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(416) 494-9224 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

CAFII ALERTS WEEKLY DIGEST: April 28 – May 5, 2023

May 5, 2023

The CAFII Alerts Weekly Digest is intended to provide a curated compendium of news on insurance, regulatory, and industry/business/societal topics of relevance to CAFII Members – drawn from domestic and international industry trade press and mainstream media – to aid in Members' awareness of recently published media content in those areas.

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GOVERNMENT/LEGAL/REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

FSRA Publishes Three-Year Business Plan, Highlighting Key Trends In Regulated Sectors

By Kate McCaffery, The Insurance Portal, May 2, 2023

The Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario (FSRA) has published its 2023 – 2026 Annual Business Plan, focused on deliverables related to emerging risks, supervisory capacity, innovation, and the need to better protect and educate consumers.

"This plan builds on the progress FSRA has made to meet the demands of the fast-paced financial environment, which includes adopting a principles-based, outcomes-focused approach and sector-specific supervisory plans," the regulator stated in its announcement about the business plan's publication.

In Ontario, FSRA regulates eight sectors, including property and casualty insurance, life and health insurance, credit unions and caisses populaires, health services providers, pension plans, and financial planners and advisors. Going forward, FSRA says it will focus on operational efficiencies in core compliance, supervision, and enforcement areas. It also says it is maturing as an organization. "New or revised priorities reflect an enhanced need to protect the public interest while enabling creative ideas and more choice within Ontario's financial services sector."

The business plan states that FSRA intends to use a portion of its accumulated surplus to maintain the fees charged to regulated entities substantially at current rates, despite inflation.

Ontario's Minister of Finance reportedly approved the plan on April 12.

The report goes on to look at the funding of defined benefit pension plans, the profitability of credit unions, at auto insurance rates, and conditions for both property and casualty (P&C) and life and health insurance.

Notable trends highlighted in the FSRA plan include the increased use of telematics in auto insurance. "Although FSRA encourages innovation such as telematics in the auto sector, the technology also has the potential to disrupt fair treatment of customer outcomes," FSRA writes.

The rising use of digital platforms, meanwhile, also comes with heightened fair treatment concerns, as do efforts to implement automation.

Other issues and trends discussed include open banking, vulnerable persons, suitability-related issues, consolidation of pension plans, new ways of looking at retirement and decumulation of retirement assets, and third-party outsourcing. Title usage among financial planners and advisors is also discussed, along with cyber-risk, and environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk which FSRA says is particularly present among insurance companies and pension plans.

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Read Story (Subscription Required): *https://insurance-portal.ca/society/ontario-regulator-publishes-three-year-business-plan/?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=daily_complete_202305-04&utm_medium=email*

FSRA Revises Proposed Fee Rule

Some Fees Reduced To Reflect Existing OSC Oversight Of New SRO

By James Langton, Investment Executive, May 4, 2023

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/from-the-regulators/fsra-revises-proposed-fee-rule/

Following a handful of changes to its proposed fee rule, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario (FSRA) is seeking feedback on proposals that would reduce fees driven by the new financial advisor titling regime.

Among other things, the regulator revised its fee rule to reflect the Ontario Securities Commission's (OSC) oversight of the new industry self-regulatory organization, the Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization (CIRO).

Specifically, FSRA is proposing to exempt SROs that are already overseen by the OSC from the variable fee charged to credentialing bodies. Further, FSRA would modify the variable fees charged to other credentialing bodies so advisors and planners who hold credentials from the SRO are not included in that fee calculation.

"The proposed updated fee structure for the financial professionals sector mitigates duplication and regulatory burden for SRO [credentialing bodies] and their credential holders," FSRA said in a notice outlining the proposed changes.

"FSRA, the OSC, and [CIRO] are working together to ensure that [CIRO's] participation as a credentialing body under the title protection framework would not result in regulatory duplication," it added in a release.

The fee rule was first issued for consultation in late November 2022 for a 90-day comment period. "Overall, FSRA's first consultation on the proposed 2022 fee rule confirmed that stakeholders strongly support the implementation of an updated fee structure that aligns with FSRA's [vision and principles]," the regulator said.

