

 **Close
Premium
Finance**

No-one else is Close.

CloseUp



Challenges keep on coming

Well, that was 2005: the year statutory regulation of our industry finally kicked in; the year we saw no let-up in the soft market; and the year brokers demanded more from premium finance providers than ever before.

How did you cope with this year's challenges?

Some didn't, of course. A few lower quality and unprepared brokers were forced to quit. And we saw the first broker go out of business after the FSA stepped in, wielding its sparkling new rule book.

Of course, it's no bad thing for the industry to clean up; it leaves the remaining brokers better positioned to face the challenges and enjoy a higher public perception.

At Close we're pulling out all the stops to help brokers run more profitable businesses, at the same time as meeting their regulatory obligations. So how are we doing this?

Firstly, we're making sure we get our product right. That means getting your money to you even earlier – with twice monthly bordereaux payments, for example. And backing it up with a technology offer that's second-to-none.

Secondly, we're continuing to make development loans available to brokers – and not just to help finance acquisitions. If you meet some straightforward criteria, we can help you upgrade software, move to new offices, take on new people or put measures in place to meet FSA obligations.

And we're already thinking about what we can do to help brokers face the next big issue – the FSA's requirement that from January 2008 brokers will no longer be able to treat goodwill as assets in their solvency calculations.

By Tim Wilson, Sales and Marketing Director,
Close Premium Finance

There are too many unanswered questions at this stage. But this development is a worry for many brokers who depend on goodwill to strengthen their balance sheet, or who write off goodwill over a longer period. And it might prevent many younger brokers from staging MBOs.

So looking ahead, the challenges keep on coming.

But at Close we're working on some interesting new developments of our own for 2006. And we'll bring you news of these just as soon as we can.

In the meantime, enjoy this issue of CloseUp. If you have any thoughts about CloseUp or our service in general, please email me: twilson@closepf.com I look forward to hearing from you.

Can't get no satisfaction? Then switch to Close, says survey

A broker survey carried out earlier this year has shown satisfaction levels among Close brokers have risen to a record high.

More than 9 out of 10 respondents among Commercial Lines brokers said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the service Close provides. And we're delighted to report that Personal Lines brokers were equally pleased with i-prompt and the way our system helps them manage and grow their business.

But that doesn't mean we're getting complacent.

We've already appointed a top team at Tolworth Tower to look at the results in much more detail and to see what we can do to keep improving and how we can keep building even further on our reputation for delivering pioneering products and services for the insurance industry.



Closely connected

By **Jeff McCracken**, Commercial Development Manager, Close Premium Finance

Love it or hate it, technology is the backbone of our industry. And at Close we make it our aim to find ways of making brokers love what our technology does for their business.

That's why my team and I have been working even harder this year to make sure arranging premium finance with Close is as easy as it can be. And that means integrating i-prompt into as many third party broker systems as possible. Why? Because then the whole process of delivering cover and finance to your clients at point of sale is streamlined and more efficient for you.

We're pleased to report that as from the New Year, we will have integrated i-prompt into all the major third party providers, including Acturis, CDL, Insurecom, Sectornet, Sirius and SSP. And we will also have integration with Misys as of early 2006.

If you'd like to find out more about how you could benefit from a full scale integration between i-prompt and your existing back office software provider, please contact Allan Oliver on aoliver@closepf.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Broker's view Integrating Close with your back office provider couldn't be easier. But don't take our word for it. Here's what two Close brokers had to say.



The Consolidator

The Oval Group has been trading for just two years, yet turnover has rocketed from £7.2million to £34million in around 18 months. The engine of that extraordinary growth is Oval's highly ambitious acquisition strategy. Since the company launched in October 2003, Oval has bought 7 brokers including one Lloyds broker. Getting these brokers' systems to work together poses a massive challenge for Oval Managing Director Jeff Herdman. However, Close's commitment to software integration has given Jeff one less thing to worry about.

"Inevitably, when we acquire brokers, we acquire organisations with different IT platforms. It's incredibly important to us that the Close system can integrate with so many different platforms – it improves our efficiency enormously."

"When we acquire a broker we set up a project team to get them up and running as Oval. Close is always a part of that integration."

"Integrating our back office software with Close means our account managers don't 'double key' data, which means they spend less time on paperwork and more time on income-generating and client service."

"And the greatest advantage is that come the next renewal, the premium finance agreement continues without any additional work at all. I don't use it day in day out, but my team do. And they sing its praises. They would never go back to pre-integration days."

"We are consistently delighted with the benefit we gain from working with Close. Their service is first class."



The Independent

Established in 1881, Nottingham based Russell Scanlan is one of the East Midlands' leading independent insurance brokers. With a GWP of £15million, this Commercial Lines broker has had Close Premium Finance as sole premium finance provider for 15 years.

Director Bryan Banbury says that Close has become so vital to their business that when it came to looking for a new back office software package part of the criteria they looked for was that it would work with Close.

