Insurtech tools that will genuinely make a difference.

With these tools in place, agencies can automate routine tasks, better track renewals and customer communications, analyze data for growth opportunities, and streamline compliance. The result is not a cold, impersonal workflow—but exactly the opposite: agencies gain the breathing room to emphasize what matters most in insurance—relationships, trust, empathy, and human connection.

Relieving the Pressures of Day-to-Day Operations

Independent agencies often juggle a dizzying array of operational tasks: negotiating carrier terms, managing benefits and compliance, tracking renewals, and keeping staff engaged. SAP's value lies in reducing these burdens so members can concentrate on clients. The network leverages collective buying power and relationships to secure favorable agreements with carriers, E&O providers, and vendors. It also offers benefits such as group health plans for employees and perpetuation planning support—resources that would be expensive or inaccessible for many agencies on their own. By easing the operational load, SAP helps members reclaim time and energy for service, sales, and growth.

A Partnership That Preserves Independence and Aplifies Strength

SAP's mission has remained consistent: empower independent insurance agencies to stay independent—retaining 100% ownership—while enjoying the scale, expertise, and innovation of a much larger organization. By combining a consultative approach, operational relief, and future-ready technology, SAP has created a model that protects the personal touch of insurance while preparing members for long-term success.

For agencies looking to grow without sacrificing autonomy or relationships, Strategic Agency Partners offers more than membership. It offers a true partnership—one that enables them to thrive in a complex market and keep the human connection at the heart of their business. ■

VOLDICO

Voldico is a network of independent insurance agencies joined together to create a more streamlined operation. When joined with Voldico, independent agencies have the ability to gain access to top national and regional carriers alongside the opportunity to receive operational support, customer service, and claims support. By unloading the day-to-day operations from an agency, they're given the opportunity to focus on the growth and development of their business.

Agencies looking to join an independent insurance network have similar needs and Voldico was created to fill those voids. When coming to Voldico, agencies are able to join and keep their existing brand or can opt-in for the fully branded model where more support is offered.

Access More Insurance Carriers

As an independent agency, it is important to help customers find the best insurance products available, but it is not possible without options. Voldico helps agents gain access to a greater number of well-known and trusted insurance carriers so those options are available to their customers.

- **Streamline Backroom Operations**
  Agencies should run like a well-oiled machine so the agents can focus on selling insurance and providing outstanding customer service. Voldico is able to provide full operational support, including payroll system management, data entry, customer service and claims center, accounting, profit/loss reports, monthly reports, acquisition and conversions strategies, and management services.
- **Retain Complete Ownership of the Agency**
  Independent agencies want to remain independent and joining Voldico does not change that. Agency members retain full ownership of their book of business and complete control of their office.
- **Pay Zero Membership Fees**
  Voldico makes money when member agents make money. Commission splits are what Voldico thrives on, which makes the relationship between the agency and Voldico that much more important.
- **Customized Perpetuation Planning**
  For those agencies looking towards the next chapter of their lives, Voldico offers fully customizable perpetuation planning.

Whether agents coming to Voldico are looking for the full system of support or simply more options for placing business, Voldico's goal is to create a longstanding, lucrative relationship with the agency. As of 2025, Voldico has relationships with over 235 agencies, across 26 states.

To learn more about Voldico, visit Voldico.com or call 866-341-2674. ■

VOLDICO

MORE FOR YOU

MORE FOR THEM

With Voldico as your agency's partner, you will:

- EARN MORE WITH TOP-TIER COMMISSIONS
- ENJOY PROFIT SHARING
- KEEP CONTROL WITH 100% OWNERSHIP
- GAIN ACCESS TO 150+ CARRIERS
- GROW WITH TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT
- LEVERAGE INDUSTRY LEADING TECH PARTNERS
- GET MERGER & ACQUISITION SUPPORT

One conversation is all it takes to see why we're better together. **CALL US TODAY!**

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SECURING PARTNERSHIPS, SHAPING THE FUTURE

INA prepares for 9th Annual Meeting, in Tampa

By Ray Scotto

For nearly a decade, the Insurance Networks Alliance (INA) has built its reputation as the premier forum for collaboration in the independent agency distribution channel. What began as a bold experiment—bringing competing networks together to share ideas—has become an institution that blends business incubation, industry insight, and peer-to-peer dialogue.

