

The Big Picture

Lovin' It: State Farm agent Charlie Rios, left, office manager Sandra Figueroa, right, and office assistant Veronica Figueroa love their jobs: helping neighbors reach financial goals while building a better community.



Fred Greaves for Best's Review

WINNING the Hispanic Market

Insurers are trying to reach out to the growing Hispanic population — and its swelling middle class — but insiders say they could be doing more.

by Meg Green

If you think reaching the Hispanic market is as simple as translating your marketing slogan into Spanish, don't be too sure.

The dairy industry's successful, and often imitated, "Got Milk?" slogan took a misstep when it was translated directly into Spanish as "*Tienes Leche?*"

"The literal translation was 'are you lactating?,'" said Andre Urena, chief executive officer of the Latin American Agents Association and founder of Oasis Insurance Services, an independent insurance agency in El Monte, Calif.

But even translating a marketing slogan correctly into Spanish isn't enough, especially when dealing with complex financial-services products.

"The term we use at New York Life is 'transculturalization,'" said Juan Job, Hispanic marketing manager for New York Life. "We recognize that you can't just merely translate documents from English to Spanish without addressing cultural nuances and making it culturally relevant."

"Culturally relevant" becomes a challenge when you consider that Spanish is the dominant language in some 21 countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean—all of which were once home to a number of immigrants to the United States. While all Spanish-speaking cultures have some things in common, they also all have their differences, and it's a tricky business to make blanket statements about the "Hispanic market."

Further complicating the issue, marketers have learned they can't lump all immigrants from the same country together because there are differences among first, second and third generations. About 75% of U.S. Hispanics either speak English exclusively or are bilingual and speak English very well, according to Hispanic Business Inc. As with any group, there's even disagreement over what they should be called. Some prefer to be called "Hispanic," while others prefer the term "Latino" or "Latin."

Even the Spanish language itself isn't necessarily consistent. "There's a big difference between the Spanish spoken by Cubans vs. Mexicans," Urena said. "Insurers need to be sensitive to those issues. Insurance companies that just translate materials are misguided."

The issue of how to reach the growing Hispanic market is one that all insurers—personal lines, small commercial lines, life and disability, and health insurers—are facing. Many insiders say they all could be doing more.

Bambino Boomers

Insurers have 39.9 million reasons—the size of the Hispanic population in the United States in 2003—to care about this group, which is now the largest and fastest-growing minority in the country. The Hispanic population is growing about four times faster than the general population. It grew 57.9% from 1990 to 2000, compared with a

13.2% jump in the overall U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census.

Key Points

- Hispanics are the largest and fastest-growing minority in the United States.
- Insurers are trying different tactics to reach the growing Hispanic market.
- Translating marketing materials and advertisements into Spanish isn't enough, insiders said.

Hispanics—the term the U.S. Census uses—in 2000 accounted for 13% of the total U.S. population, compared with African-Americans at 12.7% and Asians at 3.9%.

And the Hispanic market still is growing at a tremendous rate. The Census Bureau predicts that by 2050, there will be 102.6 million Hispanics in the United States, representing one in four Americans.

"The Hispanic population has gotten people's attention by its sheer size," said Beth Hirschhorn, chief marketing officer of MetLife. "There seems to be an emerging middle class among the segment. We've seen the median household income increase 136% since 1980. Plus an increasing number of Hispanics are starting and expanding their own businesses."

Hispanics tend to be younger than the general population: the median age is 25.9, vs. 35.3 for the entire U.S. population, according to *Hispanic Trends*. Hispanics aged 15 to 34 earned 37% of total Hispanic income, vs. 21% for non-Hispanic whites, according to Hispanic Business Inc.

As a group, Hispanics are becoming more affluent. The mean income of Hispanic households has grown from \$32,359 in 1972 to \$44,383 in 2001 (in constant 2001 dollars). The proportion of Hispanic households earning more than \$100,000 increased from 1.5% to 7%, and the middle-income bracket—\$35,000 to \$99,990—grew from 34.2% to 41.3%.

"The Hispanic population is becoming a real economic factor, and not just in terms of the Southwestern states," said Jose Montemayor, Texas' insurance commissioner. "I think most insurers are cognizant of that."

Half of the U.S. Hispanic population lives in two states: California and Texas. More than three of every four Hispanics live in seven states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona and New Jersey. Yet other areas also are expanding. From 1990 to 2000, the Hispanic populations more than tripled in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Nevada, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Ripe for Insurance

Insurance may be a common thread in the tapestry of life in the United States, but it's often not so common in other countries. For instance, most drivers in Mexico are self-insured, said Montemayor, whose father is Mexican.

Urena said insurance "is practically nonexistent to the people who immigrate from Latin America. Only the rich can protect their things with insurance."

The Big Picture

What the Hispanic community needs, Urena said, is education. "We need to know the value of the product," he said. "When they come to the

states, they often buy insurance not out of need, but out of fear: fear of being pulled over, fear of not getting the job. A lot of education is needed.

Insurance companies need to educate agents to represent them well in those communities, so the communication is effective."

Beyond Sales

When Charlie Rios opened his State Farm agency in City Heights, a neighborhood with a heavy concentration of Hispanics in San Diego, in 2000, he became the first agent in the neighborhood since the 1970s.

"Right away we started marketing to Hispanics, and we got a lot of calls," said Rios, who speaks Spanish. His mother was born in Mexico, and his father was born in St. Louis but grew up in Mexico.

The business has been growing so rapidly through referrals that Rios does very little advertising. The fact that current customers refer their friends and relatives to him is high praise, Rios said.

"Basically, we treat them fairly. We speak their language. We are aware of their cultural needs, and that's really important for them. They feel like they trust us," Rios said.

