

JAYE CZUPRYNA

PIA's member information manager



Fishing for talent

How to hook the big one

The insurance industry is bubbling with opportunities for individuals who are looking for rewarding jobs that offer diverse opportunities; a chance to grow; and the ability to help those in their communities. The trick is finding the right candidate for the right position.



David S. Boyce, CPCU



Donna Cunningham, CPIA

PIA asked a few of its members to discuss their process for hiring new employees; the types of positions they are looking to fill; and what job candidates are looking for when they are looking for a job. These PIA members include: **David S. Boyce, CPCU**, president and CEO of Tompkins Insurance Agencies Inc., Batavia, N.Y.; and **Donna Cunningham, CPIA**, PIANJ past president and president of ADP/Statewide Insurance Agencies Inc., Florham Park, N.J.

Tell us about your agency.

Boyce: We've served as trusted advisers to small and large businesses, organizations, individuals and families throughout New York and Pennsylvania since 1875. We provide a full range of personal and commercial insurance and employee-benefits products and services. By establishing strong relationships with leading regional and national insurance carriers, we can identify the right combination of coverage options and price to meet our customers' specific needs. At the heart of our business is our commitment to providing unrivaled service to our customers and to the communities where we live and work.

Cunningham: My partner and I formed our agency in 1982. For a few years, it was just the two of us. He concentrated on sales and I oversaw the inside operations. Shortly thereafter, we hired our first employee, a family member who just celebrated her 30th anniversary with us. Over the next 30-plus years, we acquired two agencies and have grown to employ a staff of 28, plus 14 producers.

What are some of your hiring-process challenges?

Boyce: With 29 locations throughout New York and Pennsylvania, our large footprint presents the majority of challenges we face—those challenges vary in each region. Generally speaking, finding experienced, qualified individuals

with the right skill set is a challenge in any market. We're happy to report that for us, finding the most appropriate people is just a typical challenge of doing business, and not a dilemma.

Cunningham: I think one of the biggest challenges is to ensure that the new hire fits in with the agency culture. We are a sales focused organization and everyone from the receptionist to the account managers must be sales oriented. Not everyone fits into that mold. During the interview process we make it clear what our expectations are and we offer excellent incentives to everyone for new business sales. We have been fortunate that our team has bought into that philosophy.

What agency positions are you looking to fill?

Boyce: With a team of 180 employees, we look to fill all positions within the agency. The most difficult position to fill is the producer, as would be typical for any agency, anywhere in the country. We have found great success hiring people who have the basic traits we seek, bringing them into entry-level positions within our Customer Care Center, then providing comprehensive training and opportunities for them to create career paths within the organization.

Cunningham: Our No. 1 priority is to focus on bringing new people into the agency business. We believe nothing happens until someone sells something, so we always are looking for new producers. Our efforts have paid off and we have a cadre of six new young producers to go along with our seasoned producers. In

filling other agency positions, our policy is to try to promote from within the agency. Typically, we have a need for both commercial- and personal-lines account executives. Recently, we filled one position in each department.

What traits do you look for when you need to fill a position?

Boyce: While we seek hardworking individuals with critical thinking skills and decision-making abilities, at the same time we are looking for a great attitude. Because of the way we run our business across our wide footprint, teamwork and a sense of team spirit is essential in any position. In addition, we seek those who embody our corporate values—individuals who are community-minded and operate conscientiously with high integrity.

Cunningham: We look for loyalty, honesty and a strong work ethic. The best candidate is someone who is interested in a career more than a job. We always look for individuals who are interested in growing in their position. We are not looking for paper pushers. We want our employees to go the extra step for our insureds. We always look to candidates for support positions who are interested in sales because account rounding and upselling is so important in our industry. Lastly, we look for those candidates who will be the future of our agency, those who we can bring to the next level should the opportunity arise.