"The INA is no longer about whether networks should collaborate," said one INA Advisory Committee member. "It's about how we grow stronger by doing so."

A growing footprint in a consolidating market

As the INA readies for its 9th Annual Meeting, January 28–29, 2026, in Tampa, membership has expanded to 43 insurance networks, including nearly all of the 20 largest. Collectively, INA networks account for over 25% of total U.S. property and casualty written premium and represent more than 30,000 independent agencies—approximately three-quarters of all in the country.

This influence comes at a pivotal time for the industry. Carrier appetites are shifting, distribution strategies are being reevaluated, and M&A activity continues to reshape the retail agency landscape. Networks, once primarily valued for market access, are now critical partners in technology adoption, data-driven decision-making, and agency growth strategy.

Expanding industry engagement

Beyond network membership, INA has broadened its reach with:

- 70-plus carrier, wholesaler, and program administrator participants, all seeking meaningful distribution partnerships
- 60 service providers offering tools and solutions to strengthen the network and retail agency community

This cross-section of stakeholders has made INA a unique marketplace—one where new partnerships are secured, existing relationships are deepened, and future strategies take shape.

Meeting agenda: leadership, market insight, and innovation

While networking remains core to the event, the 9th Annual Meeting emphasizes preparing members for tomorrow's challenges. Highlights include:

- Mike Abrashoff, former Commander of the U.S.S. Benfold, delivering a keynote on why leadership matters and culture is everything
- Tim Turner, CEO of Ryan Specialty, presenting on Navigating the E&S Market and Strategic and Operational Solutions for Networks—a timely topic as the E&S sector outpaces standard lines in growth
- Panel discussions designed to address pressing operational issues focused on data-driven decision-making and identifying new business niches

Photos provided by The Insurance Networks Alliance

Networks, once primarily valued for market access, are now critical partners in technology adoption, data-driven decision-making, and agency growth strategy.

Networks must be prepared to equip agents with the right tools, insights, and carrier relationships to stay competitive. And that's the focus attendees will benefit from as they engage with fellow professionals in Tampa.

Looking ahead

As pressures mount on agents and carriers alike—from rising loss costs to increased regulatory scrutiny and accelerating tech change—the INA's role has never been more vital. By convening networks, carriers, wholesalers, program administrators, and service providers under one roof, the Alliance offers a rare forum for collaboration in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Owners and senior management of networks, carriers, wholesalers, program administrators, and service providers interested in attending can learn more at www.networksalliance.com. ■

The author

Ray Scotto is executive director of the Insurance Networks Alliance.

E&O for Insurance Agency Networks

The member companies of Utica National Insurance Group have developed an Agents' Errors & Omissions program – more than just an insurance policy – for the needs of Insurance Networks.

We KNOW E&O

for Insurance Agents

WHAT MAKES UTICA NATIONAL THE IDEAL CHOICE FOR YOUR NETWORK MEMBERS' E&O COVERAGE?

- **Experience and reliability set us apart.** Our Agents' E&O program stands as the nation's longest, continuously operating provider. We have been protecting insurance agency assets since 1966.
- **Personalized service is at your fingertips**. Connect directly with our Underwriters, Claims experts, Risk Management Specialist, and Executive Leaders.
- **Tailored coverage.** Every network possesses distinct characteristics and requires Errors & Omissions insurance designed to address its specific requirements.
- **More than just an insurance policy.** Support is available from your local independent agents' association to help you educate and grow your network.

