

# Aviva Broker Optimisation Guide



You can learn more about the subjects covered in this booklet at  
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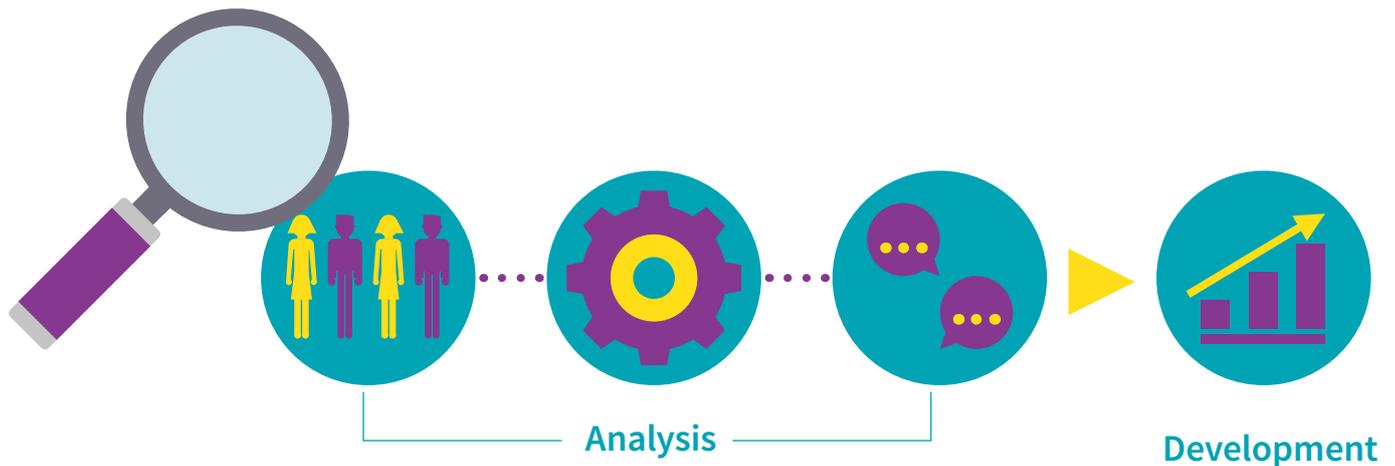
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# Introducing Broker Optimisation

The Aviva Sales Development team offer a full Sales Optimisation consultancy service to Aviva's brokers and corporate customers. This involves carrying out organisational diagnostics focussing on people, processes and culture, highlighting areas for developments, and providing recommendations as to how organisations could improve overall productivity and performance.

The team have worked with a wide range of brokers, of all shapes and sizes, and the insights gained from this have been used to create this guide. The following information will help you to “look under the bonnet of your own business” and consider ways that could help you on your way to increased performance and growth.



## What do our brokers say?

“We gained a great deal from the Aviva Optimisation process including valuable insight and feedback from both Aviva and our members of staff.

We’re a growing broker with a young leadership team and we’re constantly seeking to change and improve the business. Having the experienced team from Aviva make recommendations, really helped focus our minds on what positive changes were needed to further improve our productivity and performance. The Aviva Optimisation process has added value to our business and I’d recommend this to any broker.”

**Ashley Minors ACII Chartered Insurance Broker  
Director**



# Developing a strategic direction that leads you the right way

When we're getting to know a broker's business, we always start with a review of the business plan. This not only enables us to understand the strategic direction of the business but provides us with a good insight into its culture and personality.

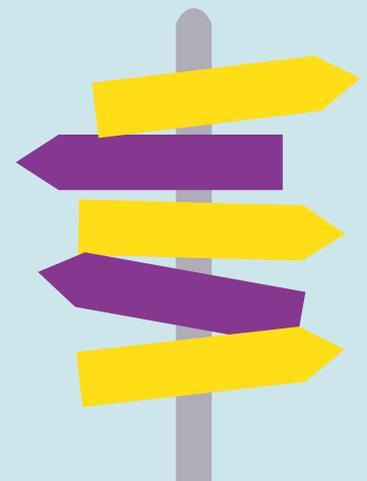
## Always start with the strategy

Throughout our consultancy work we've encountered a wide range of business plans. While these may vary significantly in terms of quality and detail, remarkably few lend themselves to providing the foundation for an effective action plan. In essence, the primary purpose of a business plan is a working document that can be used to assess every business decision and action taken, with the question "Does this support our plan?"

