

No More Spinning Wheels on Small Stuff; Partnership Frees Agents to Pursue Larger Accounts

SITUATION: THE STRUGGLE FOR BALANCE

Big accounts mean better bottom-line profits. Yet as any successful broker knows, if you want to provide comprehensive service, drawing a line in the sand regarding what size account you desire is not always a simple task. For example, the P&C commissions for a commercial real estate company with multiple holdings -- but few employees -- could be significant, while the benefits commissions might be minimal. Not to mention the time associated with managing such accounts.

In the case of Pasadena, California-based Bolton & Company, a partnership with Digital Insurance to handle small group benefits provides the ultimate solution.

"It allows us to say 'yes' to a deal and not have other brokers in the mix," says Judy Whitson, vice president of Bolton's account management team. "Every year we strive to focus on bigger clients," she explains. "Our partnership with Digital Insurance provides the resources we need for smaller benefits clients and enables our agents to focus on our firm's larger business goals."

"Digital's relationship with Bolton is a very good model," says Steve Pede, vice president of client relations at Digital. "As with many of our broker partners, they continue to grow because their segmentation strategy is well articulated, communicated and executed year over year."

Established in 1931, Bolton is one of the nation's largest employee-owned insurance brokers, providing clients worldwide with

AT-A-GLANCE

Company	Bolton & Company
Business Lines	Insurance and risk management services, employee benefits and financial products
Location	Pasadena, Calif.
Established	1931
Size	Manages >\$150 million in annual premiums for all clients

Partnership:

Digital manages employee benefits for clients that generate less than \$7,500 in annual gross revenue

Primed for Success:

- In demanding market, Bolton recognized it could no longer provide desired service to its smallest accounts
- Agents responded to new big account mindset, recognizing they no longer had to write anything they can get their hands on just for the commission
- Growth continues because segmentation strategy is well articulated, communicated and executed each year

Bottom Line:

Digital delivers big client service to Bolton's smallest accounts. Partnership freed agents to bring on additional business without adding staff.

insurance and risk management services, employee benefits and financial products. The company employs more than 120 insurance professionals and manages in excess of \$150 million in annual premiums on behalf of its clients.

Small Accounts; Big Time Investment

Bolton began working with Digital in 2004. "We had a lot of small clients and wanted to free up agents who spent a lot of time managing those accounts," Whitson says. The relationship has evolved over time, and Digital now handles employee benefits for clients that generate less than \$7,500 in annual gross revenue.

"Small accounts are very time consuming," says Bolton's vice president. "They usually don't have a human resources department or in-house staff to handle tasks such as processing enrollment forms. They want us to do all that – something we would consider only for larger clients. Working with small accounts requires dealing with people who know very little about insurance – often coordinating directly with owners. Money is always an issue; they ask a lot of questions and frequently request lower-priced quotes.

"The arrangement with Digital affords our talented staff the time to focus on larger relationships and prospects," says Whitson. "We're not spinning our wheels on tiny accounts; we're able to bring on more business without adding staff."

SOLUTION: SPECIALIST DELIVERS REMARKABLE BENEFITS

Digital also helps Bolton differentiate itself from competitors by enhancing the level of service provided to small businesses.

"Digital brings a lot to the table," says Whitson. "Offering an employee help desk for that size account is amazing; employees can get their questions answered immediately." Through Digital's INcompassSM suite of services, policyholders also have access to a website that supplements the efforts of live representatives. It is available 24/7 and includes wellness services with features such as a health risk assessment, interactive health education lessons, health logs and trackers, wellness calculators and self-care resources. There are also benefits resource tools that employers can use for understanding state regulatory requirements, employee training and document templates.

"We couldn't provide this type of service to a small client," says Whitson. "These accounts now work directly with an organization that specializes in small businesses. Digital's

team is willing to spend time with them, and they are happy to build the relationship by reaching out on specific occasions over the course of the year. We would only do this for larger cases. It's been a very positive experience for our smaller clients."

Shifting the Balance

The relationship with Digital has helped Bolton in other, unexpected ways. The benefits resource section of the INcompass website provides valuable data that the firm uses in prospecting. For example, Bolton recently reviewed the status of COBRA legislation in specific states and gathered current comparative salary ranges for a prospect that needed such information.

Would Whitson recommend Digital to other firms? "Absolutely, I would," she says enthusiastically. "It makes a huge difference in the way our agency operates. When you have a resource you trust to handle the small accounts, and your producers don't have to write anything they can get their hands on just for the commission, it forces them into a new mindset. They switch their focus to larger clients, because that's what they're expected to bring in the door."



IN THEIR WORDS

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