The revised proposal is now out for consultation until June 2.

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Life Agents Falling Short, FSRA Finds

Almost Half Of High-Risk Agent Reviews Found Best-Practice Failures

By James Langton, Investment Executive, May 2, 2023

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/from-the-regulators/life-agents-falling-short-fsra-finds/

Life agents need to pull up their socks, and the companies overseeing them must do a better job too, according to a new report from Ontario's Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA).

In an annual report on its compliance and enforcement efforts in the life agent sector, FSRA said it carried out 115 life agent examinations in the latest year. Of those examinations — which focused on higher-risk agents, such as agents who had received previous warnings or been disciplined by another regulator — 48% had issues meeting industry best practices.

"The top three best practices issues identified were the absence of 'reason why' letters, contemporaneous notes, and insurance needs analysis," it reported.

At the same time, FSRA said its work appeared to show a link between agents who don't follow industry best practices and those who commit regulatory violations.

"The correlation between not following best practices and [regulatory contraventions] suggests that increased oversight towards best practices would promote financial safety, support fair treatment of consumers, and facilitate principles-based and outcomes-focused regulation within the life insurance sector," it said. "Put simply, following best practices helps to ensure fair outcomes for consumers."

Additionally, given the link between adhering to best practices, suitability, and customer outcomes, FSRA said it intends to "consult on how such practices may become requirements in Ontario in support of fair treatment of customers."

In the meantime, it suggested that life agents "need to improve their overall business practices," and that firms overseeing those agents need to review their compliance oversight programs.

At the same time, the agency said it's concerned there may be under-reporting of "unsuitable" life agents in Ontario, as it received just 61 complaints about agent suitability (out of approximately 60,000 agents) during the year.

FSRA closed 57% of those complaints and escalated the other 43% for review. It also said it will continue to prioritize agent suitability in its supervisory work.

According to the report, the amount of administrative monetary penalties levied by FSRA's enforcement unit soared to $224,000 in the latest year from $41,000 the year before. The financial penalties issued by regulatory discipline officers also rose to $14,500 from $10,000 in the prior year.

AMF's 2023-24 Statement Of Priorities Focuses On Four Key Orientations

By Alain Castonguay, The Insurance Portal, May 4, 2023

The Autorité des marchés financiers has just published its "Annual Statement of Priorities 2023-2024". The document lists the main initiatives planned from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, in connection with its "2021-2025 Strategic Plan."

The document was unveiled at the end of April 2023 by the AMF. The strategic plan seeks to realize the regulator's vision of delivering value to consumers and the financial sector.

The key initiatives unveiled are aligned with each of the strategic plan's four key orientations.

Scalable Environment

The first orientation is the relevance of the AMF's activities to consumers in the context of the constantly changing financial services environment.

Particular attention will be paid to enhancing financial literacy in Quebec, in the context of the digital transformation of the financial sector, increased consumer connectivity, and a sustained increase in online fraud. The 2023-2026 action plan for the Québec Strategy for Financial Education will soon be unveiled.

In particular, the AMF will add content to its "Practical Guide for the Financial Services Industry — Protecting a Client in a Vulnerable Situation."

In terms of supervision, the AMF will maintain its joint efforts with the Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA) to monitor the crypto-asset industry and oversee trading platforms in this area.

Financial Sector

The second orientation focuses on the AMF's influence in support of the financial sector. Reducing the compliance burden for regulated entities features prominently in the annual plan.

In particular, it is planned to finalize the regulatory amendments relating to external activities and professional liability insurance for representatives and registrants subject to *the Act respecting the distribution of financial products and services* (ARDFPS).

The AMF will also issue a call for proposals to select a supplier to manage examination services. The goal is to move the process to an online review mode.

On the supervisory side, the AMF will continue its regulatory development work with other provincial regulators on segregated funds. The work will focus on the remuneration paid when a consumer commits to a segregated fund contract, the Canada-wide directive governing the offering of this product, and the adoption of a regulation prohibiting the charging of certain fees to a policyholder.

The AMF also intends to enhance its internal capacity in order to strengthen its supervision of the crypto-assets sector. There are also plans to roll out a pilot project to develop a stress testing tool to assess the impact of a severe macro-economic shock on the stability of large supervised financial institutions and to strengthen supervision of the sector.