"We have only worked with one premium finance provider. And that's Close. They've been great for us. They understand broking, they understand where they add value. But they don't rest on their laurels. When they launched i-prompt (back in 1999) it was the single most successful facility online that we'd ever used."

"In fact when we first started getting online facilities from insurers, we often found their systems didn't compare well to Close. i-prompt was so simple. It was brilliant."

"When we started searching for a new software provider last year, one of the many reasons we chose Acturis was because it integrated so well with Close. Plus, we knew that the Close team would have been flexible enough to help if we'd had any kind of integration problem. In fact it was straightforward."

"With Acturis and i-prompt working together, it's even more simple than i-prompt on its own. You invoice through Acturis, select an option for premium finance, put your rates in, answer a couple of simple questions and the loan is automatically set up. You don't have to enter details twice."

"It works very well for us. It's an efficient system that works nicely. We try to use technology as much as possible in our business and this has proved once again that Close are good partners to work with."

Treating Customers Fairly: what we're doing at Close

By **John Taylor**, Operations Director, Close Premium Finance

It is incredibly important for our brokers to know that any dealings Close have with you and your customers meet the FSA's guidelines on Treating Customers Fairly. And that's part of my job.

Working with a small highly skilled and experienced internal team, we have been reviewing all our policies, procedures and communications over the last few months to make sure that our processes are fair and everything we produce is clearly written and easy to understand.

And we've even hired a team of professional wordsmiths to re-write our literature where necessary. This means that all details should be easy for your customers to understand – from

the APR on letters, to details of default and cancellation fees on customer letters right through to training material for i-prompt.

We're also working hard behind-the-scenes to make sure that our contact with customers is of the highest possible standard and that if problems arise we can move swiftly to fix them. Above all, we aim not merely to comply with the FSA requirement but to go a step further wherever we can.

I'll keep you posted on our work, but if you have any comments or feedback for me and my team about the way we treat our customers, then please don't hesitate to email me at jtaylor@closepf.com



Telesales uncovered

By **Steve Taylor**, Head of Broker Sales, Close Premium Finance



It comes with the Telesales territory that even though we're in contact with dozens of brokers each day, we don't actually meet face-to-face. But I'm delighted to say that the powers that be at CloseUp have decided to let us loose for this edition.

So here, in all our glory, is the Telesales team. Hopefully, the next time you phone, you will be able to put a face to a voice.

Starting with me: I'm Steve Taylor, Head of Broker Sales. My aim is to ensure that you receive the account management support you need, whether it is internal phone assistance from Telesales or face-to-face meetings with the field team. When I'm not juggling broker calls, I'm usually somewhere between the 1st and 18th holes.



Vanessa Kennett – I'm the Account Manager for East Midlands and the North. I've been with Close for 6 years, starting as Team Leader in Credit Control, then moving to Audit and Risk Analysis, before making the move into Sales. It's my job to provide a service to my brokers that is of the highest standard possible. That means I deliver what I say I will, when I say I will. When I'm not working I go to the gym and enjoy socialising with friends.



Tom Hart – I'm the Account Manager for the South West Region. I've been working at Close for three years, starting in Operations and then Business Development, which led to my current role. When not rambling on the phone I like to ramble around the countryside; I love walking, trekking and hiking and when I'm not in the great outdoors I like to watch and play football.



Gareth Powell – I'm the Account Manager for Scotland, the West Counties and London. I am a relatively recent convert to the hotshot Telesales team, having previously worked as a Senior Loan Administrator in both the Commercial and Personal Lines teams. When not working I'm usually found running up and down one type of playing field or another – Football, Rugby or Cricket.



Will J Lambe – I'm the Account Manager for the South East Region. I have now been at Close for almost three years and have worked in the premium finance industry for almost half a decade. When I'm not attached to my headset, I enjoy mountain biking, socialising with my friends and following the misfortunes of the POSH (Peterborough United FC).

Converts to Close

By **Steven Howell**, New Business Director, Close Premium Finance

Each month more brokers discover why it makes great business sense to do business with Close. Two of the most exciting new brokers who converted to the Close way came from Wales. Welcome to Close.

Protectagroup, trading as Motaquote With a £6million commission business, Protectagroup was this year's winner of the Insurance Times Regional Awards in Cardiff – the event at which Close met this broker. After a hard-fought competitive tender process, Protectagroup moved its entire premium finance contract from Premium Credit to Close Premium Finance.

Culver Insurance Brokers Wales-based intermediary Culver Insurance Brokers has signed up with Close on a three year deal worth up to £15million. Culver Insurance Brokers Ltd is one of the largest independent brokers in Wales and until recently had used Premium Credit for all its premium finance requirements.

If you have any premium finance business that you would like to move to Close and want to find out how easy it is to transfer this to us, please contact me on showell@closepf.com



When is an insurer's own scheme not the best scheme for brokers?

By **Steve Taylor**, Head of Broker Sales, Close Premium Finance

It's my job to make sure Close provides absolutely the right service and products for our brokers. That means we need to make sure that when we offer a service it is at least as good and ideally even better than anything else our brokers will be offered.

