

A Chat with Austin Brown

GRADUATE, ALPENA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ASSOCIATE IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENT, NORTHWOOD UNIVERSITY, INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Do you come from an insurance family?

Most everyone in my family is an entrepreneur or involved in business. Growing up around entrepreneurs made me want to be one myself, and to live life and support myself by working a fulfilling job. I've always liked numbers and what goes on behind the scenes to make a business work.

I sold myself on the idea of being an entrepreneur at a very young age. Insurance seemed like a natural fit. My grandpa started his own insurance agency in Tawas, and my dad worked in insurance when he was younger. My uncle is still in the insurance business, and strongly influenced my college and career choices.

What business education or training did you receive before you went to college?

I worked at the family agency for a while when I was in high school. That sparked my interest in business and put me on a path to study insurance and risk management in college.

While I originally set out to attend Northwood University as a freshman, I later opted to get my start at Alpena Community College. I recently completed my associate in business and have been working in construction to help cover tuition for my advanced degree. My plan is to transfer to Northwood in Midland

this fall and to earn a bachelor's in insurance risk management.

What kind of job or internship would you like to do during college?

When I first started college a few months after graduating high school, I had the chance to help out at an insurance company. They were setting up a program for young agents, and I learned a lot about the opportunities in the business.

Now that I have my associate degree, I'm extremely motivated to start my bachelor's program this fall and be involved in something similar. I'd also love to intern at an agency or insurance company so I can learn first-hand what it means to work in the insurance industry.

What have you learned about insurance careers that you didn't know before?

I pride myself on being a hard worker. With insurance, I've seen that it's a business that gives you the chance to work hard and be rewarded. Since I grew up around people who worked as agents or agency owners, I saw how successful you could be.

What I didn't realize was the incredible demand that's out there right now for new talent. I've heard that about half the people working in the insurance business will be retiring in the next few



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years. That means a lot of doors will be opening for people looking to get a start on their career. My grandpa always told me insurance was recession proof – that people will never stop buying insurance since they need that security and peace-of-mind. I'm beginning to see the wisdom in his words!

Where do you see yourself going in the business?

Initially, I would like to work for someone and learn the ropes. I see insurance as a career that allows me to make my own way, and even stay in my hometown. I love Tawas. I'm a volunteer firefighter here, help coach football at the high school, and have great relationships with the community, my family and friends. Being an independent agent will enable me to build a life here and contribute to my community. That makes me extremely happy and confident in my choice of careers.

Ann Kammerer is a freelance writer living in East Lansing. She has written extensively about business people, educators, artists and everyday citizens doing good things.

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