Most brokers have a business plan but, more often than not, these are created to satisfy the regulator and are soon relegated to a virtual cupboard to gather dust. Rarely do we see a clear and concise action plan that supports the business strategy and breaks down the business plan into measurable actions.

## Why adopt an aligned strategy?

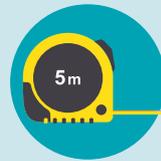
Without a clear strategic action plan, a business can lack consistent direction, wasting valuable time and energy on actions that don't work towards strategic growth. And it doesn't go unnoticed – inconsistent decision-making and an apparent lack of direction are issues frequently raised when we speak to staff, who pinpoint these as primary reasons for demotivation. Staff are keen to know and understand the strategy and it's vital to the success of the business that they see how their effort contributes to this.



## What do we recommend?



**Dedicate time and thought to crafting a strategy that will best support the development of your business.** Many heads can be better than one, so don't be afraid to involve senior staff in this process.



**Create measurable actions that support your business plan.**

These should be specific actions you can benchmark against and, again, review on a regular basis to assess whether they still support your overall business strategy.



**Make sure your business plan reflects this strategy.** Remember that it should match the culture and personality of your business, as well as where you want to take the business in both the short and longer term.



**Share all of this with your staff** so that they're fully aware of the direction the company should be moving in. What's more, your staff should establish personal objectives that reflect the actions that they'll no doubt be part of. This will encourage their development while helping them understand how individual performance contributes to the overall success of the business.



**Regularly review your strategy.** The business plan is a working document that covers both short and longer-term goals. A common mistake is to not revisit these plans as the market or the business changes.

# Building a business culture in line with your values

Every business, no matter what size or sector, has its own unique culture. A culture that's been established over time, shifting and evolving in response to a huge variety of influences.

Your culture is your business identity – it says a lot about how you and your employees will respond to any given situation. Creating the right culture is key to drawing in the clients you want and creating a level of service that they expect, as well as helping you to attract the right staff.

## Understanding your business culture

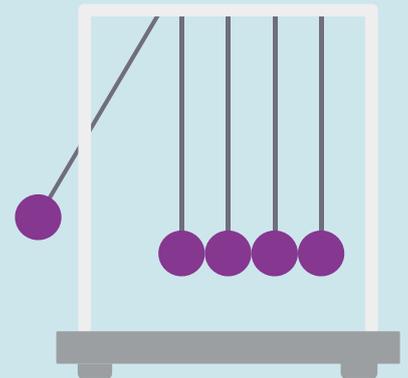
Not defining your culture, or allowing the wrong culture to spread in your business, can leave a damaging impression on your customers, as well as leading to low staff morale and impacting negatively on productivity and employee turnover. It's important to gain a clear understanding of your business culture so you'll be able to recognise how you appear to your clients and what it feels like to work within your business.

## Getting your culture right

We've encountered many businesses where the desired culture is at odds with the strategic decisions made. Often, staff are expected to build strong client relationships and deliver high levels of service, while simultaneously being pressured by management to track and reduce the time spent with their clients.

When marketing activity doesn't tie up with the culture of the business, it creates inconsistency and confusion for clients. Well-intentioned mission statements and brand values are often forgotten over time, in favour of a culture that's not in keeping with the desired identity of the business. More often than not this leads to unhappy staff and poor customer service, as a task-driven culture develops, focussed on shifting workloads rather than customer outcomes.

By placing a consistent focus on culture, you'll have guiding principles that people will know you for. Principles that will help you make difficult choices and give you a solid basis for retaining staff and your hiring decisions. Your business culture will become the glue that keeps the company together and moving in the right direction.



## What do we recommend?



**Consider the type of culture you want for your business.** Look at your market and decide where you would like to fit. Do you want to be seen as progressive and technology-led or as a local community broker?



**Create a mission statement that reflects the culture and direction of your business.** Involve your staff, as it's important that everyone in your business buys in and feels part of it.



**Create and embed your own brand values,** making sure these are always visible and regularly communicated during team meetings and in appraisals.