Performance

The third orientation focuses on the AMF's performance in achieving its mission. In particular, the AMF will proceed with the planned enhancement of its computer processing centres.

The regulator wants to have an integrated solution for managing the information which regulated entities provide to it. Together with other regulators, the next generation of the System for Electronic Document Analysis and Retrieval (SEDAR+) will be implemented, the new secure platform that all market participants will use to deposit, communicate, and retrieve information on Canada's capital markets.

Human Resources

The fourth orientation emphasizes the AMF's concern for its role as an employer, and will focus on enhancing conditions for both current and future employees. The hybrid work model will be maintained, because the objective is to focus on flexibility and autonomy.

By consulting with employees, the AMF will seek to find mechanisms that stimulate and encourage collaboration within the organization, whether in virtual mode or on its premises.

Read Story (Subscription Required):
[More Focus on Enhancing Financial Literacy - Insurance Portal (portail-assurance.ca)]

UK FCA Relaxes Rules To Rejuvenate Listings

Regulator Curbs Investor Protections To Attract Issuers, Placate Bankers

By James Langton, Investment Executive, May 3, 2023

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/from-the-regulators/fca-relaxes-rules-to-rejuvenate-listings/

In an effort to reignite the country's public markets, the UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is easing some of the investor protections in its listing rules.

The regulator unveiled a set of proposed reforms that aim to attract more public listings and boost competition by streamlining its rules for companies looking to go public.

Among other things, it's doing away with the "premium" and "standard" listing segments, removing requirements that could deter early-stage companies from listing, easing curbs on dual class share structures, and scrapping required shareholder votes on certain issues.

"Our proposed reforms would significantly rebalance the burden of regulation to the benefit of listed companies and investors who are willing to set their own risk appetite and terms of engagement," said Nikhil Rathi, chief executive of the FCA, in a release.

The reforms come in response to a 40% decline in public listings in the UK since the financial crisis — a trend that has also been complicated by the UK's recent withdrawal from the European Union.

The FCA stressed that the decision to go public in a particular market isn't just driven by regulation, it's also affected by the tax regime and the availability of capital, among other considerations — at the same time, the UK's listing rules have been criticized as too complicated and onerous, it noted.

"'While regulation plays an important part, a company's decision on whether, and where to list, is influenced by many factors so substantive change will require a concerted effort from government and industry as well," Rathi said. "We want to encourage more companies to list and grow in the UK, versus other highly competitive international markets."

Alongside the proposed reforms to listing rules, the FCA is revising the rules that govern secondary markets too — also in a bid to boost competition.

Those changes aim to enhance execution quality, reduce trading costs, and boost liquidity. Among other things, they will remove restrictions on tick sizes, allow trading venues to rely on prices from overseas markets, and simplify reporting of over-the-counter (OTC) transactions.

At the same time, the FCA is introducing a new trade reporting regime that is intended to improve post-trade transparency and to create a simpler regime for OTC reporting. These reforms are due to take effect in April 2024, while other reforms to secondary market rules will come into force immediately.

Additionally, the regulator said that it will support an industry-led initiative to improve market resilience during trading venue outages, and will examine whether a formal review of retail trading is needed.

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OTHER CAFII MEMBER-RELEVANT NEWS

TD Bank Group Calls Off First Horizon Deal

The Cancellation Of The Transaction Comes Amid Upheaval In The U.S. Banking Sector

By Ian Bickis, The Canadian Press, May 4, 2023

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/industry-news/td-bank-group-calls-off-first-horizon-deal/

TD Bank Group has called off its US$13.4-billion deal to acquire U.S. bank First Horizon Corp., citing regulatory uncertainty around the takeover.

The bank said on Thursday, May 4 that it had reached a mutual agreement with the Tennessee-based bank to terminate the acquisition because it was unclear when and if it would be able to obtain approval for the deal.

"This decision provides our colleagues and shareholders with clarity," said TD chief executive Bharat Masrani in a statement.

"Though disappointed with the outcome, we move forward with a strong, growing franchise in the United States, servicing more than 10 million customers across our footprint."

