

A.P. REID
INSURANCE STORES

Opens 21

N.S. firm a pioneer in insurance industry

A.P. Reid Insurance Stores franchise system offers host services by intranet

By Tom Mason
Special Features Writer

Aileen Reid has been a pioneer through most of her career. Recognized in 1999 and 2000 by *Chatelaine Magazine* as one of the top 100 woman entrepreneurs in Canada, she was the first woman in Nova Scotia to earn the designation of Chartered Insurance Broker.

In 1980, she left a prosperous agency to start her own firm, A.P. Reid Insurance. Twenty years, 35 employees and 9,000 clients later, Ms. Reid is using her expertise for a new pioneering effort — helping franchisees start their own businesses.

To date, six entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the system, opening independently owned partner companies in Liverpool, Amherst, Sackville, Moncton and the two newest offices in Burnside and Bedford.

"We provide all the support the franchisee needs," says Jamie Reid of A.P. Reid Insurance Stores.

"Everything from book keeping and marketing to an extensive training program."

Part of the secret to the success of the A.P. Reid Insurance Stores franchise system is an elaborate computer intranet system that allows brokers to access a host of services. Not happy with any off-the-shelf systems available to the industry, A.P. Reid wrote its own software.

"It's far more advanced than any commercial system," says Mr. Reid. "We offer a lot of features that simply don't exist in the insurance business."

Another aspect of the computer system is HotBroker, an application that allows A.P. Reid Insurance Stores staff to quickly access information on customer policies from one massive database. But that's only the tip of the iceberg as far as technology is concerned. A.P. Reid even plan to start utilizing a video camera system to record the interiors of client homes for future claims purposes and to allow insurance companies a virtual tour through a building to document complex commercial risk.

"Nobody else is doing anything like that," says Mr. Reid.

While A.P. Reid has built a reputation for serving each of its 9,000 plus clients, one at a time, the firm is especially well known for group insurance, according to Mr. Reid. Companies like the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia, the Automotive Trades Association, Sobeys and Michelin have long relied on A.P. Reid to look after the insurance needs of employees and associates.

While Mr. Reid is looking forward to helping more new franchisees get off the ground in the near future, he says that providing excellent service to clients will always remain the company's main focus.

"We believe that no one can provide the services that we offer, as well as us."

'We believe that no one can provide the services that we offer, as well as us. . . . We provide all the support the franchisee needs. Everything from book keeping and marketing to an extensive training program.'

Jamie Reid
A.P. Reid Insurance Stores