**Review your business strategy and marketing plans,** making sure they accurately reflect the culture and identity you want to pursue.



**Lead by example.** The head of any organisation has a huge impact on the culture, so you need to be the prime exponent of the attitude and brand values you desire.



**Ask yourself: 'Does this support our values and culture?'** before making any big strategic decisions. If not, are you confident that it's the right action to take?

# Engaging your team through the right communications

A motivated workforce is always good news for your productivity. That's why we believe in the power of a clear and precise communication strategy that helps keep your team up to date with, and fully engaged in, your business.

## The power of words

When your workforce has a clear understanding of your company vision and strategy, it can help drive your business performance. A structured and transparent communication plan is key to building trust between all levels of employees, to help them feel part of your business' bigger picture.

Most brokers are engaged with their businesses, creating positive and comfortable working environments. However, their teams are often unaware of the overall strategy and plan for the business, or why that strategy is in place – which can lead to a lack of consistency when dealing with customers. Many also don't realise how their actions can influence the overall culture and performance of the business – choosing instead to focus on individual tasks rather than understanding their contribution to the business as a whole. Strategic communications can often get lost or misinterpreted when they're cascaded through layers of management, so it's vital that your communication strategy is clear.

## Why is communication so important?

Without an open and consistent communication strategy, senior leaders risk their workforce becoming disengaged and isolated, which can lead to low morale, an 'us and them' mentality and a higher turnover of staff. In many cases, staff will start to see the senior leadership team as secretive and unapproachable. By inadvertently keeping employees in the dark, business leaders risk allowing resentment, rumours, working tension and the feeling of job insecurity to flourish.

When staff receive open and honest communication, they feel engaged in the business and part of a wider team. The benefits of this are higher productivity, reduced sickness time and warmer customer sentiment. Many employees state that more open, consistent and regular communication from their senior management would help them to understand the wider business performance, as well as helping them feel part of a team. So clear communication is a crucial part of running a successful business.

## What do we recommend?



**Develop a 12-month communication plan.** Make sure you structure internal communications and share your company performance and strategy in detail. It's particularly important to explain why you make the strategic decisions you do, so your team understand your aims.



**Hold regular all-company meetings.** These can be scheduled in to enable your senior management team to share company goals and performance with everyone, helping engage, motivate and inspire your staff.



**Hold regular team meetings or huddles to facilitate wider communication.** These can be used to share success stories such as new business wins or client renewals, as well as any other key snippets of relevant company news. They also offer staff the opportunity to air any questions or issues they may have, helping prevent the spread of negative messages.



**Have specific meetings for specific subjects.** For example, focus your sales meetings on reviewing the sales performance of the account executives as well as planning your marketing and strategy development.



# Helping you align your organisational development

Efficient and motivated staff are the backbone of your business. We believe it's important for business owners to take the time to understand and review how their business is working – to make sure everything is running as it should be and there's a clear route for growth.

## Taking the time to reflect

When your team members have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, they can play to their strengths and help your business grow. So it's important to take a step back every now and again to spend some time reviewing how well your business is doing. When you give yourself space to analyse what goes into your business, what comes out and all the processes in between, you can identify which bits are working well and which bits need working on.

Understanding how your business model operates enables you to define everyone's roles and responsibilities clearly, making sure your entire team is working towards a common goal.

## Have you got the right processes in place?

As businesses grow and develop over time, new responsibilities and processes are often added as and when needed. However, limited resources often mean these get shared out across team members rather than allocated to the most suitable people. More often than not, this leads to workloads being needlessly duplicated and responsibilities overlapping across the team.

Take computer processes as an example. We often see documentation and processing being duplicated, as well as double keying across several systems. Similarly, many broker

principals choose to spend much of their time managing a full book of client relationships – but experience tells us that those who pass on their smaller clients to other members of staff are in a much stronger position to develop their business and put their growth strategy into action. In the same way, account executives often spend their time on day-to-day admin tasks for clients, rather than focusing on generating business and driving sales.

## Why is it important to review your business model?

Without regularly reviewing how your business is running, you risk inefficiency and waste creeping in. Team members without clearly defined roles and responsibilities lack direction and can waste time and energy on tasks that ultimately don't add value to the business. What's more, confusion around responsibilities can lead to important and time sensitive tasks being missed.

