

Profile



The BUTWIN brothers

Almost a century after it's creation, Richard and Robert Butwin maintain their grandfather's commitment to moving the business ahead, adopting progressive approaches that benefit their clients

A Tradition of Excellence

THIRD-GENERATION EXECUTIVES ENSURE CUSTOMER LOYALTY

by Laura Williams-Tracy

Eighty-five years ago, Nathan Butwin's mother threatened to take her business elsewhere if the butcher didn't buy an insurance policy from her son. Thus, he became the first client of Butwin Insurance Group. Two generations later, brothers Richard and Robert Butwin practice a more measured approach to finding and serving new clients, but the familial passion for insurance runs just as deep. "Like the Kennedy's were raised to be presidents, we were raised to be in insurance," quips Richard Butwin, president of Butwin Insurance Group, based in Great Neck, New York. "It's the only job each of us ever considered."

The company retains its hometown roots on Long Island, and it still counts local retailers and other small businesses among its long-standing clients. But today, Butwin Insurance Group services more than 10,000 companies and individuals with a full range of insurance products. Its unique alliance with a nationwide network of Allstate Insurance agents allows it to reach beyond the Northeast. And the brothers' progressive take on a paperless operation has enabled it to expedite service and exponentially increase the number of clients it serves.

The Butwin brothers became the third generation to run the family business, when they took over for their father, Lawrence Butwin, in 1976. Both graduated from Syracuse University after studying the insurance industry. "We grew up with it at the kitchen table," says Richard says, remembering how their father would occasionally take the boys on business appointments, including one memorable visit to a home ravaged by fire damage. "To this day, I still remember seeing the child's room. That



DIVERSIFY

The Butwins practice a measured approach to finding and serving new clients. Butwin Insurance services more than 10,000 clients with a full range of insurance products, allowing the firm to customize product packages based on a client's needs.

LOOKING AHEAD...

Butwin Insurance Group actively seeks out opportunities to acquire small, independent insurance brokers to grow the size and scope of its business. Entrepreneurs are able to increase policy offerings after being acquired, while Butwin vastly increases its market share through the newly attained client base.

gave me perspective about the work my dad did."

The boys gained an appreciation for the variety of businesses their father insured, and for the people behind the regulations and paperwork. They learned much more than making photocopies and metering the mail. Over time, the boys decided to follow their father into the business. "As each of us decided this was the path we were going to take, we became our father's number-one prospects," co-president Robert Butwin says. Both brothers started out making cold calls and winning their own accounts. Richard remains the company's primary salesperson. In addition, Robert runs a division of the company affiliated with 2,000 Allstate Insurance agents who rely on Butwin Insurance Group to diversify and complete their product offerings.

Butwin Insurance Group made its name in property and casualty insurance. The company's focus ranges from personal insurance for automobiles and homes, traditional insurance for medium and large personally held corporations, captive insurance for its most sophisticated clients, and the unique alliance with Allstate Insurance, which brings in some 60 submissions for new policies to be underwritten every day.

Much has changed in the insurance industry since Nathan Butwin got his start in 1925. Mid-size agencies like Butwin now face a more level playing field as the result of consolidation among the larger carriers, Richard says. The company to date has grown to 25 employees and sells \$35 million in premiums a year. Additionally, Butwin takes a progressive approach to business to remain ahead of the competition, which includes a move to turn a paper-laden business completely digital.

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09/04/02 (7/08)

"Our industry is paper," Robert says. "All of the policies are written down and everything has to be signed. We used to have one employee going through a ream of paper every day. Now there is no printer on that desk."

Butwin embraced digital technology five years ago, in part to remain in step with larger carriers moving in that direction. Workflow now moves effortlessly throughout the office and enables staff to work remotely. The move had the added benefit of increasing response time for customers. That allows the company more time to work with clients. The company also eliminated 75 percent of its outgoing mail by e-mailing policies, invoices, and schedules to clients.

"My grandfather had a mantra that he would not go home without selling a policy that day, no matter how small," Richard says. "He would have gobbled up paperless technology and run with it like a marathon runner. He was not from the school to walk away from anything." [P]



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