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DONOVAN INSURANCE BROKERS

2011 BROKERAGE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

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Kevin Donovan's people skills and his commitment to best practices helped his team receive the IBAO's 2011 Brokerage Award of Excellence.

BY DAVID GAMBRILL

BUILDING A BETTER BROKERAGE

Kevin Donovan, president of Donovan Insurance Brokers in Waterloo, Ontario, has a rare gift for enjoying free-flowing communication that comes with educating people, while at the same time honouring a sense of structure that comes with team-building and implementing best practices at a brokerage.

Recognizing the success of Kevin and his brokerage team, the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario (IBAO) selected Donovan Insurance Brokers to receive its 2011 Brokerage Award of Excellence in the category of more than 10 employees.

Kevin brings a unique set of skills to his team. "I'm a people person, but am also

technically oriented," he says. "One of the things my students have said in the past is that I can take something complicated, break it down into parts so that they can understand."

He describes these characteristics as unique to people who have the desire to be entrepreneurial business owners. "We at the brokerage recently did the 'true colours' test and I was the only one of our company, out of 25 of us, that was bright green," he says. "That basically means you are technically oriented, you like systems and you are an organizer type of person." He nurtured these traits through the training and education he received during

his 33 years as an insurance broker. His father started his family's brokerage in 1969, convincing Kevin to join in 1978. Kevin became president of the brokerage in 1990.

Education has always played an important role in Kevin's professional life. He attributes this to his father.

"My father was very encouraging of me to get in and take courses," Kevin recalls. "He never had time to do course work himself because he was raising us as kids and he started the brokerage in his early 40s. He was seeing a lot of people at night back in those days."

Kevin went on to attain his Certified



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EDUCATOR EXTRAORDINAIRE
The IBAO selected Kevin to receive its Education Volunteer of the Year award in 1991, recognizing his contribution to broker education.

TRUSTED ADVISOR
Kevin participated in IBAC's 2005 review of course content for the Canadian Professional Insurance Broker (CAIB) program. He helped review the broker management and operations segments.

EARLY YEARS
After leaving high school, Kevin had a summer job installing alarms. "It wasn't particularly glorious work, but it did serve me well when I came into insurance and dealt with building structures," he says.

DEDICATED SERVICE
The Insurance Brokers Association of Waterloo Region (IBAWR) presented an Honorary Life Membership to Kevin, a member of the IBAWR board for 10 years, in 1994 for his dedication to member education.

Insurance Professional (CIP) designation in 1983 and his Chartered Insurance Broker Designation (CCIB) in 1984. He taught the Basic Broker licensing course offered in the Kitchener Waterloo area between 1985 and 2009. He was also a course leader for the Canadian Accredited Insurance Broker (CAIB) course from 1987 to 1994.

Along with his education came an emphasis on best practices. Donovan Insurance Brokers was among the first in Canada to complete the Insurance Brokers of Canada (IBAC)'s Best Practices program. In fact, this emphasis on building sound business systems and processes underpinned the brokerage's recent technological innovation.

It wasn't so much that the brokerage introduced flashy new technology. Rather, the staff looked to optimize existing technology at the brokerage. "We made quite a technological investment over the last few years, just to update some of the basic things that you kind of overlook," Kevin says. "There's not a lot of the fun-wow stuff there. It's not at the top of the roller coaster and the big trip down: it's just making sure what's on the highway is being used to its best advantage."

Two external factors influenced the process. First, the brokerage had an almost entirely new personal lines department three years ago. The new managers' focus was getting the technology to work for the organization. Secondly, Donovan Insurance Brokers acquired another brokerage one year ago. It then sought to integrate the brokerages' two very different business processes. This is where Kevin used his team-building and technical skills to best advantage.

"We re-invented our business process," he says. "We did it in a collaborative way. We had different project teams all working at the same time. One group of employees worked on the renewal process, another on policy change and another on new business. We re-worked and re-documented our entire workflow process, from start to finish, in about four months. The reason we were able to do that is because we were so well documented before. We went back to the Best Practices. It just made it easy to cause all of those things to flow in an organized, logical manner."