



## Insure Your Future: The Door of Opportunity Is Open to Insurance Agents

By Scott Tryner, National Director Recruiting Services, Combined Insurance

If you are looking for a job that offers you the potential for unlimited income, flexibility, and a good deal of work autonomy, then a career as an insurance agent may be your dream job.



When I started in the recruiting industry, my manager told me, "Combined Insurance Company has always been a dream machine where anyone with the right ambition, work habits, and attitude has the ability to turn their dreams into a reality." With 10 years in the field as a recruiter, I think that this

positive work situation could be true for any insurance agent at any company. All you need is a willingness to work hard and the dedication to meet the needs of your clients. I now pass along that same advice to new insurance agents entering the field.

With many corporations going through layoffs and issuing hiring freezes, a career as an insurance agent has another incentive: job opportunities in a services business.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) 2008-09 edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, employment of insurance agents is expected to increase by 13 percent from 2006 to 2016. Despite the economic woes our country may continue to face, Americans will still need insurance to protect themselves and their families. In fact, the BLS also reports that sales of health and long-term-care insurance are expected to rise sharply as the population ages.

The insurance industry has the unique distinction of having survived for over 100 years as a vital service within the broad financial industry. Our company alone could offer insurance job opportunities to as many as 4,000 people across the country in 2008.

### Turning Your Dreams into a Reality as an Insurance Agent

In general, an insurance sales agent helps clients choose insurance policies that suit their needs. Clients include

individuals and families as well as businesses. "Captive" insurance agents work for an insurance company and only sell that company's products. Independent insurance agents, or brokers, represent several companies. Types of insurance vary by company but can include life, health, disability, supplemental, and long-term care.

Insurance agents also prepare reports, maintain records, and seek out new clients. In the event that a policy holder experiences a loss, an agent acts as a liaison between the insurance company and the customer, helping the latter to settle his or her insurance claim.

Insurance employers are looking for job applicants that have sales ability, excellent interpersonal skills, basic PC skills, and some knowledge of the industry. However, previous insurance sales agent experience is not always a requirement and is sometimes offered during training. A college degree is also not a requirement. Depending on your state's mandated age limit, you could begin your career as early as 18th birthday.

Every state requires insurance agents to be licensed, and many companies offer training while employees complete their license requirements. Most states require applicants to obtain separate licenses to sell life and health insurance or property and casualty insurance. To become licensed, insurance agent applicants must complete pre-licensing courses and pass state examinations. Most state licensing authorities also have mandatory continuing education requirements focusing on insurance laws, consumer protection, ethics, and the technical details of various insurance policies.

A career as an insurance agent is a great opportunity for someone who does not like being in a structured, corporate environment but does well in the field. Our company offers interested candidates the ability to shadow a veteran insurance agent for an entire day, to walk in their shoes and have a firsthand look to see if the insurance job suits their needs before they are hired.



## Insurance Job Insights

In addition, many companies will give an assessment test to identify if an applicant will be successful as an insurance agent. Recruiters will be looking for applicants who can generate new accounts and sales, build strong customer relationships, respond to the needs of clients, meet the standards set by managers, and complete required training programs.

### What to Expect as an Insurance Agent

Insurance agents in their first year can earn \$35,000 or more with the potential for unlimited income opportunities as they advance in their careers. Many insurance agents say that one of the most appealing aspects of the career is the steady flow of income with job security. Instead of a one-time, direct sales commission, some insurance sales agents have the opportunity to receive insurance renewals which are paid out in a percentage every year. Each company has its own commission schedule. Ask about their policy before you are hired.

There are great opportunities for career advancement to the management or account executive levels. Unlike in most of the corporate world, promotions for insurance agents are based on performance, not seniority.

In addition, a few companies like Combined Insurance offer additional employee benefits such as medical, dental, and a 401K following an introduction period that can range anywhere from three to twelve months. Each company's policy varies, and unfortunately many companies have eliminated medical coverage. Inquire in advance about what is included in your company's benefits.

### Insurance Agents: Beyond the Silver Lining

As with any job, there are challenges you will face in this career. This is a results-oriented business. As an insurance sales agent, you are compensated for results. Your time and effort must be focused on prospecting and selling. You must have a strong stomach, because starting out you will likely hear more nos than yeses. You must have a strong work

ethic and a commitment to your customers.

Another challenge is the increase in fuel prices, which has recently become a concern to insurance agents. In order to build good customer relationships, you will have to meet your clients in person. This requires driving to various locations throughout your region. However, if you manage your time wisely and build good rapport, you will come out ahead in the long run.

If you enjoy sales, there is no reason not to try out a career as an insurance sales agent. Even if you discover that it is not the right choice for you, you can use the sales experience you gain as leverage in many other fields.

As I stated before, with the right ambition, work habits, and attitude, you can reach your career goals. Stop dreaming of a job where you do not have to sit at a desk all day long with someone looking over your shoulder, and discover how you can begin your career path in the insurance market.

### About Combined Insurance

Combined Insurance ([www.combinedinsurance.com](http://www.combinedinsurance.com)) is a leading provider of supplemental accident, health, and life insurance products, and is a member of the ACE Group of Companies. With a field sales force and corporate staff in excess of 10,000 people worldwide, Combined meets the growing coverage needs of policy holders around the globe. For more information, call 1-800-490-1322 or visit [www.combinedinsurance.com](http://www.combinedinsurance.com).

### About ACE

The ACE Group of Companies is a global leader in insurance and reinsurance serving a diverse group of clients. Headed by ACE Limited (NYSE: ACE), a component of the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, the ACE Group of Companies conducts its business on a worldwide basis with operating subsidiaries in more than 50 countries. Additional information can be found at [www.ancelimited.com](http://www.ancelimited.com).

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