TD had said earlier this year that it did not expect to receive regulatory approval for the First Horizon deal by a May 27 deadline, but that it was in talks to extend the closing date window.

The cancellation of the deal comes amid upheaval in the U.S. banking sector, including the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in March and Monday, May 1's closure and sale by regulators of First Republic Bank. The sale of much of First Republic's assets to JPMorgan Chase marked the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history.

The strain on the banking sector has put pressure on the value of many mid-sized banks, leading to calls from some for TD to walk away or renegotiate the terms of the deal which it first announced in February 2022.

The two banks did not, however, talk of changing the deal, said First Horizon chief executive Bryan Jordan on a conference call on Thursday, May 4.

"At no time did we discuss any changes in price, or any other changes to the structure of the deal," said Jordan.

He said the regulatory uncertainty was not related in any way to First Horizon, and that TD told him they couldn't provide assurances of approval this year or in 2024.

The collapse of the deal, rather than a renegotiation, was somewhat unexpected, said Barclays analyst John Aiken in a note.

"We are surprised that the parties could not come to an agreed upon lower price and believe that there could be broader repercussions from walking away from the deal."

TD might find future potential partners less willing to sit across the table, he said, while the end of the deal also raises questions about how the bank is going to put its excess capital to use.

Under the terms of the agreement, TD will pay First Horizon a US$200-million break fee. The payment is in addition to a US$25-million fee reimbursement owed to First Horizon under the merger agreement. The First Horizon preferred shares purchased by TD Bank will continue to reflect a conversion price of US$25 per share.

At TD's shareholder meeting in April, Masrani said he still saw the benefits of the deal, but notably absent were his comments from March that the bank remained "fully committed to the transaction."

The end of the deal comes as U.S. bank acquisitions face heightened scrutiny and longer timelines under the Biden administration. Edward Jones analyst James Shanahan noted that merger approvals, including BMO's recent US$16.3-billion acquisition of Bank of the West and another one by U.S. Bancorp, took about twice as long compared with before.

"The Biden administration appears to be particularly concerned about the potential impact on local communities, including branch closures that could inconvenience customers," said Shanahan in a note.

He said this administration has also been more focused on how mergers affect the ability of banking customers to access credit, particularly among traditionally under-served communities.

TD faced criticism at a public meeting about the merger last year for what some called a poor track record of serving Black and Latino clients, though the bank noted several recent initiatives to increase lending to communities of colour.

The bank also faced criticism during the review for past actions around fees after it reached a US$122-million settlement with U.S. regulators in 2021 stemming from illegal overdraft practices.
In announcing the end of the deal, TD did not provide any details about what might be causing the regulatory approval delays.

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HSBC Expects Later Close Of Canadian Division Sale To RBC

Both The Competition Bureau And OSFI Are Reviewing The Transaction, Which Requires Approval From The Finance Minister

By Investment Executive Staff, with Files from Canadian Press, May 2, 2023

https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/industry-news/hsbc-expects-later-close-of-canadian-division-sale-to-rbc/

HSBC Holdings plc says the sale of its Canadian division to Royal Bank of Canada is going to take longer than first expected, but that the deal remains a key priority.

London-based HSBC says it now expects to complete the $13.5-billion transaction in the first quarter of 2024, rather than late this year as it guided when it announced the deal last November.

The bank says the later close is to ensure a smooth transition, while several other recent bank deals have taken longer than expected amid heightened regulatory scrutiny, including TD's still pending takeover of First Horizon.

Canada's Competition Bureau on Tuesday, May 2 put out a call for input from the public on the RBC deal, seeking information that would help it assess potential impacts on competition from the deal.

"The bureau is investigating whether the proposed acquisition is likely to result in a substantial lessening or prevention of competition for services provided by the companies, including personal and business financial services across Canada," it said in a release.

Among other things, the Competition Bureau is reviewing the impact on the competitive landscape in various market segments, including the retail investment business, investment counselling, and various retail banking businesses, such as consumer lending, mortgages, and ordinary banking services.

The review will consider the potential impact of the proposed acquisition on price, selection, and quality of products and services in these various businesses, it said. The deadline for submitting feedback is June 1.