OUR APPROACH TO NETWORKS HAS MANY FEATURES, INCLUDING:

- **Better control of limits and coverage by the Network Hub,** including the ability to customize individual exposure and policy limit needs for the members while adhering to your minimum standards for coverage.
- **Individual policies can be provided for each member.**
- **Lower administrative burden** in tracking certificates and coverage of members. Network Hubs are also notified of the policy status of their members.
- **Quarterly claims review.**
- **Loss control/risk management material tailored for the Network Hub** and access to our Risk Management Specialist.
- **The ability to provide loss control policy credits through participation in customized courses** that align with the offerings and operational objectives of the Network Hub.
- **Members can be billed directly.** We provide a selection of payment options and plans to accommodate various needs.

Mark Angelucci
Senior Vice President and
Errors and Omissions Segment Leader
Utica Mutual Insurance Company

> *Insurance agents network executives are so focused on meeting the needs of their members and policyholders' that they are, at times, a little like the childhood fable of the cobbler's children having no shoes. Our approach gives them the opportunity to get this important part of their needs met correctly.*

Mark Angelucci

PROTECT THE REPUTATION AND ASSETS YOU'VE WORKED HARD TO BUILD:

Choose the Right Agents' Errors and Omissions Program for Your Network Members!

We KNOW E&O for Insurance Agents

The member companies of the Utica National Insurance Group provide E&O professional liability insurance in 42 states, including the District of Columbia (and we distribute our products and services through 26 independent trade associations).

Customized Program Structure

- Better control of limits and coverage by the Network Hub, including the ability to customize individual exposure and policy limit needs for the members while adhering to your minimum standards for coverage.

Your Members Benefit From

1. **A quick premium indication or bindable quote with an easy application process to get started.**
2. **Contemporary risk management tools and information to help you reduce the likelihood of an E&O incident.**
3. **Direct access to Utica National's team of dedicated E&O pros offering technical knowledge.**
4. **The benefit of getting insight from the longest continually running E&O program in the country.**
5. **The strength that you can expect from an A rated* carrier.**

**For the latest rating, visit www.ambest.com*

Contact Tina Desantis by phone at 1-800-598-8422, extension 7342810, for more information.

THE INCUBATORS FOR TOMORROW'S AGENCY OWNERS

Networks help lay foundation for new and growing insurance agencies

By Mike Strakhov

In the evolving landscape of insurance distribution, agency networks have emerged as powerful incubators for aspiring agency owners. These networks—often referred to as clusters, alliances, or aggregators—offer a unique blend of support, resources, and strategic partnerships that empower producers, industry professionals and current captive agency owners to transition into independent agency ownership with confidence and capability.

At their core, insurance agency networks provide a collaborative environment where member agencies can access markets, mentorship, and operational infrastructure that would otherwise be out of reach. For many, joining a network is the first step toward building a book of business under their own brand, while benefiting from the collective strength of a larger organization.

Not all insurance agency networks target startup agencies for membership, but many do, providing the foundation to get started.

Access to markets and carrier relationships

One of the most significant barriers to entry for new agency owners is securing appointments with top-tier carriers. As a former marketing and branch manager for two national insurance companies, the likelihood of appointing a startup agency was almost zero.

Networks solve this problem by leveraging their aggregated premium volume to negotiate broad market access. This allows members to write business with preferred carriers from day one, without the production requirements typically imposed on directly appointed agencies.

Mentorship and professional development

Agency networks often foster a culture of mentorship, pairing emerging agency owners with seasoned

agency principals. This relationship is invaluable, offering guidance on everything from underwriting and sales strategies to compliance and agency management.

Many networks also provide structured training programs, leadership development tracks, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities that accelerate professional growth.

> *At their core, insurance agency networks provide a collaborative environment where member agencies can access markets, mentorship, and operational infrastructure that would otherwise be out of reach.*

Operational support and technology

Launching an agency requires more than just selling policies; it demands robust operational systems. Networks frequently offer support and direction on critical services such as agency management systems, quoting platforms, marketing tools, and back-office support. These resources reduce overhead and streamline operations, allowing new agency owners to focus on growth and improve their administrative processes.

Several networks have expanded their value proposition to members to include discounted access to consultants and vendors that specialize in legal, accounting, valuation firms and financing.

