TOTAL CSR

FOR INSURANCE AGENCIES

The Definitive Guide to Hiring the Best Talent for Your Agency

A five-part hiring strategy to help you find, hire, and keep the best possible talent for your agency.

INTRODUCTION

Hiring Under Pressure

> Insurance agencies are being pinched by a tight labor market, an aging workforce, and a series of demographic and cultural challenges with the workforce now available for hire. Finding qualified people is hard, and every hire you get wrong costs real money.

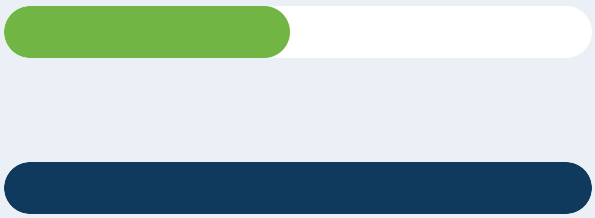
So if you're an agency that needs to hire new professionals to replace workforce turnover, the pressure can be high. Between workers retiring and others leaving for opportunities elsewhere, you may be hiring more often than you'd like. When qualified candidates are hard to find, it's tempting to hire whoever applies.

$12,200

to train one new hire the old way*

About $25,000

when a bad hire leaves around month eight



But you should never make important hiring decisions out of desperation.

Instead, there are proven steps you can take to make sure you're getting the best talent available.

*130 hours of senior staff time (10 hours a week for 13 weeks at $40 an hour, $5,200) plus $7,000 in lost productivity (3.5 months at 50% capacity on a $4,000 loaded monthly cost), per hire, before a single thing goes wrong.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Your Hiring Strategy

We recommend a hiring strategy with five parts that work together to help you find, hire, and keep the best possible talent for your agency:

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01

Hire for Aptitude and Attitude

When evaluating potential candidates, many companies scour their networks and hope to find anyone with a related work history and a good reference from someone they know. But hiring a great candidate should be much more scientific than just looking for a connection to someone known to you. A better way to ensure that your candidates are really a fit for a job in your organization is to look at their attitude and their aptitude.

PART 1
Aptitude and Attitude

PART 2
Outside the Industry

PART 3
Learning Development

PART 4
Career Roadmap

PART 5
Attract Gen Z

PART 1 | HIRE FOR APTITUDE AND ATTITUDE

Attitude: Questions to Ask Yourself

Attitude can be fairly subjective, but the right mix of attitude traits for an insurance agency Customer Sales Rep is easy to spot. A few questions to ask yourself as you evaluate a candidate's applications:

ASK YOURSELF

- [ ] Does their attitude fit what the role demands, like staying patient with a stressed client and following a process?
- [ ] Is the candidate enthusiastic for the role and eager to learn?
- [ ] Do they appear motivated and inspire confidence that they'll show up to work and do a good job?
- [ ] Are they self-aware enough to be a team player and understand that they need to learn from others?

NO **If the candidate is a hard "no" on any of these questions, it might be a sign that they don't have the right attitude for the role.**

Attitude: A More Scientific Approach

For a more scientific approach, there are services that can help you determine which personality traits are most important for your roles. Identify two or three of your best CSRs and have each of them take a personality assessment, like the one in Total CSR Assess. Then you can match candidates against their profiles to find positive matches. Benchmarking against several people who already succeed in the role keeps you from hiring copies of one person, and a match is a great sign that your candidate has the right traits to be successful.

START WITH

Your best CSRs

Each takes a personality assessment

›

THEN

Every candidate

Matched against those profiles

›

LOOK FOR

Positive matches

The right traits to be successful in the role

Aptitude: Even More Objective

Aptitude can be even more objective. In addition to the standard indicators like test scores and grade point averages, you can use an aptitude assessment, like Cognify in Total CSR Assess, to measure how quickly a candidate learns and reasons through problems. It's a 15-minute, game-based test, and it works for people with no insurance background. A tool like this can help you sort through your applicants to identify prospects with advantages in key cognitive abilities, and it may even help you find candidates that you might otherwise have overlooked.

