

The Ratewatch

The FSC Newsletter - National Edition

Issue 3 3rd Quarter 2009

StoneRiver – FSC Users Meet at the Dells

More than 100 customers, vendors, and carrier representatives joined StoneRiver – FSC staff at the annual StoneRiver – FSC Midwest Users Conference July 22nd and 23rd in Wisconsin Dells. The theme for this year's conference was "Maximizing Revenue with StoneRiver – FSC."

Attendees had the opportunity to learn about how they can maximize revenue by leveraging StoneRiver – FSC software throughout the two day event.

The conference included presentations by our staff and clients, along with an agent and carrier panel discussion.

StoneRiver – FSC President Paul Areida opened the conference with an overview of the transition from Fiserv to StoneRiver, along with information about the other business units that make up the StoneRiver family. Paul commented, "We are excited about the opportunities that come from being a private company dedicated to insurance technology. Our name symbolizes an enduring commitment to our clients as we continue to be a steady reliable source for insurance automation." He spent additional time during the conference talking with users and carriers, sharing his insight into market conditions and trends.

Mike Worthington, President of NUDGMI, the StoneRiver – FSC Users Group, also addressed the conference, highlighting some of the work the group has accomplished over the past year. Among their accomplishments was the launching of a new user group website: www.nudgmi.org. Mike commented that the purpose of the site was two-fold; to inform and to network. Beginning in 2010, all FSC Manager Users will be members of NUDGMI and are encouraged to create a login at www.nudgmi.org so they can collaborate and contribute with respect to issues facing the group.

Terry Indrebo, a StoneRiver – FSC Technical Sales Support Specialist, led a session highlighting the benefits of comparative rating. "Comparative Rating not only saves agents and CSRs hours of time, it provides a method for a consistent workflow when quoting new business," said Terry. "If an independent agent is quoting more than three markets per risk it is a must."

Other highlights included presentations on technology to improve agency operations. FSC Manager Associate Trainer Bobby Lubinsky led a session on how agencies can maximize their productivity through the effective use of hardware and peripherals. Her presentation underlined the benefits of implementing such equipment as dual monitors, scanning devices, and wireless headsets. (continued on page 2)

"We are excited about the opportunities that come from being a private company dedicated to insurance technology."

**Paul Areida, President
StoneRiver - FSC**

In This Edition

- FSC Users Meet at the Dells..... **1**
- Technology is not the Solution.... **2**
- Tech Corner **3**
- We Have a Winner **4**

Technology Is Not the Solution for Independent Agents

The least important thing you do for a customer is get rates.

That may seem like an odd statement coming from a company like StoneRiver – FSC that produces a system that generates comparative rates. But let's think about why independent agents and brokers are important in the marketplace. Agents and brokers provide a personal face on a commodity that everyone must have in one shape or another. They provide a conduit to understand the customer, the risk profile that customer has and represent them to the appropriate carriers or vice versa.

That is where you should be spending most of your day. Ask your customer questions, learn about their risk profile, their preference for risk levels and what they can afford. These are all part of providing a service and building a relationship. You should be active in the community, representing your agency and everything that it can do for the community, various business and organizations and, of course, the individual. Entering data on carrier web sites over and over doesn't bring any value to your customers that most of the time they couldn't get already.

- Understand your carriers and their position in the marketplace.
- Get to know the types of policies they offer, the differences between them and who they best fit with. This doesn't mean knowing who will have the best premium; it means knowing which company has the best match of coverages for a particular client, and who has the appetite for a particular risk.
- Develop relationships with your marketing representatives and underwriters.
- Strong carrier relationships help you and your insureds.

Here at FSC, we have been watching trends and have seen agencies attempt to pursue alternatives to comparative raters because call or sales volume is down. When inbound volume is down, agency owners often feel that their staff has time to go to multiple company web sites. And staff often feel that after asking a few questions they are better at placing a risk than a comparative Rater.

One agent who subscribes to FSC comparative rating services saw that his staff was reluctant to use

the Rater. He challenged them to a contest: If they could out-predict the rater, he would get rid of it and they wouldn't have to use it. The staff gladly agreed and set about documenting where they thought a risk should go before entering all the data in the Rater. By the end of 3 months the numbers were in. The staff placed the business correctly only 20% of the time without the rater.

Now, you might argue that you know more than that particular agency's staff. And, perhaps you do. Consider the tale of American folk hero John Henry who was famous for racing a steam powered hammer and winning. Sure he won, but the contest killed him. Similarly, while it is possible for an individual to keep up with every single revision, update and rule change that your carriers release, it might kill you. Instead, utilize technology to do what it is best at – performing repetitive, time intensive tasks.

Take the time that you save and invest it in marketing your agency to the community, investing in the relationships with your customers and your Rater will pay for itself many times over.

