

Vancouver Area Commercial Insurance Brokers

An insurance broker is an insurance retail intermediary who represents the customer (the insured) often getting quotations from several insurers. By contrast, an insurance agent is an agent for a given insurance company. A broker has the opportunity to assess a client's needs and match those needs with offerings of multiple insurers. A broker often performs a risk management assessment for their clients as they are not required to "sell" only what the insurer they represent wants to offer. A broker is also able to "cross sell" a placement with several different insurers to receive the greatest cost and coverage benefits for the client.

Having said that, some agent insurers offer special programs for specific industries that may, in the final analysis prove to be most competitive. Well known agent insurers include State Farm Insurance, American Family and Federated Mutual.

Following is a list of four Vancouver area business insurance brokerage firms. In keeping with SCORE policy, we make no specific recommendations of one over another.

Biggs Insurance

916 Main Street
Vancouver, WA 98660
360-695-3301
<http://www.biggsinsurance.com/>

One of the largest locally owned independent insurance brokerages in the area. Has a staff of 40 people located in offices in Vancouver and Longview. Biggs Insurance was founded in 1935.

Columbia Insurance Group

7700 NE Parkway Drive Suite 210
Vancouver, WA 98662
360-892-3998
<http://www.columbiaingroup.com/>

Columbia Insurance Group has offices in Vancouver, Fife and Oregon City.

Nies Insurance

900 Washington Street #101
Vancouver, WA 98660
360-254-2220
<http://www.niesinsurance.com/>

A former "local" broker with offices in Battle Ground, Camas and Vancouver, Nies merged with Portland broker Fullerton Company in 2009. Fullerton is a subsidiary of Brown & Brown, a publically traded insurance intermediary ranked 7th of US insurance brokers.

Wells Fargo Insurance Services

1300 SW 5th Avenue, Suite 500

Portland, OR 97201

503-293-9500

<https://wfis.wellsfargo.com>

Wells Fargo Insurance Services, a subsidiary of Wells Fargo Corporation, is the country's fifth largest broker and specializes in Business Property/Casualty and Employee Benefits coverages. The area staff now approaches 40 people.

Tips on Interviewing Prospective Business Insurance Providers

SCORE recommends you first choose a broker you feel will best represent your risk situation to the commercial insurance community. Avoid trying to "pit" one broker against another. Commercial insurance markets are often surprisingly limited for certain business risks and having two or more brokers approach the same insurer may hinder a competitive placement, not help it.

- Ask prospective brokers what insurers they represent
 - Generally, the more the better
 - Some carriers are national, others are regional - ask which is best for you and why.
- Account Staff
 - Professional qualifications of each – especially for account manager and others assisting you with risk evaluation. Ask about the insurance professional designations held by members of your account team.
 - Ask “Who will handle what on my account?”
 - Meet all members of account Team – will they “fit” with your organization?
 - Get references... and call them!
- Account Management Strengths
 - Do they handle other businesses such as yours?
 - Do they really “...understand your business” or have they conducted a risk management assessment/checklist in your behalf?
 - How will they serve as advocates on your claims or insurer billings?

- Will they involve your input in the drafting of insurer specifications and will they allow you to review submission information before "going to market?"
- Have they asked you for a copy of your business plan? If not, they're not really trying to "understand your business."
- Will they review proposed leases and related documents for insurance requirements and clauses, etc?
- Have them describe the annual service cycle for your account
- Do they have Employee Benefits capabilities as well?