PART 1 | HIRE FOR APTITUDE AND ATTITUDE

What to Screen For, in Order

Screen every candidate for the same six things, in the same order, starting with the three that are hardest to teach. Total CSR Assess covers all six with 12 assessments, and testing is unlimited for candidates and current staff.

1	**Aptitude**	Can they learn quickly and reason through a problem?	COMPATIBILITY
2	**Personality fit**	Do their traits match what the role demands?	COMPATIBILITY
3	**Emotional IQ**	Can they stay calm with an upset client?	COMPATIBILITY
4	**Computer literacy**	Can they work comfortably in Word, Excel and PowerPoint?	SKILLS
5	**Insurance knowledge**	What do they already know about coverage?	EXPERTISE
6	**Processing skills**	Can they handle real desk work, like a submission?	EXPERTISE

Run a Structured Interview

Ask every candidate the same questions, in the same order, and score each answer on the same scale before you compare notes. It keeps the decision tied to the job. Total CSR Hire can generate the questions for you.

And as you evaluate potential candidates, don't be afraid to look outside the industry for new employees.

NEXT PART 2

02

Don’t Be Afraid to Look Outside the Industry for New Employees

One of the core challenges facing insurance agencies is that the total pool of qualified candidates looking for jobs in the insurance industry is limited. So one great way to expand your available talent pool is by reaching outside the industry to find prospects with the right skill set.

PART 2 | LOOK OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY

Identifying this skill set isn't as challenging as it might seem, and finding successful candidates doesn't necessarily mean hiring trained professionals with industry experience.

Looking to the outside can also mean looking for the right skills in non-traditional places. The skills to be a successful insurance Customer Service Rep can show up in many customer-facing roles, whether in sales or customer service or another job. As you go about your life, potential candidates are all around you.

INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

A limited pool

Qualified candidates already looking for insurance jobs

OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY

Customer-facing roles

Sales | Customer service | Another job

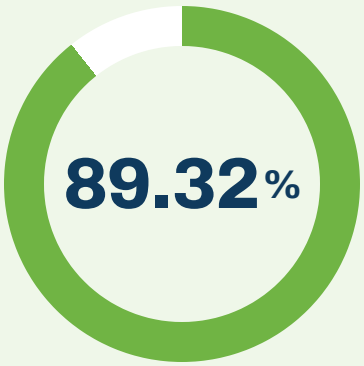
If you come across someone who stands out and shows their skills in a different setting, you may want to consider how those skills could translate into a successful insurance career, and hire them. The keys to success are in looking for the right skills in people you meet and being ready to take action when you find them.

After hiring, it's equally important to have a robust onboarding program to help new hires acquire the job-specific skills they need to be successful.

COMMERCIAL LINES BENCHMARK STUDY

30-Day New Hires vs. 3-Year Professionals

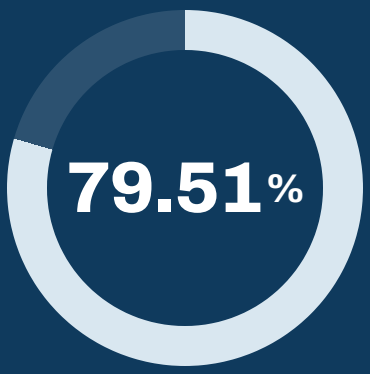
Hiring from outside the industry works when you can train people quickly. Total CSR compared new hires with no insurance experience, who completed the commercial lines program in under 30 days, against professionals with an average of three years' experience.



New hires

No insurance experience, under 30 days of training

vs.



