

We Have A Crisis!

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It is 4:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoon when your client calls with a simple request. He is leaving on vacation early tomorrow morning and wants to make certain the company received his auto premium. When you call the company, you discover they have not received the check and will not bind coverage because of his past payment history. When you call the insured back, he becomes irate.

The company did an inspection on a new home you wrote and discovered a trampoline in the back yard. You call the customer to break the bad news; the company is canceling the policy. You have only one company that will offer coverage and the price will increase by 40%. The insured will not accept it and continues to push for other options

You have a crisis! Or, do you? Before you drop everything you are doing and work late to solve a customer's problem, ask these three simple questions.

1. Whose problem is it?

The first step is to be very clear in your mind who owns the problem. Often you will find it is not really the agency's problem. If the insured sent the money late, they have a problem. If the insured created an increased liability hazard, they have a problem. In most cases you will not tell them the problem is theirs, but be certain you are aware of the ownership issue. If it is your problem, accept it and resolve it. If you do not own it proceed to the next step.

2. Do I have the power to fix it?

If you cannot do anything about the problem, make it clear right away. It will minimize your involvement. "I really wish I could help you on this; but, our companies do not make any exceptions on trampolines." Then just keep repeating it. There is no reason to spend more time on this issue and you will do well to avoid a long discussion that will change nothing. However, if you do have the power to fix the problem, go on to the final question.

3. Is the insured worth it?

When it is their problem and you do have the power to fix it, ask this final question. How much time, energy, and clout will you have to expend to get their problem solved? Would the actions violate the insurance carrier's policies? Is this client worth it?

If this customer presents the same problem repeatedly, is a perennial shopper, or has significant claim activity, are they worth the additional

effort? This may be an agency decision and you should consult with your supervisor or agency principal before taking action.

The Bottom Line

There is no spare energy in this world. When you expend energy in one area, you draw it from another. When you spend two hours solving a problem created by a customer, you are stealing service time from a client. Make certain the trade off is justified.