

THE ONTARIO BROKER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
INSURANCE BROKERS ASSOCIATION
OF ONTARIO (IBAO)

AUGUST 2013

DONOVAN INSURANCE BROKERS INC.
BROKERAGE OF THE YEAR

ON A ROLL

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Donovan Insurance Brokers was named Brokerage of the Year for the second year in a row last fall. Changes are rounding into form, ensuring that the brokerage is well-positioned to grow even more. BY ANGELA STELMAKOWICH

ON A ROLL

What's better than once? Twice, of course.

It was a bit of a surprise, but may have felt twice as good when Donovan Insurance Brokers Inc. (DIB) in Waterloo, Ontario was again honoured as Brokerage of the Year (more than 10 employees) at IBAO's Awards of Excellence last October. "It was not really expected, but certainly welcomed," says brokerage president Kevin Donovan.

Is the DIB team setting its sights on three in a row? The submission has been filed, Kevin says, but only time will tell.

In the interim, it may be time to enjoy how considerable efforts in recent years are bearing fruit. Noting that DIB purchased a brokerage a couple of years ago, Kevin says it has taken some time to move that business from paper files to a paperless system, match up files, get new staff trained and integrate new employees into the extra companies (DIB dealt with

eight companies while the purchased brokerage had dealt with just three).

Still, Kevin considers it time well spent. It is important for everyone to be working off the same page, he says, and this takes time to make sure things are right. "We're quick to implement, but slow to finalize," he says, laughing.

"We like to do that in stages and implement things piece by piece," Kevin explains, taking care to ensure a high level of customer service is maintained. "The customers really shouldn't notice what we're doing internally," he says.

And what is being done internally seems to be working. Kevin reports that DIB's growth year to date is about 15%.

GROWTH CURVE

The hope is there will be more growth, perhaps through more acquisitions. "We would entertain any acquisitions that

would make sense," says Kevin. DIB's appetite is fairly broad, he reports, pointing out that the most recent acquisition was his seventh, "going back to me buying this place," since about the early 1990s.

"We have strong management here. We have great market relationships with our insurers. We have processes and technology to leverage to make even the most basic operation easily integrateable and take care of those customers, which is ultimately what we're here for," Kevin says. "There's no question the aging demographic of ownership is going to continue to bring sales about in the next two years," he says. "There may be some great opportunities there."

Should the right ones present themselves, the DIB team will be ready. It recently revisited the brokerage's business vision with an industry expert to assess where DIB is and where it wants to go.

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**THE
GUARANTEE**



Photo: Terry Scott White, supplied by Donovan Insurance Brokers Inc.

ONE, TWO...
The efforts and performance of Donovan Insurance Brokers were recognized for the second year in a row during last fall's Awards of Excellence.

TIME WELL SPENT
Taking time to do things step by step allows for an ease of integration that will pay off in the end, Kevin suggests.

GROWTH CHART
Internal changes are proving themselves. Kevin reports that DIB's growth year to date is about 15%.

RETENTION ATTENTION
Retention is one of the things that is foremost in the mind of the DIB team. "If you're keeping your customers, you make it easier for yourself to grow," Kevin says.

EASY FLOW
Workflows are better with, among other things, quicker turnaround time on policy documents, a lower error rate and efforts to send out renewals super early.

FULL OF PRAISE
Kevin thanks DIB staff for embracing change, making the brokerage successful with customers and always putting forth their best effort.

DIB has initiated and documented its internal management model for optimum growth, with the focus being on retaining staff and upselling customers.

Efforts around both are aided by the brokerage's consistent radio advertising campaign, which encourages customers to visit DIB's website and get an estimate. "Ninety-five per cent of our online hits on Google analytics are people searching for Donovan Insurance or Donovan Insurance Brokers online," Kevin says. "So they're specifically going to our address," he adds.

"Our retention has also been pretty key to our growth because we're doing things that are keeping our customers," Kevin says. "If you're keeping your customers, you make it easier for yourself to grow."

Workflows are better, he says, citing a quicker turnaround time on policy documents, a lower error rate, sending out renewals early, and, although not for every customer, making "a conscientious effort to contact our customers well before renewal to have a discussion of what's going on in their policy."

COMMUNITY FOCUS

Beyond looking after things internally, DIB continues to look externally with its many charitable endeavours.

These include raising more than \$85,000 for local charities with its sponsorship of the 30 hole-in-one charity golf tournaments; having 14 charities benefit through its Oktoberfest hall, with \$60,000 going to charity; raising more than \$30,000 a year through the Ontario General Insurance Hockey Tournament for Camp McGovern, an affiliate of Big Brothers and Big Sisters; raising more than \$10,000 for Scouts Canada and almost \$25,000 for the Lutherwood Foundation and their Youth Mental Health programs; and taking part in DIB's annual eye glass collection, which supports the "gift of sight" effort.

Asked what he would like his legacy to be, "other than Freedom 95," Kevin quips, "hopefully it will be said that I was a good, fair leader." His biggest praise, though, goes to "staff for embracing change, making us successful with our customers and for putting forth their best effort every day," he says. Kevin's hope is that they feel "we accomplished a lot in our efforts and that these were well worth it, that our customers feel well-served by us and we've done well for the community."