

CPCU Growth through Inclusion

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As we enter a new next decade, the inclusion of different viewpoints and talents will improve organizational effectiveness and synergy. As the demographics of our population change, all organizations must capitalize on new pools of available professional talent. Organizations must include highly talented individuals of all backgrounds to ensure their objectives are successfully achieved.

The Chartered Property and Casualty (CPCU) society has always been open for individuals, who meet the challenging standards of ethics, education, and experience. The society has been proactive in recent years, by highlighting the need for individuals of diverse backgrounds to pursue these career enhancing studies and to become local chapter members after conferment.

Below are ideas that can promote diversity within the CPCU society:

1. Evaluate methods to improve inclusion

It is important to identify why non-inclusion still exists. Measurable improvements in our society have resulted from the Civil Rights movement and the Equal Rights for Women campaign. Additional improvements are certainly still needed in our society, to ensure the equal treatment and inclusion of all individuals.

CPCU professionals have achieved educational milestones and are bound by a code of ethics. At work, they are usually in key positions that require effectively working with individuals of all backgrounds. Underwriters and claims professionals have experience in communicating with individuals from all walks of life. Diversity improvements are more related to embracing new opportunities, rather than major failures to include others.

Just as two snowflakes are not exactly alike, it is important for CPCU professionals to recognize that we all are truly different from one another. While we all have unique traits, our human nature still causes us to gravitate

to individuals that are similar to us. However, when we work as a team, our different strengths and weaknesses create synergy. For this reason, we must ensure that all interested professionals are invited, encouraged and mentored in seeking the CPCU designation.

It is important to evaluate whether we are reaching potential candidates with physical, cultural, or social differences. As we come into contact with new individuals in the insurance profession, these differences may prompt us to be cautious and superficial. Recognition that avoidance occurs represents the first step in a plan of improvement. When artificial barriers are eliminated, it will lead to a more diverse pool of talent among CPCU professionals.

2. Move out of the comfort zone

As change can only occur in one individual at a time, the CPCU society depends on the collective support of its members to support the diversity initiative. Change is always a difficult process and it is natural to setup barriers of resistance. Instinctively, CPCU professionals will associate with their closest friends. Sometimes it requires additional work and skill improvements to better interact with new individuals.

Our CPCU chapter president often requests that board members not sit together during educational meetings. Everyone feels more welcome and we can learn more about each another by not clustering into our comfortable group of friends. Rather than using name tags, attendees will briefly introduce themselves during many of our meetings. There are informal social times before and after meetings to rekindle old friendships and to ensure new attendees feel welcome. The traditional of “we’ve always done it that way” is difficult to overcome. However, new ideas can break down barriers and generate new enthusiasm.

3. Exploring new opportunities as CPCU Professionals

In all fairness, the CPCU society has been open to all candidates throughout its 66 year history. The key requirements are to meet the educational milestones and to agree with a code of ethics that recognizes the interests of others. Insurance professionals must adhere to laws that require equal treatment of all customers seeking products and services. Respecting individuals from diverse backgrounds is a fundamental requirement of our profession.

However, CPCU professionals may need to think outside of traditional approaches, to better recruit new candidates. Presentations to local high schools or colleges will provide a more expanded audience. As we engage with others at work, we may discover career oriented individuals who are

interested in learning the principles of insurance.

Many large companies are using highly talented individuals from other nations. These employees are well educated, highly skilled in technology, and have a tremendous work ethic. They are also interested in learning the business side of insurance. The INS series can provide a great starting point for learning. Later CPCU courses can provide the most advanced form of insurance training.

Perhaps the most productive way of promoting the value of the CPCU is for company leaders to promote it through incentives. Many companies pay small cash bonuses as employees complete courses plus expenses to attend the conferment ceremonies. Executives often send congratulatory letters to encourage continuation of the studies. When executives are actively promoting this education, career minded professionals will become interested.

Technology can also promote CPCU studies as a resource for professionals. Chapter newsletters can inform candidates of classes or study groups. Even social applications like Facebook or Twitter have a potential for reaching others. Whether it's face-to-face or through technology, it is important to spread the word to others.

4. CPCU Chapters should "Just Do it" in promoting Diversity

The local chapters are the lifeblood of the CPCU society. Each chapter should make a strong commitment to mentor interested individuals, who seek this professional designation. During annual chapter planning sessions, a formal goal should be set to better reach individuals of all backgrounds. As the famous slogan by Nike implies, we should take the spirit of inclusion beyond just the idea stage.

Some of us may be more introverted in our personalities. Reaching out to others may not be a natural process. We can still demonstrate inclusion through actions and being a role model. There are many ways to use different talents in ensuring a better inclusion of others.

The personal sponsorship and candidate development initiatives are important to include in the annual chapter plan. Large companies, schools, or other professional organizations can provide a good platform to share about the insurance profession and the CPCU designation.

When chapter officers and committee chairs are needed, the nominating committee should evaluate all members for opportunities of service. CPCU leaders should be selected based on their talents and their involvement in

the local chapter. It is mutually beneficial to involve new talented members in chapter leadership opportunities.

There are approximately 30,000 CPCU professionals working in a profession of three million people. Statistically, this represents only 1% of the work force. This educational milestone is respected by potential employers because it is not easy to achieve. The other 99% represent potential candidates for the future. More individuals need to see that the long term career benefits are worth the extra time devoted to these educational studies.

The five year effort to complete the program may seem impossible to many individuals. The terminology and concepts can be challenging to master. But they are achievable through dedicated participation and working on it one day at a time. Students cannot take the cellophane off the text books a few weeks before the exam date. However, small successes will add up over time, as each course is completed.

Bruce Williams, a radio talk show host, has often encouraged young adults to go the second mile and attend college night classes even while working. He encouraged them by saying, "Invest in yourself, what better investment can you make"? Studying CPCU courses a similar investment, which will provide a greater payback than watching a lot of TV.

Likewise, a CPCU chapter must invest in itself, by constantly developing others. As individuals retire in the insurance profession, new experts are needed to take their places. The future of the CPCU society relies on candidates from differing backgrounds, who will preserve in these advanced studies.

Only a small percent of the entire insurance profession are willing to make the educational investment in CPCU. Finding these individuals who want to make a difference is difficult. Numerous invitations will be turned down, as we are all very busy in our daily lives. CPCU chapters should brainstorm in exploring new channels to reach and include everyone possible. When success is achieved in adding just one more CPCU professional, it adds further quality in our industry. Make a difference and invite a talented individual to participate in this career enhancing studies.