StoneRiver – FSC Users Meet at the Dells (continued from page 1)

Kathy Mulder of Nolan Insurance in Brandon, WI provided agents with a hands-on demonstration of the efficiencies gained by going paperless. Kathy successfully converted her agency to a paperless office through use of scanners, download, and the FSC Manager. In addition to sharing some of the lessons she and her employees learned along the way, she gave step-by-step instruction to agents that haven't yet made the leap to getting rid of the paper.

Mike Peterson, Director of Business Development, kicked off the second day of the conference by presenting: *The New Rules of*

Insurance Marketing – Leverage Today's Technology to Reach Tomorrow's New Customer. This presentation highlighted the opportunities agents have to market their product, services, and most importantly, themselves through social marketing tools.

He provided an overview of the new rules of social networking as well as the reasons these new rules are important... "Social networking is the fastest-growing activity on the web with more than half of American adults participating." The session included overview of some of the more popular social networking tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn,

and Twitter. "The way in which we communicate and network with one another is changing before our eyes. The use of social networking tools such as Facebook is a great opportunity for businesses to connect to their customers and prospects." said Peterson "We'll look back at this time a few years from now and recognize how much social networking via the web has changed the way America does business."

The Conference concluded with the participants enjoying a boat tour or participating in the annual golf outing.

Tech Corner

Operating System Struggle

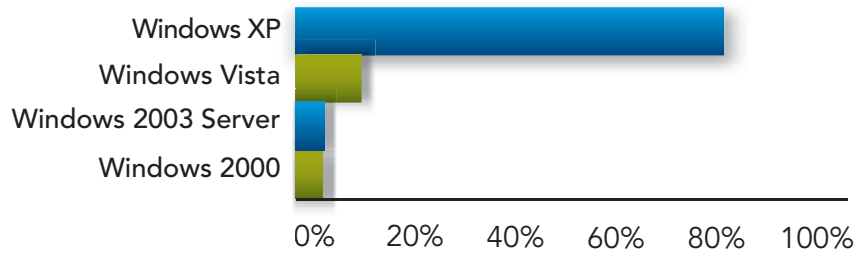
Is the upcoming release of Windows 7 something you should care about? If you believe the hype, the world will change dramatically on October 22, 2009 when Windows 7 becomes widely available. Even though more applications continue to move to the Internet, your computer operating system is not going away any time soon. For most folks that means some version of Windows.

Typically, each version of Windows is supported for 5 years with mainstream support and another 5 years of extended support. What's the difference between the two levels of support? It's a matter of degree, but the important differences are that during mainstream support Microsoft provides hot-fix support for system bugs, provides free incident support and more. Once a system moves into extended support, only security updates are delivered. After extended support ends, well, good luck. For more detail, visit Microsoft at <http://support.microsoft.com/gp/lifepolicy>.

What should I do with my computer systems now?

If you are part of the 3% of FSC customers still running Windows 2000, start planning a way to move to something else. A computer running Windows 2000 is probably fairly old at this point and may have trouble running Windows XP. Your best bet is to buy a new computer once Windows 7 arrives.

What are FSC customers running?



For the majority of FSC customers running Windows XP, you too are running in extended support mode. It's time to start thinking about upgrading, but it makes sense to take a look at Windows 7 as an option on your existing hardware. If your machines were manufactured with a "Vista Compatible" sticker then they probably can run Windows 7 without any issue.

Vista is fully supported through 2012, so those running Vista are sitting pretty right now. For those of you considering purchasing new computers, make sure you check with the manufacturer or retailer. Most of them are offering a free upgrade to Windows 7 if you buy before it is released.

Usually, newer software is bigger, slower and harder to use. In a rare turn of events, this appears to not be the case for Windows 7. Microsoft seems to have listened to the criticisms of Vista and has improved the User Interface (UI) as well as the performance. In many cases, Windows 7 actually runs on the

same hardware more efficiently than Vista. In addition, there are no major changes to the security model in the operating system, which means that software developers like FSC may not have to do anything more to get our products running successfully on Windows 7.

What are the upgrade options?

There are many options for upgrading from both Windows XP and Vista. CNET provided a very good FAQ recently with pricing: <http://tinyurl.com/kroz9c>

As always, we recommend you consult with all of your technology providers to ensure that they are ready to support a move to the newest operating systems. The last thing you want to find is that you've spent a pile of money on an operating system and then your management system or some other key system doesn't work.

Windows 7 is due in stores and on new computers in October.



28038 Dorothy Drive
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Phone: (800) 433-2550
Email: fscsales@stoneriver.com
fsc.stoneriver.com

Presorted
Standard Mail
U.S. Postage Paid
Emerald
Publications

We Have a Winner!

At StoneRiver – FSC we take pride in offering our customers world class customer service. We are excited to announce the winner of the HP Laptop. The winner was drawn randomly from the participants in our 2009 Customer Service Survey.

The winner is Greg Cazan of Budget Insurance Agency in Los Angeles. When we called Craig to let him know he had won he said "Wow, I have never one anything before! Thank you this is great. I was not going to fill out the survey and have not for the last few years but happy I did now."

Congratulations Greg!