Hospitality Market

**Restaurants
Taverns
Bars
Fine dining
Large caterers
Delis
Pizzerias**

Package policy

- Property—\$10 million
- Liability—\$1-2 million
- Liquor Legal—\$1 million
- Umbrella—\$1-10 million
- Equipment Breakdown including steam boiler
- Plus D Property Enhancements
- Commission 15%
- Monoline Property and Liability



SPECIALTY INSURANCE

Contact Mel Watters, VP Marketing:

1610 Route 88, Ste. 102 • Brick, NJ 08724

(732) 701-8945 • (800) 836-1400 ext. 8945 • Fax (732) 458-3728

The leading source for hospitality markets for 33 years.

"A" A.M. Best rated admitted carrier

www.specialtyagency.com

Available in 18 states

Where are you finding new employees?

Boyce: Our top source for new employees is through existing employee referrals. In addition, our managers are constantly recruiting, looking to identify qualified potential employees in all regions. On a rare occasion, we'll use an outside recruiter to assist in filling an open position.

Cunningham: We work hard to earn the respect of our carriers and business partners and we enjoy a good reputation, which enables us to cast a wide net. We regularly receive resumes and referrals from companies and other

markets in which we do business. As I mentioned before, we recently filled a commercial-lines position. We contacted a former employee to inquire if he was looking to make a change and it was music to our ears when he said, "I've been hoping you would call." As past presidents of PIANJ, my business partner and I are also able to talk with other past presidents, board members and committee members who may know of someone seeking employment. The PIANJ Young Insurance Professionals is also a good referral source especially when looking for younger producers. We also recruit and mentor ethnic producers who serve their communities.

What are the benefits you offer new employees?

Boyce: Our agency offers employees a comprehensive training program, abundant leadership and professional development opportunities and a robust benefits package.

Cunningham: We offer a generous benefits package. I think it is equally important that we treat our employees like family and let them know that their families are as important to us as they are. I like to say we believe in "family first." We want them to be there for their children's school plays, sporting events and teacher meetings as much as they want to be there. And, we have never had an employee take advantage of us.

What are the candidates looking for?

Boyce: Today's candidates are looking for a position in which they

can advance and identify a potential career path within the organization. They're looking for benefits, competitive pay and a great work environment with flexibility to balance work and life.

Cunningham: Candidates are looking for a fair salary. Most of the candidates look for health insurance and a good benefits package. I think career opportunities are important to most of them. It doesn't hurt to be able to call the place where you work your second home. We have fun, we laugh a lot and each day is a new adventure in our office. When a problem occurs, we encourage our employees to come to us so we can find a timely solution. We don't punish mistakes, we learn from them. I think our employees appreciate that.

Anything else?

Boyce: Our success is really all about our people. It's clear to us that any success we achieve is because of the hard work by each and every one of our employees on the team. To best continue our long tradition of exceptional service to our customers, we'll continue to maintain our strong team of great people.

Cunningham: Not many people grow up wanting a career in insurance and everyone has a story about how they got there. However, in my experience, motivated, people-oriented individuals can have a satisfying and financially rewarding career in our industry. Lastly, I would encourage those of us already in the industry, particularly agency principals, to look beyond their own agencies and commit themselves to growing the independent agency distribution system. ■

Czupryna is PIA's member information manager.

Lawyers Professional Liability Coverage

for Professional Insurance Agents

With nearly 30 years of experience in Lawyers Professional Liability, we can help you provide the coverage and service level you need for your attorney clients.

Contact us today so we can assist you with the needs of your law firm clients!

Parsons & Associates, Inc.

INSURANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT SINCE 1930
(800) 695-4262 • www.4lawyersinsurance.com



Sometimes CLOSE isn't good enough

In premium financing, competitive rates are just part of the game. We've got superior technology and exceptional customer service — all backed by a national charter. If you're a client, you already love us. If you're not, let us show you what you've been missing.

AFS IBEX
A division of MetaBank®

Newport Beach, Calif.
800.347.4986
Dallas, Texas
800.299.5626

Call us or visit afsibex.com for your premium financing needs

EFFORTLESS marketing

Build relationships and round your business with consumer newsletters and e-newsletters from PIA. We do all the work: writing, design and distribution.

- Written by industry experts
- Easy and cost-effective
- Print or online options
- Customized to fit your agency's brand and existing marketing efforts
- Establish your agency as the authoritative, local source for insurance

Think **PIA** first
(800) 424-4244
creativeservices@pia.org

112370 715