

Digital pioneers

AT8's Mark Loosmore reviews L&G's online quote and apply system, OLP Connect



Legal & General needs no real introduction – its brand is well known to consumers and advisers alike. It is a leading manufacturer in several product areas including protection and investments and has one of the largest distribution networks, including some large tied distributors such as the Nationwide Building Society.

In the world of e-commerce it is also well known for leading the field with innovation and early adoption, driving the e-commerce market forward for over a decade.

Back in 2000, L&G became the first insurance company to launch an online quote and apply system called OLTA (OnLine Term Assurance), which included online underwriting through the electronic underwriting system called Magnum. The solution was enhanced further in 2002 to include electronic new business tracking.

In 2004, L&G added additional products to the system, including an income protection policy and a change to the underwriting system moving from Magnum to Aura. The additions led to the name being changed to OLP (OnLine Protection) and this was later improved to include a more dynamic underwriting approach.

More recently in 2009, OLP was enhanced once again, with questions changing dynamically depending upon the information and answers it was given. It was then relaunched as OLP Connect, which was a more complete solution covering multiple products in a single system driven by intelligent data-capture processes that aimed to improve the user experience.



An evolving product

The reason for summarising the history is that this legacy defines what the system has become today. Its core strengths, and some of its weaknesses, stem from having such a deep history.

The solution is highly functional, with feature enhancements being added regularly as the system has developed over the past 10 years.

The initial part of the system allows a quote to be produced via OLP Connect. A few simple client details are collected and then the adviser can select the reason for purchase, which filters the products available for selection. In total, the system supports an amazing 40 products in a menu-style approach. At the quote stage, the adviser can add as many products as he or she likes and they appear in a list on screen. The quotation

engine is then called to collect the premium and cover details.

The quotation details are returned in a table showing the key details for each product quoted along with a total premium to include any options at the bottom of the table. The adviser can then select which products and options they want to proceed with by clicking on the select or deselect text and the total premium changes accordingly (a discount structure is applied for multiple product purchase). However, the selection process could be clearer by using a simple set of tick boxes to select the products and highlighting those products selected.

Online applications

The application process itself is more logical. All products can be applied for via a single all-encompassing application form. While I have seen a few other systems that do this (not many I hasten to add), I have never seen this done across such a wide range of products.

In principle, it provides a real win for the adviser and a real incentive to use an electronic application process – in the paper world, it would almost certainly involve multiple paper applications, re-writing the same piece of information several times.

The system uses integration to other data sources, such as address and bank-code look-ups, to speed up the data collection and accuracy. In addition, the questioning is dynamic so that only the relevant questions are

ever shown.

If some data is not available, it does not prevent the application from being submitted and the application is not frozen so data can be added later if necessary.

If the underwriting means the combination of products applied for is not available, the system is intelligent enough to recommend an alternative product combination.

For example if joint life and joint critical illness cover is applied for, but the second life does not qualify for the critical illness cover, then rather than rejecting the application the adviser will be asked if they want to apply for a joint life policy and cover just single life for critical illness. We really liked this feature as it saves a lot of unnecessary toing and froing to get the right product combination.

Teleunderwriting

L&G supports the application process with 'teleunderwriting'. It has two flavours of teleunderwriting on offer, which it memorably calls 'Big T' and 'Little T'. Big T is about outsourcing the entire application process to a third party and can remove the time-consuming application process from the IFAs workload and so provide real efficiency benefits. Little T collects additional medical underwriting information from the client, removing the need to ask those more embarrassing questions

face-to-face, and is triggered by certain disclosures made in the original application.

The usability was the only major disappointment that I had with this system. Often the system does not provide a menu-bar to allow navigation through the process and most routing is performed by clicking an underlined section of text.

In a world of iPhones and iPads, I am not sure this type of textual navigation gives the right

brand impression or more importantly is quick or easy to use. To be fair to L&G, if it had not done what it did over so many years as thought leaders and were starting now, it probably would not be doing what it does.

OLP Connect also supports business protection, an area of growing opportunity for advisers and product providers alike. Back in April, L&G sized the business protection gap as approximately £1.1trn so it is no surprise they have invested to smooth the quote and apply process in this sector.

Electronic stable

It is worth adding OLP Connect is only one of the ways L&G distributes its products electronically. It places its products on all the major portals including Exweb, Assureweb, Weblines and True Potential.

At AT8, we remain firmly of the view that if the portals are adaptive, they will remain an important part of the e-commerce landscape and it is important that the product providers continue to support them.

L&G is a major force in insurance e-commerce and has been for many years. OLP Connect continues this tradition with some good innovation providing real benefits to advisers. We would like to see some more consideration given to usability, but we hope and expect these issues will be addressed in upcoming releases.

Demonstrations of OLP Connect can be found at <http://www.olpconnect.com/protection/view-demo/fulldemo.html>.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Product providers should follow L&G's lead and provide multiple product applications with a single data entry process.
- System has good features that include e-commerce based tele and online underwriting.
- Innovation and thought leadership gives a competitive advantage, but it will date over time and so requires constant review, evaluation and re-ignition (eventually it will need re-invention).

