

A Chat with Dan Diederich

SENIOR, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND MARKETING, AQUINAS COLLEGE

Michigan Agent has been talking to students and agents new to our industry to discover their path to and experience in our industry.

What led you to your interest in the insurance industry?

My parents have been in the insurance and financial industry since I was born. They never pushed me to go into insurance, and said I should explore my options. But I always wanted to be part of the family business, and found insurance to be a good fit.

I began working at my parent's agency during the summer when I was still in high school. I started out sorting mail and running reports. When I turned 18, my parents encouraged me to get my property and casualty license. I did that and started selling. When I turned 19, I got my life and health license, too. I'm still working at the family agency, and will be marking my eighth year this summer.

How is college contributing to your career? Have you done any internships?

I started at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids right after graduating from Detroit Catholic Central in 2015. While most of my knowledge of the agency side comes through my experience at my family's business, my studies at Aquinas are giving me a great understanding of the company side of insurance.

I interned at Accident Fund as part of a "swap" with my parent's agency. I job-shadowed loss con-

trol, business development and underwriting. I also spent three days at Citizens Insurance in Howell doing similar activities as part of the Hanover LEAD competition. In addition, I've interned at a marketing agency in Grand Rapids through my bachelor's degree program. I am beginning to really see all the opportunities that exist in the insurance industry – which validates my career choice even more.

What perceptions do you want to dispel about the insurance industry?

Sometimes, people think insurance isn't a fun or challenging business. But that's easily debunked if you spend any time at all in the industry. There's also a negative connotation that the business is all about simply making money and not about the people we serve. I don't see that at all. Everyone I have met in this business has been very caring and has the best interest of customers top-of-mind.

Personally, I think we have a big responsibility to tackle climate change as an industry – particularly since we're seeing more weather-related disasters and claims. Going forward, the insurance industry can be a big champion for change when it comes to issues that affect us all.

Where do you see yourself going in insurance?

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I'm proud of forging my own career path. I saw what my parents had built and knew the business was right for me. Down the road, I envision myself taking over the family business when the time is right. I'd also like to get involved in industry associations and take on leadership roles. I joined the Young Agents (YA), worked a variety of events, and was awarded a scholarship to help with my college expenses. Dipping my toe into the industry through YA really ignited the flame my parents had started, and assures me I'm a professional in my own right.

I think we're all called to make a difference, and to put our best foot forward with everyone we interact with. I tell people that it really hits home when you sell a policy and you see how it helps protect people's lives and assets. I had a case where the father of a family of four passed away. The family would have had nothing if the father hadn't been insured. But because he was, his wife and children were provided for and able to get by.

I always think about how I feel whenever I step through the doors at an agency. Many, like ours, have that family atmosphere – and I'm finding that extends

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to the industry as a whole. For me, it's important to feel appreciated, and to feel like I'm working with others toward the same goal. You get that with insurance, and there are a lot of good people in the business doing their part for the greater good. ●



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.