Over the last few months brokers have been asking us to look more closely at those insurer own schemes they've been offered. And it's clear that these aren't quite the great deals for brokers, and their clients, that they may initially appear.

So, we've put together a quick checklist to show you what you and your clients may be missing out on, if you offer an insurer's own scheme:

- 3 **the ability to generate extra income to your bottom line through the addition of overrider on premiums funded**
- 3 **the ability to finance "add-ons" for example - legal expenses, administration fees or risk management fees, making it easier to collect and account for these sums from the client**
- 3 **easier administration for you and your clients by helping them finance more than one policy on a single direct debit**

- 3 **the business benefit of easier renewals**
- 3 **a cheaper premium for your client, as insurers load the policy premium to cover their 0% and low interest finance offers**
- 3 **award-winning service and real time online management information via i-prompt!**

Still not convinced? Then please speak to your account manager or contact me at stevetaylor@closepf.com

Out and About

It has been a busy few months, with Close participating in quite a few roadshows and award events.



We started off sponsoring the Insurance Times Regional Awards in Wales in June and this proved to be such a success that we decided to sponsor the Birmingham and Manchester Regional Awards too. These events were ideal opportunities for our people to catch up with existing and prospective brokers whilst also being a lot of fun.

The Close team hit the road in October with our sponsorship of the Professional Broking roadshows which included a series of case studies presented by key broker groups. Our stand at each roadshow was constantly busy, as we met brokers and discussed key subjects such as i-prompt and software integration. To make the events even more fun we ran a prize draw competition where two brokers won an i-pod! – Johnathan Quaile, Alliance Insurance Management and Carol Martin, Primary Broking Services.

In November, we attended the Insurance Age Expo where we had a stand with a blackjack table. It was a lively event with many brokers stopping to find out about our services and to enjoy a game of blackjack too. As always, we enjoyed the chance to talk to brokers and other market contacts. And to make the event even better, we gave away an i-pod which was won by Natasha Peacock of Beachcroft Wansbrough.

Close people Care Adventure Challenge

25 September 2005

In September, Close took to the vertiginous slopes of the Old Man of Coniston and the icy waters of Coniston Lake to raise £5,000 as part of the Care Adventure Challenge.

Close entered two teams, one led by our fearless New Business Director Steven Howell and the second by intrepid Gavin Worrall, Operations Manager.

The challenge, a major feat of endurance, is an annual event designed to raise funds for Care International, a charity which exists to

help fight global poverty. It involves a canoe race across the lake, orienteering, a long mountain bike ride and a demanding trek across the Cumbrian fells.

Despite one minor injury, an embarrassing loss of the map (over a cliff, since you ask) and far too many hot toddies to ward off the fog and cold, our Close adventurers returned safely. After all, when you spend your days helping insurance brokers wrestle with current market conditions, there's no mountain high enough nor lake cold enough to put you off your stride.



Did you know?

By **Bela Allen**, Marketing Manager, Close Premium Finance

Have you received a postcard from us recently? You should have done. My team and I have put together a mailing campaign based on "Things you didn't know..."

The campaign came together after recent research with brokers. We asked what you would like us to do for your business. And it turned out that many of the things you asked for we were already offering – we just hadn't mentioned them for a while.

So it made sense for us to have some kind of reminder campaign. However, we know that the nitty-gritty about our personal lines non-recourse products isn't the most exciting topic in the world, so we decided to add a bit of humour to spice up those gentle reminders.

The result: our Did you know? campaign with a set of postcards, an email, some adverts and a web page – all bringing you some light-hearted facts! If you haven't seen this campaign or received any postcards yet, then please give me a call. We've got plenty to share around your team if you'd like more.

And if you have any thoughts at all about the campaign, please don't hesitate to drop me an email. It would be great to know what you think. ballen@closepf.com



Have your say!



Tell us what you think – it can only make our service better

Whether it's a newsletter, a special offer or recent system changes, would you prefer to receive our communications electronically (by email) or on paper (written or printed)?

Please email your answer to the Marketing team on marketing@closepf.com

Would you like to know what Close can do for your broking business? Why not speak to your account manager or give Allan Oliver a call on 020 8339 6247 and find out?

i-prompt eye

So what's piping-hot in the world of i-prompt? And what do brokers need to look out for?

Defaults and Cancellations Report – an automated report that lists all the loans that have defaulted, fallen into arrears or have been cancelled in the last 24 hours. We're introducing this report for all UK and Ireland, Commercial and Personal Lines business.

Diarised MTAs – a new facility that diarises mid term adjustments that cannot be transacted due to the principal loan being in our payment cycle.

The facility processes the adjustment and issues an i-mail confirmation. The result? We will save Personal Lines brokers lots of time and hassle.

As always, you should have received news of these developments through our i-news messaging system. But please don't hesitate to call us if you'd like any advice or help – or even just a friendly Close person for an i-prompt chat. Call us on: 0870 607 8120



Would you like to know what Close can do for your broking business? Why not speak to your account manager or give Allan Oliver at Close a call on 020 8339 6247 and find out?