Both the Competition Bureau and the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions are reviewing the transaction, which requires approval from Canada's finance minister.

HSBC Bank Canada says it had a record profit of $309 million before income tax expense in the first quarter, up $17 million from the same quarter last year, while its total assets were $123.3 billion at quarter end.

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Poll Finds Majority Aren't Aware Of The Estate Planning Benefits Of Insurance

By Kate McCaffery, The Insurance Portal, May 4, 2023

A new survey conducted by Ipsos for RBC Insurance has found that Canadians want to maximize what they leave behind when they die, but there is an awareness gap preventing the use of financial products and services that can help.

Of the 1,501 Canadians surveyed in March 2023, 87 per cent say they want to avoid unnecessary estate fees, while 86 per cent say they want to minimize out-of-pocket settlement costs needed to settle their affairs.

"However, the findings also suggest there is a lack of planning and prioritization among Canadians when it comes to preparing their estate," the bank's insurance division states, adding that estate plans are important, but many don't have a clear understanding about what happens to their money after they die.

Of those surveyed, 61 per cent don't feel knowledgeable about or have never heard of the probate process. Notably, 57 per cent aren't aware that estate taxes may be reduced by insurance policy benefits, an awareness gap which RBC says makes it more difficult for Canadians to set up their estates advantageously. "For example, only 25 per cent say they are knowledgeable about segregated funds, an investment solution that can help maximize an inheritance by reducing estate fees, since the funds bypass probate and are paid directly to an appropriate named beneficiary," RBCs writes.

Among the barriers examined, RBC says that 42 per cent of those over age 55 are not talking openly about their long-term wishes; and 38 per cent say their financial affairs are private and they don't feel comfortable discussing them with loved ones. Another 21 per cent said that speaking with family about their financial affairs will cause infighting. Furthermore, 34 per cent, more than one-third, say that their spouse or partner is not familiar with their estate plans. More than half added that their financial planner is also not in the loop.

Read Story (Subscription Required): *https://insurance-portal.ca/society/poll-finds-majority-arent-aware-of-the-estate-planning-benefits-of-insurance/?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=daily_complete_202305-04&utm_medium=email*

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Six Findings On Workplace Culture In The Insurance Industry

By Courtney Hoff, Writer, Growth Content, Arizent, as published in Digital Insurance, February 16, 2023

https://www.dig-in.com/list/6-findings-on-workplace-culture-in-the-insurance-industry?position=editorial_3&campaignname=DIG%20Morning%20Briefing-02172023&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=V2_DIG_Daily_Briefing_20210316%2B%E2%80%98-%E2%80%99%2B02%2F17%2F2023&bt_ee=GGyjQYSFMUPMXcRjTyP95weRaLpTDon2ZdwQnwih%2FzF1t1k9ephF%2FKxeVoV5Ntp1&bt_ts=1676642480613

The workplace in the insurance industry today bears little resemblance to what it was just a few years ago, when remote working was a remote possibility for most people and commuting to the office was the norm.

Insurers, however, are embracing the change. Read our roundup for the latest cultural shifts in the landscape of the insurance workplace.

Putting The Employee At The Forefront

The focus on employee health and safety was already ingrained in the culture at Allstate when the pandemic struck, making it an easy decision to transition immediately to remote working, according to Stephanie Roseman, the company's vice president of people solutions and experiences.

"It was all really about the employees and their well-being — that has been our primary decision-maker through a lot of things," said Roseman. "When the issue arose, it wasn't something we had to really think through, it was second nature to us to make this work."

It was therefore only natural to ask staff for their thoughts on WFH vs. hybrid vs. office working when the company reviewed its workplace strategy. With 83% favoring WFH and Allstate responding accordingly, Roseman says the policy is bearing fruit with a big improvement in employee recruitment and retention.

Setting New Norms For The Remote Working Environment

Melissa Jones, executive vice president and chief human resources officer at CSAA, would be the first to say that if remote working is going to become the new normal, companies have to be intentional about establishing what the norms should be.

Jones spoke with Digital Insurance to discuss how CSAA approached the company's transition to work from home, why it's important to recreate the "water cooler" experience virtually, how going remote has improved employee recruitment, and more.

