

## A Growing Power

The Strategic Insurance Agency Alliance counts 3,200 independent agencies among its affiliates.

**T**he Strategic Insurance Agency Alliance is dedicated to helping its member affiliates grow their business, earn larger commissions and increase their agency values.

In a year when so many organizations were hit hard by the financial crisis, SIAA didn't just weather the storm, it went cruising through it full speed ahead with Chairman James Masiello at the helm. In an interview with *Best's Review*, Masiello discussed what's driving the growth of SIAA.

**BEST'S REVIEW:** What sets SIAA apart from other networks these days?

**MASIELLO:** There are a number of things. First off, we are a national alliance of independent insurance agencies. We're a multilevel partnering/joint venture and that business model is what sets us apart. When you say network, you usually say aggregator. We are not an aggregator, we're not third-party brokers and we don't allow third-party brokerage at any level. Every piece of business has to be written by an SIAA agent.

**BR:** How long has the SIAA model been in existence?

**MASIELLO:** We've been in business in this model since 1983.

**BR:** How did SIAA fare in 2009 given the state of the economy?

**MASIELLO:** We had the best year ever. We had 433 new member agencies sign with us. Premium growth was \$525 million and that's \$53 million over 2008. And what's really interesting, 269 of those who signed with us are former direct writer/captive agents who wanted to become independent insurance agents. With that we added \$387 million of new SIAA strategic partner company premium opportunities. Our organic growth was around \$120 million, so we had a great year.

**BR:** Is it easy to become an SIAA member?

**MASIELLO:** It really isn't. We're selective. Our due diligence process is extensive. Our model is quality over quantity. This isn't just accepting a piece of brokerage business; this is a long-term partnering relationship.

**BR:** Why would an agent want to be an SIAA member?

**MASIELLO:** Because it gives agents access to top-rated, competitive insurance companies that they probably don't have access to now. There are a lot of smaller agents who have personal and business relationships that they can't capitalize on because they don't have the markets and we provide those markets to those agencies who join us. And with our pooling effect, their income and agency values will increase. We're at 3,200 signed agents as I speak.

**BR:** What does the future growth of SIAA look like?

**MASIELLO:** Right now, we're developing proprietary specialty markets and programs in different niche markets that are going to add a whole new element of the value that we bring to the table for our member agencies. We just entered into our first national joint venture with a premium finance company. We're constantly bringing opportunities to our members they just can't get otherwise.



James Masiello,  
Chairman

“2009 was just a magnificent year and who would have thought it would be given the situation with the economy.”

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