

## **The new tech era in insurance**

### **Looking back at 40 years of CBPF, and looking forward to exciting developments in tech**

A lot has changed in the world of insurance and fintech. From typewriters to tablets, telephones to video conferencing, on the surface, the offices and workspaces that drive the financial services industry have evolved to be almost unrecognisable. But the tech that drives the machinations behind the scenes, the very infrastructure that forms the bedrock of the information systems, has also changed dramatically.

“And even more change is coming,” says José Ramos, Chief Information Officer of Close Brothers Premium Finance.

### **From paper-heavy to paper-light**

While financial services as a whole have embraced new technology, the insurance sector still has a way to go, says Ramos. For an industry that has historically been very reliant on paper records, the move to digital ways of working is still ongoing, and will likely continue for some time.

“For many brokerages, the next 5 to ten years will be taken up with focusing on becoming more digital – and that is not just moving their files and records from hard copy to electronic, but also planning and transacting digitally,” says Ramos.

The move to digital has its obvious benefits, says Ash Shahata, Head of Business Analytics and Architecture at Close Brothers Premium Finance.

“Savings on office and storage space will be the first obvious result for brokers and insurance service providers, but another positive will be the increased security of their records. Boxes of paper files are always at risk, even in fire-proof boxes, but with cloud-based solutions, your records are backed up in locations different to your own,” he adds.

### **A new tech era in insurance**

Enhancing and developing a digital customer journey is a current major theme for the insurance industry, and it's one that Close Brothers Premium Finance is investing heavily in, because of the unique demands of the customer of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, says Jon Howells, Close Brothers Premium Finance's Head of New Markets.

In a world of the Internet of Things, instantaneous contact with family and friends, and immediate services like app-based shopping, the typical insurance customer has come to expect similar immediacy in their dealings with insurers and premium finance providers, he says.

“The work we are doing to constantly enhance our technology – whether through the E-signature capability, the emailed documentation that is eDocs, or the Payment Services we are developing – ensures that we keep being digital by design,” says Howells.

### **Transition from one technology to another**

Exciting developments like these need to be underpinned by suitably reliable and agile infrastructure, but many firms in insurance are still using legacy systems, and this transition presents a challenge, says Ash Shahata.

Being part of Close Brothers Group plc, for Close Brothers Premium Finance, this means that the company benefits from investment into cutting-edge enterprise architecture that safeguards the business into the future.

“Transitioning from a legacy system, which has been evolving and growing over many years, to an entirely new platform, would have been risky. Instead, we approached our legacy transformation in iterations, or transition states, targeting a set of business outcomes with each phase. Our first iteration focused on digitising our touch points with our brokers and customers, introducing eSignature, eDocuments and eMessaging. A new cloud based digital platform was introduced to help create a frictionless customer experience and streamline our on boarding process. We also chose to couple the digital platform with an application integration suite.” he says.

“The Application Integration Suite allows our legacy systems to communicate with the digital cloud in a safe, secure and scalable approach. This made sure we were delivering a digital experience for our business partners and customers that would reap the benefits of cloud technology, all the while still able to work with our legacy systems, which was an essential requirement,” says Shahata.

This transition now means our brokers can interact with our systems using a set of secure, modern and well integrated digital services. It also resulted in the information systems within Close Brothers Premium Finance being “change ready”.

“This hybrid (cloud and on-premise architecture) approach will now enable us to swiftly respond to critical business requirements,” adds Shahata.

## **Change is coming**

So, what does all this mean for insurance companies, brokers, and insurance service providers? “As we look back on 40 years of Close Brothers Premium Finance, and look to the next 40 years, it is evident that we haven’t seen the end of big changes and they’ll be coming faster than ever, says Ramos.

“The customer experience is still migrating to digital journeys within the market, and many brokers and service providers still have a way to go to move from old legacy systems to more reliable, cost-effective and flexible solutions,” he adds. “So, there is a lot of change coming.”