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Changing The Cultural Mindset In The Industry

The key to having happy, engaged staff in the insurance industry is to give them a modern employee experience, with better compensation, an improved work-life balance and good prospects for career advancement, according to Jena Wierwille, VP of Human Resources at Central Insurance.

During the pandemic, many insurers offered more progressive working arrangements and company benefits, said Wierwille. Some firms are now looking to turn back the clock on these policies, but their employees are unlikely to want to return to the way it was before.

Wierwille, however, sees a clear way forward: "Taking a page from the tech industry's playbook can help modernize and move insurance companies in the right direction."

Disability Inclusion Is The 'New Frontier' In The Top Workplaces

A number of insurance firms and insurtechs have been recognized for their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by making the list of best places to work on The Disability Equality Index.

"To prepare for the future and create sustainable businesses, companies must engage their stakeholders with disabilities and weave disability inclusion into everything they do," said Ted Kennedy, Jr., co-chair of the Disability Equality Index.

Of the 16 insurance industry companies on the list, 12 received the top score of 100%, including Chubb, Lincoln Financial, Prudential, and USAA.

Progressive Heads List Of Best Employers

Insurance firms account for almost 20% of the companies on the Forbes list of America's Best Employers for Diversity, with Progressive taking the top spot.

Based on a survey of 60,000 U.S. employees, the annual list ranks companies according to their level of the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion by asking the employees to rate the firms they work for on a variety of factors, including ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation.

"At Progressive, the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion are built into our core values, which are the foundation of our culture and guide everything we do," said Marisa Afzali, director of diversity, equity and inclusion at Progressive.

'Perfect' LBGTQ+ Score Awarded To 27 Insurance Industry Employers

Top P&C and life insurance companies featured highly in the Human Rights Campaign's 20th annual Corporate Equality Index for their policies, practices, and benefits for LGBTQ+ employees.

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Companies are rated by the HRC on very specific criteria, covering protections for sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace; benefits for spouses, partners and transgender people; and internal education, resources groups and outreach to LGBTQ+ communities.

Twenty seven insurance companies were awarded the top 'perfect' score of 100 in the report, including American Family Insurance, Chubb, CNA, CSAA and Farmers.

Going Down The Rabbit Hole Of Customer Reviews

By David Gambrill, Canadian Underwriter, February 27, 2023

https://www.canadianunderwriter.ca/insurance/going-down-the-rabbit-hole-of-customer-reviews-1004230925/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newcom&utm_campaign=CanadianUnderwriterWeek&utm_content=20230303152618&hash=6d73923380f292a40dc042b455f0fde3

Before asking customers for online reviews of their insurance purchases, brokers and insurers should give their clients 5 to 13 days to reflect on the experience and the product, a recent *Harvard Business Review* article suggests.

"If they're asked to provide a review too early, they can feel pressured and rushed, and they might opt not to send in a review at all," Miyeon Jung, Sunghan Ryu, Sang-Pil Han, and Daegon Cho wrote in a recent blog post. "One survey has revealed that the majority of online customers today take at least two days after getting a product to post a review, while only 8% choose the same day."

And that's for customer reviews of products leading to immediate gratification, whereas with an insurance product, it is hoped the person won't be in the kind of predicament in which they would need to use it at all.

So, how long should you wait to before asking a consumer to review your product or service?

"Our findings suggest that the following approach is best," the authors wrote. "Figure out how long, on average, it took customers to post reviews for your product or service in the past. Check to see if the average amount of time has passed. If no, do not send a review reminder. You don't want to interfere with your customers. If yes, then send a review reminder to the customer."

In the case of insurance, there is some question about whether to encourage customer input at all. Since many insurance policyholders place great stock in their product bailing them out of life's most difficult situations, the expectations of the product are often higher than they'd be for something like a blender.

It's more likely that high expectations will be thwarted, which leads to bad reviews for insurance companies.

Toronto company InsurEye compiles independent customer reviews for various financial and insurance products across all major Canadian insurance providers. They show the average five-star ratings for insurers providing auto, car, motorcycle and travel insurance.