Ultimately, it's confusion, inefficiency and wasted opportunities that all impact your bottom line. But with a business model that's fit for purpose and plays to your team's strengths, you put yourself in the best possible position to develop and grow.

## What do we recommend?



**Hold a full review of your existing organisational structure,** focusing on addressing both the strategic and operational needs of your business.



**Create, and regularly review, role profiles for all your team members.** This will remove any confusion or misinterpretation of roles and responsibilities, meaning you can concentrate on people's areas of strength and development.



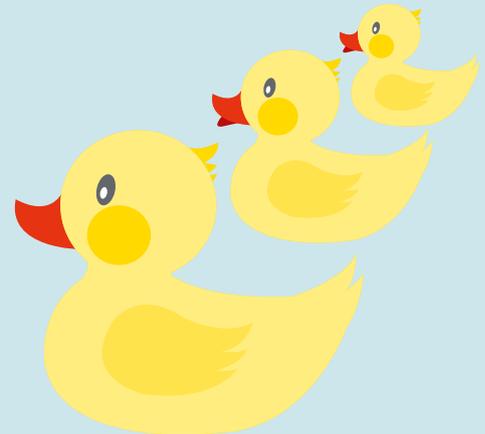
**Focus on core responsibilities for specialist roles,** such as account executives, and remove as much administration as possible.



**Enable business owners to focus on the strategic direction of the business** wherever possible, and shift the responsibility for handling smaller clients elsewhere.



**Try to align account handlers to specific account executives** where possible. This will build their knowledge and experience of how the executives work so they can adjust their approach accordingly.



# Set your staff on a clear path to success

A successful business needs a clear direction – and so do the people working there. We understand the need for team members to be able to develop and grow into confident and successful leaders to help your organisation thrive. That's why putting a clear development plan in place for your staff can really benefit your business.

## The ambition to succeed

Every business needs a leader who can keep it heading in the right direction. Businesses need goals, a strategy and – ideally – a plan that details how the strategy is going to be implemented. Why would the people within a business be any different? Everyone needs to understand their goals and direction, as well as have a plan that helps to connect them to the business, be successful and achieve their ambitions.

## The risk of blurred responsibilities

When we spend time in broker offices, the overall impression is generally that of pleasant and comfortable working environments, with little pressure on individual performance. Often there are no sales performance targets and we rarely see any consequences for under performance.

Most brokers have some form of system for annual staff appraisals, but often these are subjective and based around the opinion of the manager. Most team members lack clearly defined role profiles, which often leads to a blurring of responsibilities as their roles develop over time. The overall strategic and business goals sometimes fail to filter down to individual members of staff – so personal objectives are not aligned specifically to business objectives or performance outputs.

## Engaging your staff to benefit the business

Without clearly defined role profiles, individual responsibilities can become confused and the expectations on employees can be misinterpreted – which in turn can lead to a sometimes chaotic working environment. However, when workloads are closely monitored across the team and more attention is paid to individual performance, staff feel engaged and motivated to succeed. Through regular one-to-ones and discussions with their manager, staff can better understand how their performance links with the wider business. Plus, they can see regular progress towards both personal and business objectives, which means productivity generally increases.

Without these objectives in place, it's difficult for your team members to measure how effective their own performance is – and it's difficult for managers to reward performance objectively.

## What do we recommend?



**Create clearly defined role profiles and objectives** for all members of staff, from director to apprentice level. Outline objectives and performance measures and implement regular one-to-one meetings, where performance can be discussed and coaching provided where needed. This also allows more focus to be placed on individuals whose performance is not meeting expectations.



**Consider your salary strategy.** Developing a clear and transparent performance-related pay structure across the organisation that links closely with the individual's regular performance discussions can really help motivate your team.



**Undertake a full review** of your performance management structure and put in place regular development and business performance one-to-ones. This structure has been proven as a tool to motivate staff performance, but also leads to opportunities for coaching and mentoring.



**Create personal development plans** for all staff. These should provide a structured plan for career progression and clearly set both behavioural and performance expectations.



