

FOCUSONSUCCESS2008

ADVERTORIAL PROFILE

CMW insurance

Locally owned with global reach



It might seem odd for a commercial insurance brokerage to say its business is not selling insurance. But that's exactly what Andrew Kemp, president of CMW Insurance Services, said and it's one of the main reasons why CMW is such a local success story, and was recently named one of BIV's Fastest Growing Companies.

BY COREY VAN'T HAAFF

"We have very experienced staff who understand the only way to truly set yourself apart from the competition is by adding value to the operations of our clients. This is accomplished by making a commitment to become involved in our clients business and finding ways to provide quality advice and support services," said Kemp. "We strive to go beyond just managing their insurance programs by quantifying and advising on their total risk exposure. In this way, we become trusted risk and financial advisors to our clients."

Of course, the relationship includes providing an insurance program. All companies, he said, require insurance to protect assets and to transfer liability exposures. For large and complex commercial and industrial businesses, that historically meant accessing one of the dominant, multinational brokerages.

However, in recent years, there has been a prominent shift in opinion that the giant brokerage firms have lost their focus on client priorities and this has strengthened opportunities for the large independent brokers like CMW

who remain client-driven while having full access to the global insurance market.

That's the strength of CMW—the ability to combine large multinational expertise, depth of knowledge and superior market access with what smaller companies are known for: personal service and decision-making at the local level.

"We compete against the international brokers because this office is made up of people who successfully developed their skills working for these large firms," said Kemp, who adds that CMW's staff is among the best and brightest in the industry.

Being a privately owned brokerage means the company is not subject to cumbersome administration and overhead that is normally associated with the large multinationals. And as a privately held firm, the owners can make strategic and tactical decisions quickly and pass on cost savings to their clients.

"Our clients know they can always pick up the phone and get the owners or president of the company on the phone," said Kemp.

"A lot of current clients felt they were not getting the level of service they felt they should get with their previous brokers. They came to CMW because it is locally owned, independent and has proven that its staff is dedicated to a personal level of service without compromising knowledge and expertise."

This local ownership has also paid dividends when it comes to staffing a growing company. CMW is proud many senior staff members are also owners in the company.

"For many, moving from being a senior employee at a multinational firm to an ownership position at a highly respected local firm was a natural progression in their professional careers," said Peter Casey, one of the founders of the company. "At CMW they can continue to advise and manage the complex risk and insurance programs of their corporate clients while gaining the pride and benefits of growing their own company."

CMW's management has also put a major focus on being an employer of choice in the insurance industry. Allowing flexible

work hours, competitive compensation, good benefits and an enjoyable work environment attracts good employees and makes them productive.

"Good things happen when you hire good people," said Casey. "Clients want to work with us; workers know it's a good place to go to work. Clients like the fact that they are dealing with employees that are happy here."

CMW started business in 1994 with less than a handful of employees. Today, the 60 employees typically have over 20 years experience with complex commercial accounts. Revenue has jumped 50-fold.

Historically, CMW Insurance focused on providing services to the property management, manufacturing and construction industries. While still leaders in these areas, CMW's expertise has grown into further segments of business such as tourism, hospitality, gaming, food and beverage operations and municipalities. They also have specialty programs for strata corporations, restaurants, warehousing and travel professionals.

"We bring in very established and respected staff that expands our skill sets," he said. "For example, we now provide risk services to a major gaming company, many established manufacturing companies and some large municipalities."

To expand its service reach to assist multinational clients, CMW

Insurance has alliances with a number of similar-minded independent brokerages across Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. It also has a financial alliance with Capri Insurance of Kelowna, one of the largest independent brokers in Canada. CMW is a member of the Canadian Broker Network and is exploring further formal international alliances.

That personal, value-added service and global reach are what allow CMW Insurance to provide innovative solutions to its clients. Services include risk evaluations and advisory services, asset valuations, contract reviews for risk transfer, insurance program placement and management, employee benefit and pension services and claims support.

It's not just a great relationship with an insurance broker—it's the right relationship. It's a combination of access to the global insurance market, a well-deserved reputation of the broker and a mutually satisfying working partnership between the client and the company.

"We have made exceptional strides growing the company in recent years," said Kemp. "The insurance industry across Canada has been impressed and very supportive of CMW as a result. Our goal is to continue growing our commercial client base through the hiring of quality people and expanding our already considerable contacts." □