
RetirePreneur: Paul Feldman

By Jenna Gottlieb *Thu, Oct 8, 2015*

Paul Feldman is the publisher of InsuranceNewsNet magazine and InsuranceNewsNet.com

What I do: I am the president and publisher of InsuranceNewsNet.com and InsuranceNewsNet Magazine, two news media companies for the insurance industry. We provide news for annuity, life, health and the property/casualty industries, as well as financial services. Our business model is based on advertising and subscriptions. Some recent stories we ran were ‘Why Single-Payer Health Coverage May Be the Nation’s Future,’ and ‘Three Ways to Nurture a Relationship with Your Clients’ Children.’

Where I came from: I am a third-generation insurance agent. I tagged along with my father on client visits. Soon after I started college, I was impatient to get going in what I knew would be my career. So I left Monmouth College at 19 years old and started selling insurance for my dad’s marketing organization.

<p>RetirePreneur: Paul Feldman Company: InsuranceNewsNet.com, InsuranceNewsNet Magazine Location: Camp Hill, PA Founded: 1999 Niche: Publishing</p>
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My career switch: I was an early-adopter online. I loved the speed and reach that the Internet provided. In 1999, there wasn’t much online about insurance. With the industry knowledge I had, I thought I could do better than what was there. I’ve also always been fascinated by the media. It’s funny; I was young and naïve at the time. I had no skills, no degrees and no experience with journalism. I didn’t know anything about graphic design, programming, publishing or what it took to run a magazine. All I had was pig-headed determination and a willingness to learn.

Why we publish both print and online editions: People consume and prefer their information in different ways. I started InsuranceNewsNet as an online publication and then went to print, so I think I have a unique perspective. Companies have been shuttering print publications and focusing solely on digital. But print continues to be a strong part of our business and our brand, because people have a closer relationship with a printed magazine. They read and keep print magazines and newsletters for years. More than one reader has told us that ours is the only magazine they take with them on trips. Our average reader

spends almost an hour with each issue, while online readers are there for minutes at a time. I'm a big digital reader, but I enjoy reading a magazine when I don't want to be distracted by email, ads or even screens. When you look deeper at digital media and online content, you see that many readers will print good articles to either read, keep, comment on or share with colleagues. I think that people still like to have things in print.

Why print still makes sense: As far as an advertising effectiveness, we have advertisers that have generated twice as many leads in a year from our magazine than they did online. When done right with measurement tools, advertisers are seeing that print can sometimes deliver a better cost-per-lead and cost-per-action result than digital. We have also heard from numerous clients that the quality of leads from print far outweighs that of a typical online lead. I think print is seeing a resurgence in relevance and effectiveness for advertisers. In an over-communicated world it's becoming more difficult and more expensive to make an impact if you are only in the digital world.

On advertising: We deal mostly direct with advertisers, but work with many ad agencies. Advertisers include Pacific Life Insurance, Prudential, Protective Life Insurance Company, Legal & General America, American Bankers Insurance Association, and John Hancock, among others.

On serving the Wild West of the insurance business: There are certainly a few rogues out there. But you find them in the fee-based world, where there are far more consumer complaints filed annually. The securities industry provides little, if any, legal recourse for consumer losses, but insurance has a well-regulated backstop to protect consumers from fraud and misrepresentation. I also don't see a stark difference between commissions and fees, with the exception that fees are charged to the consumer's assets under management and split with the rep every year and commissions are typically paid by an insurance company.

On insurance-related legislation: I am worried about the new DOL fiduciary rule. The underlying assumption is that sales with any indirect compensation leads to conflicted advice. The suitability standard already requires agents and advisors to do right by the client. Plenty of advisors have felt the wrath of state insurance and finance departments when they didn't. If the federal government makes it difficult to earn a living with indirect compensation, more clients will have to pay fees out of the few dollars they already have.