Of the 16 Canadian insurance service providers that received more than 100 customer reviews of their products and services, as complied on InsurEye, only three — Belair, Insurance Corporation of B.C., and Allstate — received as high as two stars out of five. The rest received customer reviews of 1.5 stars out of five.

Berry Insurance, a U.S. independent broker based in Massachusetts, shared a blog post of what to make of online reviews of insurance carriers. The brokerage understands the importance of online product reviews to people making decisions, but consumers do need to ask themselves some questions about the online reviews.

“Occasionally, when we pick the [insurance] company we think is best for a client, they express concerns about some reviews they’ve seen online, and understandably so,” Berry Insurance wrote. “We’re glad our clients are doing their homework and want to make sure they have great coverage, but we also know there is sometimes more to the story when it comes to bad reviews.”

Basically, customers should ask themselves who is actually writing the online review. Their anonymous nature makes it hard to be certain. It could even be a competitor writing the review, or the same disgruntled consumer writing under multiple account names.

Another factor is the mood or motivation of the reviewer. As Berry Insurance noted, sometimes when a person is mad about something, the first place they’ll go to let off steam is the internet. They may not have had the time (or inclination) to find out from the insurance company exactly what happened. They just wanted to sound off.

Berry lists frequency and consistency as two indicators of how much stock to place in your consumer reviews.

“If a company has hundreds of great reviews, and one bad one, I wouldn’t let it concern you too much,” said Berry’s blog post. “It could be from a fluke situation or untrustworthy source.

“If a company has a bunch of negative reviews, all with different complaints, that might send up some red flags. The number of bad reviews is concerning, but if they’re all saying different things, it’s hard to determine if the company does have any specific, widespread issues.

“If a company has several bad reviews, all with the same complaint, you can probably take them seriously.”

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UPCOMING CAFII MEMBER-RELEVANT WEBINARS AND EVENTS

Webinar By Managing Matters on Volunteer Engagement In Associations

Dates: Wednesday, May 10, 2023
Time: 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm EST

Managing Matters will be hosting a 30-minute webinar for clients and the wider industry, focusing on the state of volunteering in Associations. Join Managing Matters' award-winning expert on Volunteer Engagement, Erin Spink, as she shares some insights into recent research MM conducted into the volunteering landscape across Associations and why Association leaders need to prioritize volunteer engagement to keep their organizations thriving.

This is a free learning opportunity for our clients and the wider community, and we encourage you to join us if you'd like to learn more about the volunteer landscape across Associations.

Register Here

Webinar By Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP On "Quebec's Charter of the French Language: Where We Are Now and What to Look Out for in the Coming Months"

Dates: Thursday, May 11, 2023
Time: 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm EST

Join Blakes lawyers for a discussion on the impacts of the adoption of Bill 96 and new obligations coming into effect for employers in Quebec. Our speakers will review the main amendments to Quebec's *Charter of the French Language* and examine the significant changes employers have made to their practices and policies, as well as the strategies they have put in place in this regard over the past year.

Our speakers will also discuss key amendments to the Charter that apply to commercial contracts and the significant changes that businesses operating in Quebec must make to their commercial practices.

Please note that this webinar will take place in English only.

Please register by Wednesday, May 10, 2023.

For more information and to register, send an email here: evenements.montreal@blakes.com.

200-411 Richmond Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 3S5
☎ (416) 494-9224 🖷 (416) 967-6320
info@cafii.com www.cafii.com

In-Person Conference By Insurance Business Canada: "Fighting Fatigue – Insurance Leaders Share Strategies At 'Women In Insurance Summit'"

Dates: Thursday, June 22, 2023
Time: 8:00 am – 4:15 pm EST
Venue: The Carlu, Toronto

Join us at the annual Women in insurance Summit Canada in Toronto this June 22, for Fighting fatigue – How to remain on top of your game – an engaging panel discussion with leaders from Marsh Canada, Sovereign Insurance, Intact Insurance, and Ridge Canada. They'll be addressing questions such as

- What are the best strategies for fighting fatigue, and how can we utilize them?
- How can we prioritize well-being; and, in turn, create a culture of empathy and support?
- What tools can we use to overcome challenges such as time management, multiple responsibilities, and burnout?

Register Here