

SaaS delivers for alternative risk vehicles

Captive owners need to work with a software provider that understands the complexities of alternative risk management. *US Captive* reports.

The current demanding business environment is placing greater emphasis on technology to bring efficiencies to day-to-day operations, as well as helping manage compliance requirements.

The captive and risk retention group (RRG) sectors are no exception, and perhaps have the greatest need to introduce technology efficiencies to manage their boutique portfolios, according to Nick Teetelli, chief executive officer for Maple Technologies. “Unique product offerings and specialised business processing are part of this industry, which typically caters to specific market segments with high levels of specialisation, both in product offering and serviceability,” says Teetelli.

One such boutique product provider is Pinelands Insurance Company, a risk retention group (A.M. Best rating of ‘A-’), domiciled in Washington, DC. Pinelands’ product offerings cater to the public auto industry, providing commercial automobile liability insurance to taxis operating in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. Expansion into additional jurisdictions is on the horizon.

Not unlike other specialised risk vehicles, there was little to be found in the form of off-the-self technology solutions for Pinelands. Principally relying on smatterings of semi-retrofitted traditional technologies and

sophisticated spreadsheets, Pinelands was able to manage day-to-day operational requirements, along with a significant level of manual processing. However, Pinelands also recognised the need for more practical and scalable technologies to increase its serviceability, manage compliance, and grow its business model.

“In looking for a viable systems solution for our transportation insurer, we selected Maple Technologies based on its ability to combine a claims and underwriting solution tailored to our needs,” says Ronald J. Hambrecht, chairman of Pinelands. “The Aspire system meets those needs.”

Maple Technologies is a software development company that specialises in web applications for the captive and alternative risk transfer industry. Its main product, the Aspire Information System, is a comprehensive web-based Internet policy, claim and reinsurance management system, with statutory reporting capabilities. Aspire incorporates the latest Web technologies that combine intuitive user interfaces with intelligent data structures. Through integration of Web and database technologies, Aspire allows real-time access to data, while offering full policy, claim and reinsurance management capabilities.

Aspire offered Pinelands the flexibility to support highly specialised business requirements through a fully integrated custom-configured Software as a Service (SaaS) platform. As a Web-based solution, Pinelands also gained organisational integration through a real-time environment supporting day-to-day business processing requirements.

“At Pinelands, we have a very specialised manner in which we handle our process and administrative requirements,” says Jennifer L. Holmes, who heads up Pinelands’ underwriting department. “Working with the Maple Technologies development team, we were able to spell out these specialised requirements, and its development team recreated them in Aspire, making the new process very efficient and easy to use.”

With Pinelands now in its second year of production using the Aspire Information System, Holmes highlights: “Since implementing Aspire, everything is so much more streamlined and automated. With renewals, we often found ourselves having to enter the same data twice, sometimes even three times, making the process tedious and time-consuming. With Aspire, there is no need for redundant data entry, and the process now takes less than half the time it used to, which means we can get quotes out to our clients quickly and efficiently. Aspire has made our processing efficient in all areas of our business, allowing us more time to focus on growing our business.”

“Processing business transactions—starting with application processing through to rating, quoting and binding risks—has become convenient and streamlined,” she adds. “Aspire’s workflow is so intuitive and makes what was a dreary multi-step process seem so simple and quick now. More importantly, our document needs have been simplified. Under our old process, we had to handle all forms requirements in a totally manual process, identifying the required forms, filling them out, putting the document package together. With Aspire, all of our forms requirements are processed automatically in the background, so when we bind a policy, the policy documents, including state-specific forms and ID cards, are instantly created. For Pinelands, policy issuance is no longer something that we need to think about—it just happens—and Aspire has reduced it to a simple click and print or email process. This alone has brought great efficiencies to our work environment.”

In the current financial climate, the captive sector is looking for ways to drive down operating costs and maximise productivity in order to enhance the bottom line. Applying the right technology to your captive can have a positive impact not only on productivity, but also enhance operating costs, as it did for Pinelands. Technology can replace many of the manual and semi-manual processes, allowing captive operators to maximise their workflow capacities and refocus resources toward productivity and business development.

In order to get the best solution, Teetelli maintains, one of the most critical considerations for a captive is to determine just how flexible the information system architecture is. Understanding this will allow the system to be modified and changed, without an extended process, and adapted to support specialised business requirements, as was the case with Pinelands.

This type of flexibility in systemic architecture needs to parallel the flexible transactional landscape that is native to the captive being serviced, and will be critical to making the right choice in a technology solution.

Once a captive has decided to use such heightened technology, it needs to be able to make the right choice.

As a highly specialised risk vehicle, it is critical that a software vendor

has a firm understanding of the captive industry and, better yet, has some industry experience. This is possibly the most vital consideration when determining technology requirements.

“I too often hear the former woes of our clients in recounting prior failed or inadequate vendor experiences. They reflect that the vendors ‘could not connect the dots’ or could not grasp a fundamental understanding of our business,” says Teetelli. “Captive vehicles are highly specialised, and a lack of understanding by a vendor can result in deleterious results and a failure to match the right technology to support their business requirements.”

The captive sector is disadvantaged, as most mainstream system solutions cannot support the high level of specialisation required to manage captives’ unique risk portfolios, much less understand them. Flexibility and custom configuration are essential assets for captive vehicles, in order to take full advantage of today’s technologies and to keep pace with the demands of policyholder service, compliance management, and balanced capacities for business development and growth.

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Nicholas Teetelli serves as the chief executive officer of Maple Technologies, and is one of the principal designers and architects of Maple’s proprietary insurance information system product, Aspire. He has extensive experience in the insurance industry that spans nearly three decades.

About Maple Technologies:

Maple Technologies is a software development company that specialises in Web applications for the captive and alternative risk transfer industry. Its main product, Aspire®, is a comprehensive Web-based Internet policy, claim and reinsurance management system, with statutory reporting capabilities. Aspire boasts cutting-edge technologies that combine intuitive user interfaces with intelligent data structures. Through integration of the latest in Web and database technologies, Aspire allows real-time access to data, while offering full policy, claim and reinsurance management capabilities that respond quickly. For more information visit us on the Web: www.maple-tech.com

About Pinelands Insurance Company RRG:

Pinelands Insurance Company Risk Retention Group, Inc. is a stock insurance company owned by its policyholders who consist of public livery classes, including taxicabs and limousines, operating in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. Membership in the National Transportation Association (NTA) or the Pennsylvania Taxi Association (PTA) are required for membership in the RRG.