

Zurich: The Brokers' Verdict

Zurich's report card was broadly C+. It came in tenth for e-broking, 11th for claims handling and 12th for documentation, but only 15th for general service and support.

Brokers gave Zurich's e-broking 0.86, a C+. Comment split 50-50, positive to negative. Half liked the system, finding it clear, straightforward and reliable. The other half complained about uncompetitive quotes, the lack of automatic policy-printing and problems with criteria that prevented them closing business. One said Zurich's motor quote system often locked, another that log-in details were frequently recognised "one day but not the next." A third said Zurich's list of trades had not been changed for years "...and needs updating. They are behind the rest of the market here."

On claims and documentation, brokers rated Zurich 0.85 and 0.73 respectively - third-quartile performances. Broker comment was near 60 per cent positive, a modest majority finding Zurich documents and claims swift and effective. "Documentation is turned round very quickly and documents on the whole tend to be accurate," said one broker. Another praised Zurich for producing 70 policy documents for him very quickly and professionally. A third said: "Zurich has a dedicated claims support role which helps with every type of problem we encounter."

Two-fifths of brokers, however, criticised "poor" or "appalling" claims handling and documentation. "Zurich documentation is awful," said one broker. "There is plenty of it, but the things you need to know are hidden, or not on there." Another remarked: "Tons of paper but very little information." One broker bemoaned shoddy service on property claims - which he attributed to Zurich "outsourcing too much".

A 0.62 score exposed general service as Zurich's weakest area. Again, it was a case of the haves and have-nots. Half of Zurich's brokers cheerily listed all the service features any broker would want: strong relationships with flexible, decisive and accessible underwriters; fast responses; good admin; a helpful attitude; and a focus on partnership. Several mentioned Zurich's "honesty" or "integrity" as a business.

"The answer is always yes and then they seek a solution," said one broker. "Their staff are knowledgeable and deal with mail and phone calls in a proper fashion," said another. "Zurich have worked hard to secure new scheme facilities for us and I am sure this will encourage us to work more closely with them in the future," said a third. A fourth spoke of "access to immediate decision makers combined with a first class response to new and existing policy queries."

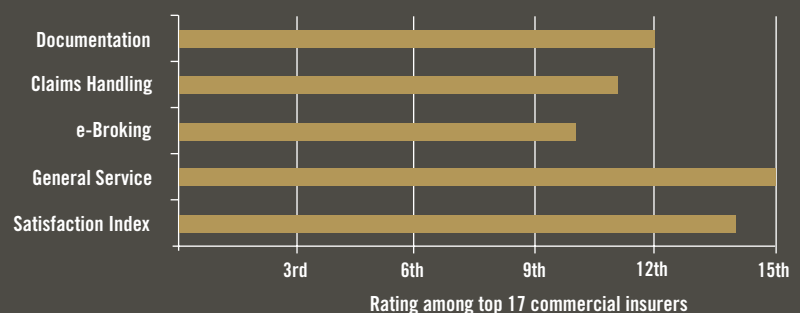
But the other half of Zurich's brokers said much the opposite, citing poor

staff morale, lousy communication and access, too-late responses, general "fussiness" and, perhaps significantly, a recent plummeting in service. Several commented on Zurich's lack of "trading appetite" or inability "to accommodate market rates". One described Zurich as "almost impossible to give business to."

Summary

On comprehensive broker satisfaction, Zurich came in 14th - ahead of Norwich Union but a little behind Allianz, NIG and ACE. Taken as a whole, its e-broking, documentation and claims looked OK. But beneath the average figures lay stark divisions in broker service levels, which were all the more evident in general service and support. Consciously or not, Zurich seems to be super-serving half its brokers - leaving the other half with pricey premiums and, they feel, a distinctly second-rate service.

Zurich's broker ratings ranged from 10th to 15th



At a Glance - How Brokers Rated Zurich

Category	Ranking out of 17	Score	Final Grade
Documentation	12th	0.73	C+
Claims handling	11th	0.85	C+
e-Broking	10th	0.86	C+
General Service	15th	0.62	C
Overall Broker Satisfaction Index*	14th	2.63	C+

* = Documentation + Claims handling + General Service + (0.5 x e-Broking)