Financial stability and growth incentives

Some networks offer financial models that ease the transition into ownership, including commission splits, profit-sharing arrangements, and even equity opportunities. These incentives not only make agency ownership more attainable but also align the network's success with that of its members, fostering a mutually beneficial ecosystem.

For agencies that are interested in growing through acquisition, networks provide an opportunity to meet other like-minded members who may be interested in selling today or at some point in the future. Some have gone as far as creating a forum to introduce buyers and sellers within their network to foster those transactions.

A launchpad for independence

Perhaps most important, agency networks serve as a launchpad for independence. While members benefit from the network's infrastructure and support, they retain the autonomy to build their own brand, culture, and client relationships.

Over time, many agencies evolve into fully independent agency owners, equipped with the experience, confidence, and resources gained through their network affiliation.

Conclusion

Insurance agency networks are more than just business alliances—they are incubators for the next generation of agency owners. By lowering barriers to entry, providing critical support, and fostering a community of growth, these networks are shaping the future of the insurance industry one entrepreneur at a time. ■

The author

Mike Strakhov, CPCU, and Insurance Networks Alliance co-founder and Advisory Committee member, is senior vice president and agency banking market leader at Westfield Bank.

Photos provided by The Insurance Network Alliance

GROWTH OPPORTUNITY CASE STUDY: INDEPENDENT INSURANCE

A successful insurance network secured a total of $37,000,000 in financing through Live Oak Bank. The network was able to refinance existing debt to improve their cash flow and access growth capital to support its acquisition strategy. With the influx of capital, the company positioned itself to continue expanding its innovative business model while strengthening their brand within the insurance industry.

Challenge

- Finding a financing partner that could assist in refinancing existing debt to streamline the business financials and create cash flow flexibility for future opportunities
- Access capital to fuel further growth and to add independent insurance agencies to their network

Solution

- Live Oak funded a $13,000,000 term loan to refinance existing business debt, reducing costs and improving cash flow for the customer
- The customer secured a $20,000,000 delayed draw term loan (DDTL) to support the business's acquisition strategy, enabling them to add independent insurance agencies to their network over time
- Live Oak included a $4,000,000 working capital revolver to ensure liquidity, supporting the customer's expansion efforts while managing daily operations

Outcome

- The customer continues to build on its strong market position in the industry, supported by a structured financing package tailored to the network's specific goals
- Live Oak's partnership has empowered the business to scale effectively while remaining true to its core mission of supporting independent insurance agents

Deal At-A-Glance

Business Type
Independent Insurance Network

Aggregate Loan Amount
$37,000,000

Wins
Strategic growth, cash flow coverage, low funded leverage, and increased enterprise value

Since 2014, Live Oak Bank has specialized in creating innovative lending solutions for the insurance industry. Live Oak can create flexible credit facilities to support the growth of companies with $1,000,000–$2,000,000+ in EBITDA. If you are seeking growth capital, we can work with you to develop a financing solution that aligns with your specific requirements.

To learn more or to contact a member of our team, visit liveoak.bank/insurance

LiveOakBank.

WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER—USING DATA TO DRIVE SUCCESS

How well do you know your organization's key numbers, like sales velocity, employee turnover, or revenue per salesperson? More importantly, how do they compare to the competition? Tracking metrics is paramount to driving organic growth, new business, client retention, and more. But it's more than just tracking a few stats, it's about benchmarking those results against the best in the industry.

Why firms should measure their performance

Measuring results across a business provides crucial insights into where the firm is thriving and easily identify areas to prioritize improvement. Specifically, firms should seek to:

