

AGENCY WEB SITE WORDING: DOS AND DONT'S

Your agency's website is your "business card" to the world. Well managed, it can be the cornerstone of your operational and marketing strategy. If not, it can and will be used to strengthen a claimant's E&O case against you. The Swiss Re Corporate Solutions claims team has seen seemingly harmless content on agency websites, such as wording emphasizing competitive advantages or certain expertise, very quickly and unintentionally increase the agency's standard of care resulting in a higher duty than normally required. To help mitigate the risk of an increased standard of care, consider the tips below.

X Don't say the agency does things or provides services it does not do or provide.

X Don't say that you can ensure that any claim will be fully covered.

X Don't use terms such as "expert," "specialists," "best price," "most comprehensive," "fully covered," or "partner."

X Avoid terms promising absolutes such as "immediate response time," "ALL lines of insurance," "all risk," "24/7," "all carriers," "addressing ALL of your coverage needs," or "constantly reviewing."

X Don't include client testimonials that show the clients' names and identifying information without being sure the testimonial is specific to their experience thus avoiding an increase in your standard of care. Be sure to have their express written permission, along with a procedure to remove their testimonial if they are no longer a customer.

X Don't launch a website without carefully reviewing the language, with an E&O risk management eye. Template agency websites or advertising firms simply may not have E&O on their radar. Involve your legal counsel in reviewing the language.

X Don't have a quote mechanism (form-fill or Rater) and then fail to respond in a timely manner.

X Don't use open text boxes for customers to type messages to you unless adequately encrypted. You have no control over the information entered in the text box. If a breach occurs during transmission of that message, your agency may be held liable for the release of Personal Identifying Information.

✓ **Do** clearly specify in which states the agency is licensed.

Clearly state the lines of coverage the agency writes (or does not write). For example: not all P&C agencies handle benefits lines.

✓ **Do** clearly state that misstatements or omissions of relevant information by the client can lead to price variation or even declination or rescission of coverage.

✓ **Do** clearly state that information requested to provide a quote or work on coverage will not be shared with carriers or with any other entity without the applicant's permission.

✓ **Be clear:** requesting coverage does not guarantee coverage can be provided. Coverage can begin only with specific statement by a licensed member of the agency staff.

✓ **Do** clearly state by including a disclaimer that none of the information provided in the website is a guarantee that insurance will be provided or that the agency is obligated to procure insurance for the website visitor.

✓ **Do** obtain express written consent from your carrier(s) or any other entity(s) if you use their name or logo on your website.

✓ **Do** use a Privacy Statement on your website and be sure to encrypt any pages that collect Personal Identifying Information, such as an online quote form.

If you are interested in having your website reviewed for terms or phrases which could potentially increase your E&O risk, contact your Big "i" Professional Liability Program Manager via www.iiaba.net/EO to receive a list of approved auditors.

Learn more about mitigating agency web site liability risks at www.iiaba.net/EOHappens.