

Sales leads in 2009.

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The current economic climate makes quality sales leads more important than ever for agents. Our cover story, "Contact Me," page 26, takes a look at the 21st century's version of the cold call--online aggregator-generated sales leads. Many agents are turning to this lead source because, as agent Ken McVickers says in the story, the phones aren't ringing.

However, one agent expert, Vice President of Education and Research for the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, Madelyn Flannagan, said the association's 2008 Future One Agency Universe Study reported only 3% of agents surveyed said they purchased leads. Rather, Flannagan said, agents are getting their leads by networking through community and service organizations and via business relationships with real estate agents and banks.

Mike Schneider, president of Houston-based Cravens Warren & Co., said he tried to buy leads several years ago for the personal lines side of his agency but found it difficult. Instead, Schneider's sales strategy for his commercial insurance agency is built around optimizing his Web site, using telemarketing and leveraging his membership in the Combined Agents of America. Schneider isn't daunted by today's economic environment. In fact, he sees it as an opportunity. "In these tough economic times, families and business need to save money. They are more curious to look around to see if they can." And Schneider and his agency staff of 25 will be ready to serve them.

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Lynna Goch

Agents--what is your sales lead story? Please go to <http://www.bestreview.com/salesleads> and tell us what you think. Look for results in our May issue.

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