3-year professionals

An average of three years in the business

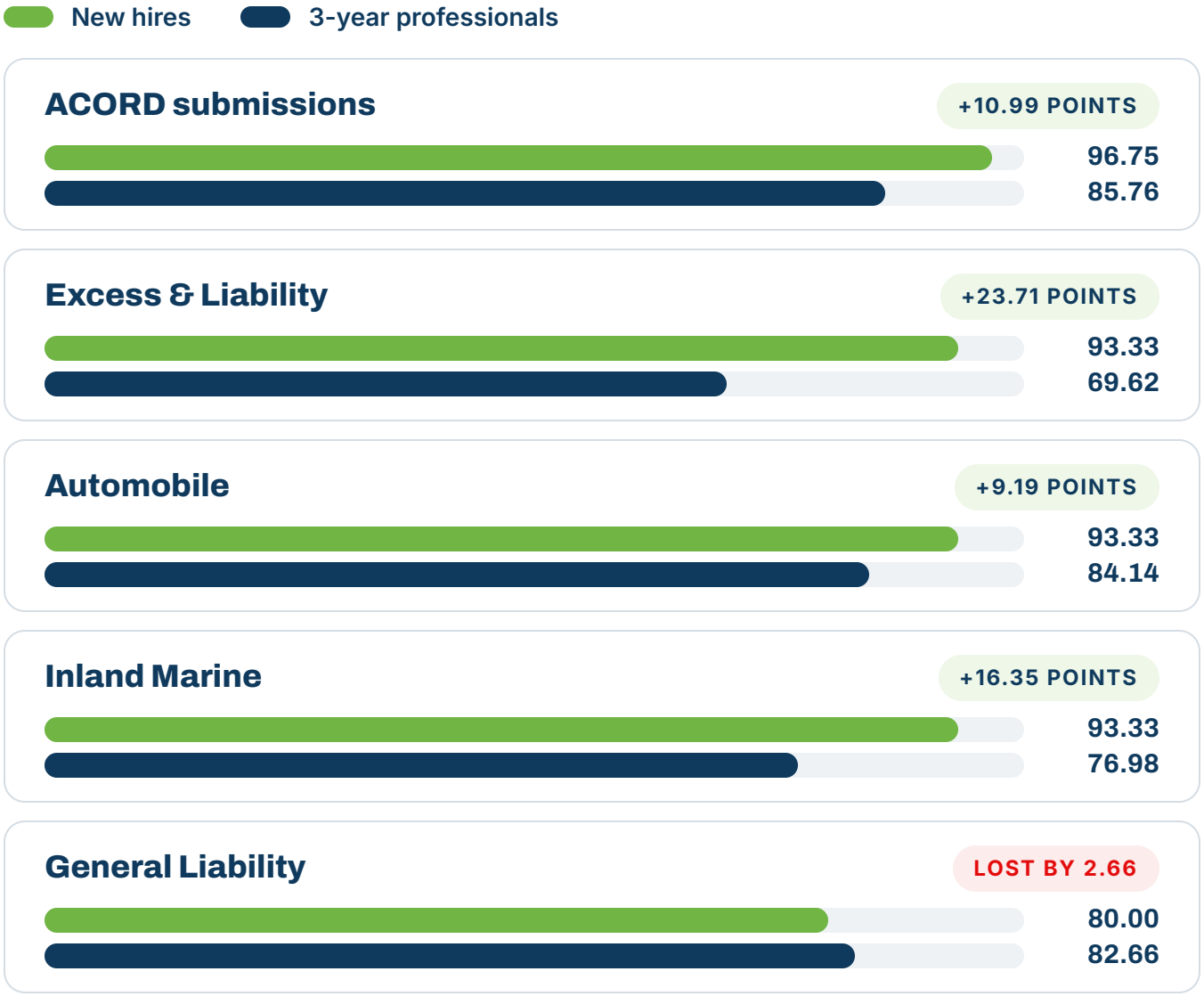
6 of 7 job duties went to the new hires.

New hires with no insurance experience who completed the commercial lines program in under 30 days. Industry averages came from a random sample of 500 assessment scores from professionals with an average of three years' experience.

PART 2 | LOOK OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY

COMMERCIAL LINES BENCHMARK STUDY

Scores by Job Duty



New hires with no insurance experience who completed the commercial lines program in under 30 days. Industry averages came from a random sample of 500 assessment scores from professionals with an average of three years' experience.

These kinds of onboarding and training plans are important tools to help you leverage learning development trends.

NEXT PART 3

03

Leverage Learning Development Trends

Companies routinely consider paid time off, retirement plans and similar benefits to be significant “perks.” They list these benefits prominently during the hiring process, yet many don’t consider training opportunities in this same category.

PART 3 | LEVERAGE LEARNING DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Even companies who offer extensive training benefits as part of their employee benefits may not advertise them. Treat training as a benefit, and put it where candidates can see it.