# Map out your marketing in the right direction

Every business can benefit from a clearly defined marketing plan. By putting a targeted approach in place and linking it to your overall strategy, you'll grow your business in line with your ambitions.

## An essential part of your strategy

The importance of a marketing plan shouldn't be overlooked. It's what creates a strong brand that prospects will want to engage with, existing clients can trust, and your staff will be proud to be part of.

From the time we've spent with brokers, it's clear most have a good understanding of their target markets and the existing relationships which could help attract new clients. However, marketing activity tends to be handled by individual account executives doing what they feel is best, with no formal structure across the business.

## The risks of a disjointed approach

Without a defined marketing approach and clear roles and responsibilities, businesses are left open to a range of risks.

Marketing may be neglected, meaning key opportunities are missed and existing clients who feel undervalued turn to competitors. Staff may focus time and budgets in the wrong areas and, without reporting to identify which marketing initiatives were successful, this cycle will repeat itself. Also, a lack of governance over the content that's produced means your brand may be open to misrepresentation, leading to a loss of prospects.

Add these factors together and the result for businesses is often a failure to grow.

## Active brand management

Making marketing a business priority means devising a well-constructed activity plan.

By formulating more detailed strategic business goals first, you can develop your marketing plan to directly support each objective and deliverable. And by designating a member of staff to oversee all your marketing activity, they can ensure your customer touchpoints are coordinated.

This targeted approach means content which fits your brand will reach the right audience, in the right way, at the right time.



## What do we recommend?



**Introduce a prospect database** to capture valuable information on new leads. You can then tailor your marketing messages to their needs, making content and incentives more relevant.



**Update your website** to reflect your business in the most positive light. It should explain why new clients need your expertise, be easy to navigate, mobile-friendly and follow your brand style.



**Consider using social media** such as Twitter and LinkedIn to promote your brand, attract new prospects and engage with existing clients. By publishing useful content on your website and then sharing it on social media, you'll help drive more people to your website.



**Capture client testimonials** when they first do business with you or renew, asking why they chose you over competitors. This feedback can help develop your offering and be used in marketing to attract new business.



For more information on improving your marketing, please visit [www.brokermentor.co.uk](http://www.brokermentor.co.uk)

# Focus on cross-selling for healthy business growth

Every business can benefit from a sales strategy that focuses on acquiring new clients and cross-selling to existing ones. Cross-selling is one of the simplest ways of growing your business, by using information that you already have.

## Taking time to focus on sales

From working with brokers, we've noticed that employees sometimes focus more of their energy on client servicing and renewals. This can leave very little room for cross-selling or upselling activity. Prospect data, where it exists, is also often left unchecked and only brought into play during quiet periods.

While the perception is that staff don't have enough time or the right skill-set to allocate to sales or cross-selling, the reality is that it's a simple way of growing your business because you already have most of the information you need.

## The risks of ignoring new business

Relying solely on existing business and renewal retention is a risky strategy. Businesses that do this can often remain static and often don't meet the organisation's growth aspirations. It's essential to develop and implement a specific, targeted new business and cross-selling strategy and a working prospect database, without which the business will at best remain stationary and at worst move backwards.

## Selling more to new and existing clients

The more products a client has with you, the less likely it's that they'll move away, largely due to the service, trust and relationship you've built with them. Having a proper plan and objectives in place that are linked to the overall business strategy will ensure effective sales growth for your business.



## What do we recommend?



**Develop and implement a consistent strategy** for the whole organisation. This will establish a streamlined approach that your clients can become accustomed to over time.



**Give staff the opportunity to learn** about the sales process, client life-cycles and the principles of cross-selling. This will increase their awareness and confidence when talking to clients.



**Build elements of cross-selling into account handling.** This will ensure that existing clients are benefiting from the full scope of the broker service and product offering.



**Create a centrally managed prospect database,** ideally linked to the broker operating system to record all lapsed and cancelled cases. Marketing support can maximise the opportunity of new business.



**Focus on cross-selling to high net worth clients.** Experience suggests that this type of business is profitable and has high retention rates.



**Make clients aware of their needs.** Talking to clients about their needs is already a fundamental part of meeting regulations.



You can learn more about the subjects covered in this booklet at **mydevelopment.zone**

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