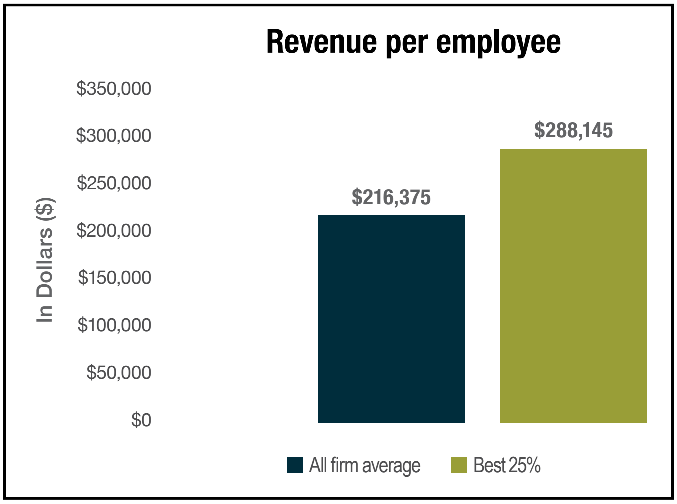
- **Identify strengths and weaknesses.** Benchmarking data helps firms recognize where they excel and where they lag. This insight allows them to capitalize on strengths and address weaknesses before they become critical issues.
- **Set informed goals.** Deep analysis of a firm's performance enables leaders to establish realistic and strategic growth objectives based on data. It enables businesses to refine their strategy, improve efficiency, and allocate resources effectively for long-term success.
- **Enhance competitive edge.** Benchmarking offers the roadmap to remain a market leader. Benchmarking provides an objective comparison against industry peers and methods to proactively adapt to industry trends.

How top firms use data to improve

Taking action and executing after reviewing data findings is perhaps the most important takeaway when firms begin to measure. Based on data from MarshBerry's proprietary financial management system, Perspectives for High Performance (PHP), participating firms have used their individual findings to drive better results in key areas mentioned earlier.

Productivity is an example of another key area that insurance firms should measure and improve. One firm used data shown in the chart in the next column to identify that their teams had capacity to take on more accounts without needing to hire additional staff since their revenue per employee was below average. Having insights to average performance encourages businesses automate manual processes, outsource tasks, and remove or reassign underperformers. Then they measured revenue per employee again over time to confirm progress and effectiveness of these strategies.

Data and benchmarking often reveal hidden potential, even in areas once thought to be strong. By embracing a cycle of data-driven insight, strategic improvement, and continuous measurement, insurance brokerage firms have unlocked extraordinary growth and profitability. Just imagine what breakthroughs await when you take a closer look beneath the surface.



Source: MarshBerry proprietary financial management system, Perspectives for High Performance (PHP). Data as of 12/31/2024.

MarshBerry Connect

Connect is MarshBerry's executive peer exchange that enables members to overcome common challenges, make plans for future growth, and learn how to increase productivity, create innovative products, or enhance sales initiatives. Learn more about MarshBerry Connect at MarshBerry.com/Connect. ■

Brooke Liu, Senior Vice President, MarshBerry

Brooke Liu joined MarshBerry in in 2016 and in her current role as Senior Vice President, Brooke's collaborative guidance and industry expertise are essential for overseeing the company's many growth assets. Brooke's operational expertise, product development experience, and servant leadership style are instrumental in helping MarshBerry clients achieve their growth goals through the invaluable MarshBerry programs such as Connect executive peer exchange.

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MarshBerry's Connect Executive Peer Exchange is designed for brokers who believe in learning from the achievements of those who have paved the way.

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SMARTPAY: TRANSFORMING PREMIUM BILLING FOR A SMARTER INSURANCE EXPERIENCE

Streamline payments. Simplify audits. Unmatched service.

In today's fast-moving insurance landscape, efficiency and accuracy are everything. Everyone in the insurance ecosystem needs technology that reduces administrative burdens, improves cash flow, and delivers a modern customer experience. That is where SmartPay comes in.

Since 2010, SmartPay has been redefining how insurance premiums are billed and paid. Our Pay-As-You-Go (PayGo) and installment billing solutions connect insurance providers, agents, payroll companies, and policyholders in one seamless network, making premium billing more accurate, transparent, and flexible than ever before.

Meet SmartPay

At SmartPay, we believe billing should not be complicated. Our mission is simple: make premium billing easy for everyone involved, backed by advanced technology and exceptional service.