YOUR BENEFITS PACKAGE

- Paid time off
- Retirement plans
- Health and wellness

+

Training

Add training to the perks you list during the hiring process.

Effective training and continuing learning opportunities are both a great perk to highlight during a competitive hiring process, and great tools for keeping your good employees engaged and up to date.

Well-trained employees feel valued, are up to date on all the industry's best practices, and improve their own skills to keep performing at a high level.

This kind of training is also an important way to offer a different career roadmap.

NEXT PART 4

04

Offer a Different Career Roadmap

HR professionals talk about an employee roadmap: a literal progression of the touchpoints any employee experiences during their time with your company.

THE EMPLOYEE ROADMAP

Moments That Matter

The traditional employee roadmap is often portrayed as a segment of road that represents the “Path” an employee takes while working for you. HR teams look at important points along the way or “Moments That Matter” and call them out as stops or turns on the employee’s roadmap.



Every employee has an onboarding experience, a variety of career changes along the way, and finally an offboarding experience when the employee’s path and the company’s diverge. But what happens to their career while they’re on “your road” is something you can influence.

PART 4 | OFFER A DIFFERENT CAREER ROADMAP

THE AGENCY CAREER PATH

The Typical Agency Roadmap

The typical insurance agency career roadmap doesn't have a lot of twists and turns. Often an employee will start off in customer service and stay in the job for several years. Their only change may be if they progress to become a producer themselves or decide to leave your agency to pursue a new opportunity.

THE TYPICAL ROADMAP

Customer service › Same job for several years › Producer, or leave

A DIFFERENT ROADMAP

Training | Continued learning | Certifications › Many career paths

But the insurance industry has many career paths, and training, continued learning, and professional certifications offer great ways for young professionals to advance their careers. Offering alternate plans for your employees to advance their careers can help you attract employees with varied interests and help you retain employees with valuable skills who want to make a professional change.

And when you're actively looking and still having trouble finding candidates, it's time to attract Gen Z.

NEXT PART 5

05

Attract Gen Z

Every professional, even the most successful and most talented, started off somewhere as an unproven beginner with zero experience. Gen Z, today's college students and recent graduates, is your next group of beginners. At any given time, there is a whole ecosystem of potential superstars at your local colleges and universities, looking for any opportunity to get some real-world work experience.

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PART 5 | ATTRACT GEN Z

Many Gen Z college students will go so far as to take unpaid internships, trading their effort for experience they can put on their resumes. Others can't work for free but would jump at the chance to trade in their part-time jobs waiting tables or doing manual labor for an office job that pays them and gives them professional experience.

WEIGH IT

The Downsides

Of course there are downsides for insurance agencies to hire Gen Z students:

- They may only have limited hours to give.
- Their turnover rates may be high.
- Even the good ones might not ever take a full-time job in the industry.

WEIGH IT

The Benefits

But there are many benefits for agencies too. A Gen Z hire might be very effective as a part-time employee while they finish school and give you quality service for the next couple of years. They could even end up being a great fit at your office and become a long-time employee after graduation.

GEN Z AS RECRUITERS

> Even Gen Z employees who aren't stellar themselves can become great recruiters for you among their peers. They might find their experience working with you to be rewarding and speak about it to their network of friends, classmates and recent graduates. An endorsement from a peer telling them about how great your company is might just be the way you find your next superstar employee.

CONCLUSION

The End Result

Clearly these are tough times to be an insurance agency with a need to hire. Running all five parts of this strategy together gives you a real advantage in landing the talent you want.

Looking outside the industry and to non-traditional sources, including Gen Z, opens up your net so you can find hidden gems laboring away in other corners of the workforce. Hiring for aptitude and attitude helps make sure the people you bring in fit the role.

Once they're hired, providing professional training opportunities to help your employees onboard successfully and develop important skills can help attract and retain skilled employees. Providing chances for your employees to define their own career roadmaps within your company can help you keep the talent you have and help your agency keep running at top efficiency.

YOUR HIRING STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

01	02	03	04	05
Hire for Aptitude and Attitude	Look Outside the Industry	Leverage Learning Development Trends	Offer a Different Career Roadmap	Attract Gen Z