

WALKAWAY: new digs, name and improved Main Street Program

CHANGES COME AS RESPONSE TO DEALER FEEDBACK, EVOLVING MARKET

This past summer, not only did WALKAWAY Canada Inc. move to bigger and more impressive new digs located on the picturesque Glen Abbey Golf Course in Oakville, Ont., but the insurer also transformed its business.

The company name and all the team members now reside under its sister company, Insurance Insight Inc., a registered insurance brokerage and now exclusive WALKAWAY distributor.

"Growth often requires restructuring the business units, especially with increasing business lines, markets, people and complexity," says Robert Varga, company president and CEO.

Closely following the transition were plans to keep the WALKAWAY program current and introduce some meaningful improvements.

And, on Jan. 4, WALKAWAY did just that.

"We carefully considered dealer, lender and claimant feedback and combined the findings with closely monitoring key industry trends, an ever-changing economy and the consumer – specifically, the negative equity epidemic, an aging population with health concerns, a worrisome workforce and unprecedented levels of consumer debt.

"Things change and we need to change too," Varga says.

As a result, WALKAWAY says its program received a number of refinements to keep it relevant and sustainable when it comes to the price-to-value relationship.

The new program is even more consumer-friendly than ever before, offering a broader breadth of coverage and more flexible options.

Since the fall, WALKAWAY's business development managers have been busy in the field conducting detailed training on the new program.

"The reception has been excellent. The entire team did a really amazing and efficient job of educating the dealers and we've had extremely favourable feedback all around," he adds.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Maximum term increases from 84 to 96 months, as finance terms are increasingly longer.

Full-term upgrade age limit increases from 78 to 79, as our population is aging.

The 12-month complimentary remains ageless. Everyone qualifies.

Increase in claim amounts up to \$25,000 as negative equity continues to rise and represent one of the biggest challenges in the industry today.

One4One 12-month complimentary policy credits now offered on all payment relief products rewarding dealer loyalty, commitment and performance.

Additional life events are covered across even more WALKAWAY products to provide greater flexibility for consumers at all levels of coverage.

More payments in the payment relief product category to help consumers keep their vehicles longer until they get back on their feet.


Newly designed and professionally produced consumer website and point-of-sale material with simplified messaging to help aid sales, raise awareness, provide multiple touch points and augment dealer training.

More opportunities to achieve higher margins to motivate business offices and help dealers reach their financial objectives; all are designed with a long-term, "partnership" mentality and to augment other business office product sales.

Plain language policy wording for easier understanding, consumer disclosure and compliance.

Further relaxing of qualifiers and shortened waiting periods to make the claim experience easier and friendlier.

Varga says it's hard to believe WALKAWAY has been around for 16 years now and has settled over \$80,000,000 of auto-related debt in Canada alone.

"We're extremely proud of this accomplishment and feel we do good work every day with a program that passes the 'Mom Test.' Having said this, it's very important to always strive to improve every aspect of our game and never take anything for granted." 



Robert Varga, WALKAWAY president and CEO

Handling the credit challenged

Use these questions during client interviews to give the dealership and customer a clearer picture of what is really going on



Duane Marino
F&I COLUMNIST

Customers may bring up credit concerns at any point during the sales or F&I process. Sooner is better than later.

Top-performing F&I managers allow credit apps to be integrated into various parts of the vehicle sales process. They also walk the floor early and often to meet customers, create rapport and give customers the opportunity to ask questions regarding lenders and credit processes.

However, many F&I specialists and salespeople at franchised dealerships lack expertise or confidence when it comes to identifying or categorizing credit concerns.

Having done both F&I and lending, I have a perspective on this from both sides of the desk.

Once the customer asks credit questions or a challenge is identified, suspend the standard sales process and address those credit questions to get some clarity.

A top-performing business manager knows that educating staff and customers regarding the finance and credit industry and its role in the car business today will result in more turnovers and larger profits. So they will take on the role and language of a credit re-establishment service and salesperson/client-credit educator.

In the murky world of credit, the following is a simple structure for client interviews to give both the dealership and customer a clearer picture of what is really going on.

Do not skip any questions during a phone or face-to-face interview.

1. Have you ever gone for credit counseling or had a consolidation loan? Have you made a proposal or declared bankruptcy?
If yes, get the trustee's name, number, the amount of money involved, when discharged and how long. Ask them how well they got along with the trustee.

2. Have you ever had anything repossessed?

3. Where have you applied for financing in the last three months? For how much money? What happened?

4. When did you look at your own credit bureau score last?

5. What level of driver's licence do you have and has it ever been suspended? Do you have any outstanding fines?

6. What size of vehicle are you looking for and why?

7. Are you open to other vehicle options?

8. There's a difference between want and need. So, this time around, you have to focus on what you need; the next time, after we rebuild your credit, you get to focus on some wants. What are your core two to three must-have features?

9. Can you drive a manual transmission?

10. What is the maximum monthly payment you can handle?

11. Do you have a co-signer available if needed? When can I talk to them, if needed?

12. Are you married or living common-law? Do you need to add a partner to the application?

13. Have you researched your car insurance? It can be very costly and a budget deal-breaker for some people. Is this an issue for you?

14. To lower your payment, how much money down could you come up with for our next appointment? Is that the maximum down payment? Do you have any other sources of money down you could tap into or call on?

15. Do you have a trade-in? Please give me the full details on that vehicle? Is it paid for?

16. Have you ever financed a vehicle before? If so, with whom? How long ago? How did that go?

17. Have you lost your wallet in the past two years or had your identity compromised?

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