We combine deep insurance expertise with cutting-edge technology to automate the entire premium collection process. Our platform eliminates guesswork, minimizes audit surprises, and keeps payments aligned with real payroll data, ensuring every stakeholder benefits from greater efficiency and accuracy.

Trusted by over 80 insurance providers and programs, and integrated with more than 400 payroll partners, SmartPay simplifies operations for carriers while providing a seamless experience for agents and policyholders. Policyholders can connect with our nationwide payroll network, choose to self-report, or use the SmartPay Payroll Reporting Service (SPRS) for easy and accurate payroll reporting.

Our Solutions

SmartPay's technology calculates and collects premiums in real time based on actual payroll. As payroll changes, premium payments automatically adjust so policyholders only pay for what they owe when they owe it.

For businesses preferring structured payments, we offer flexible installment options, giving carriers the tools to support every type of policyholder.

Whether it is workers' compensation or other lines of insurance, SmartPay delivers accurate billing, streamlined reporting, and smoother audits through secure and flexible technology.

Why SmartPay

More than a platform. A partner in your success.

For Policyholders: Align payments with actual payroll, improve cash flow, and eliminate year-end surprises.

For Agents: Strengthen client relationships by offering flexibility, convenience, and confidence in your offerings.

For Carriers: Enhance billing accuracy, reduce audit exposure, and boost retention with a modern payment experience.

Every transaction, every report, every interaction is backed by SmartPay's dedication to accuracy, security, and partnership.

Let's Simplify Insurance Premium Billing Together

SmartPay is more than a billing platform. We are a partner in modernizing the insurance experience. Whether you are an insurance provider, agent, payroll company, or policyholder, SmartPay provides the tools and expertise to streamline premium billing with solutions tailored to your unique needs.

Visit smartpayllc.com to see how SmartPay can transform your billing experience. ■

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Smarter Solutions for Insurance Premium Billing

SmartPay sets the standard for billing innovation with our secure, purpose-built platform designed and maintained by our in-house team to meet each user's needs. Join the **80+ insurance providers, 3,000+ agents, 400+ payroll companies, and 35,000+ policyholders** already leveraging our advanced billing solutions to drive their success.

Why SmartPay?

SmartPay's platform empowers insurance providers, payroll companies, agents, and policyholders to work seamlessly with their preferred partners to manage premium billing. We deliver flexible technology, reliable support, and a commitment to true partnership.

How it Works

Pay-As-You-Go (PayGo) Billing
SmartPay connects premium payments directly to actual payroll, so final audits closely align with amounts already paid, reducing the risk of unexpected balances at policy end. Here's how it works:

- Policyholders report payroll data through the SmartPay platform.
- Premiums are calculated based on reported payroll.
- Payments are automatically debited from the policyholder's bank account or credit card.

Installment Billing
SmartPay streamlines premium installments with a seamless setup and payment process:

- We receive the premium installment schedule directly from the insurance provider.
- SmartPay sets up and manages the payment schedule in our system.
- Premiums are automatically debited from the policyholder's bank account or charged to the credit card set up during registration, then sent to the insurance provider.

SmartPay

Supports Multiples Lines of Insurance: Workers' comp and other lines of coverage with variable exposure, as well as installment billing.

Purpose-Built: Designed for insurance providers, agents, payroll companies, policyholders, premium finance companies and self-insured groups.

Real-Time Premium Calculations for PayGo: Improves cash flow management and ensures audit-ready accuracy by matching payments to actual payroll and variable exposures.

Flexible Reporting Options: Connect with our network of nationwide payroll partners, choose to self-report or utilize SmartPay Payroll Reporting Service (SPRS) to ensure easy and accurate payroll reporting.

Multiple Billing Options: PayGo and installment billing make payments easier, helping clients manage costs while strengthening retention.

Dedicated Support: SmartPay's best-in-class Customer Experience Team is here to help providers, agents, and policyholders Monday-Friday, 8AM-8PM EST.

Have questions or looking for more information?
The SmartPay team is excited to hear from you! Please contact us anytime.

877 905 0786
sales@smartpayllc.com
smartpayllc.com

Discover what's possible with SmartPay