That trust extends well beyond buying insurance. Many of Rios' clients come to him for advice for other matters, from helping translate mail to helping understand contracts.

"They feel like sometimes they are taken advantage of, because they don't speak the language, or maybe they aren't that well educated," said Rios. "It's nice to help people and tell them where to go for help."

Rios' advice has helped some clients avoid scams or simply deal with paperwork that overwhelmed them. His office also works to teach people about insurance, not simply try to sell it.

Sandra Figueroa, Rios' office manager, said, "Our job here is to educate, and that's why we get so many referrals. I go through every single step and explain everything.

"When they leave here, they can basically go and work in an insurance office," she said.

Respecting Preferences

Rios, Figueroa and Figueroa's daughter, Veronica, 20, who helps out in the office, try to make the office especially inviting for Hispanic customers. Many of their clients like to pay their premiums in cash and stop in to make the payment in person. Not all insurance agencies are that accommodating, Rios said.

"We've had clients complain that they've paid [other companies'] insurance premiums but didn't get the insurance coverage," Rios said. "Many times people come in and say they aren't comfortable with their agent, because he doesn't give them service."

Some clients may stop in to pay their premiums straight from their blue-collar jobs. A bricklayer covered with dust is treated with the same respect as someone

who comes in wearing a business suit, Figueroa said.

Also, it's common for entire families to come into the office: mom, dad, children and grandchildren. In some families, it's the husband who makes the financial decisions, so some clients want to speak directly to Rios, Figueroa said.

"We can't judge. We just respect every culture," she said.

People want to see a familiar face when they come into the office. "I tell them we're not necessarily the lowest price. But when people see what we can give them, they feel comfortable," Figueroa said. "They know if they have any problems, I'm not going to give them a 1-800 number. They are going to come here, and I'm going to help them with whatever they need."

Rios often makes house calls initially, going to prospective clients' homes to talk about their insurance needs. State Farm sells personal lines, auto, homeowners and renters insurance, plus life and disability insurance, retirement and savings products, and a basic health insurance policy. Also, Rios reaches out to small-business owners with commercial policies, including workers' compensation.

Cross-selling opportunities abound. Figueroa said some customers just listen but then decide later they need coverage and come back to buy it.

Rios recalled speaking to one Hispanic family about the importance of saving for retirement. They opened two Roth IRA savings account with him. "Mutual funds do not go after this market," he said. "The blue-collar Hispanic families are working but may be not 'well off.' But they want to save."



Charlie Rios

Beyond the Hispanic Market

The skills needed to serve the Hispanic market can be applied to other minorities, Figueroa said. "Here in City Heights, there are 71 different dialects spoken. We have every culture you can think of. The way you talk to someone from another culture is the same way you speak to a Hispanic. You have to speak slowly, and be easy to understand," she said.

Rios also serves on several community boards, including one for first-time home buyers and another for neighborhood improvements. "It's very rewarding. We're helping people, and I have the flexibility to serve in the community," Rios said.

Figueroa, who's active as a volunteer with the local school system, said she also loves her job. "You're not giving people anything they don't need. Everything that we offer is something that everyone needs," Figueroa said. "That's why I feel very comfortable and proud of what I do. We're providing for the next generation."

The Big Picture

The market is ripe to buy insurance, Job said.

"If you look at what is referred to as 'traditional values' in the mainstream,

these are the things that are important to the Hispanic community. They're family oriented. They put a great value on young people and educating young

people. They value elders. They're quite compatible with who we are as an industry and who we are as a company," Job said.

Speaking the Language

For PacifiCare, reaching the Hispanic market isn't just about selling insurance—it's about providing better health care.

"While many people use English in their day-to-day work, when they are dealing with a subject that is more complicated, like health or health insurance, they prefer to have the information explained to them in Spanish," said Russell Bennett, vice president of Latino Health Solutions for PacifiCare.

Two years ago, PacifiCare launched Latino Health Solutions, a division established to transform the company into one that could competently deal with the growing Latino market and meet the needs of the 600,000 Hispanic or Latino members that PacifiCare already has, Bennett said.

In the eight states where PacifiCare operates—California, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, Texas, Oklahoma, Oregon and Washington—Hispanics represent the largest minority.

While Latino Health Solutions has created marketing material for employers to distribute to their Hispanic employees, it's also concentrated on helping Hispanic patients find doctors who literally speak their language.

The company surveyed its doctors and published a directory that indicates how fluent in Spanish they are. Doctors, their nurses and office staff are each listed with a rating to show how comfortable they are speaking Spanish. Three stars is the highest rating; one star means the doctor or staff member is somewhat comfortable speaking Spanish.

"When physicians credential with a health plan, most health plans ask them to indicate what other languages they speak. They may put down Spanish because they have office staff that speak the language, but they don't. The patient could be disappointed that the doctor isn't fluent," Bennett said.

On the other hand, a patient with fairly strong English could be comfortable with a doctor that didn't speak Spanish, as long as some of the doctor's support staff did.

"We think it's a responsibility for us to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services," Bennett said. "When a doctor deals with a patient in his or her own language, with respect and knowledge of their culture, the result is better compliance of medical instructions."

A Family Affair

Bennett, who grew up in Mexico and is bilingual, said one example of a cultural difference could be that an entire Hispanic family will visit a doctor, not just the individual

patient. If an elder person is the patient, the adult son or daughter—who could have children of his or her own—needs to be involved with the diagnosis and treatment.

For instance, if a grandmother has diabetes or heart disease, then her daughter—who may do most of the cooking—needs to be aware of any nutritional requirements.

"You really need the support of the family," Bennett said.

Realizing there is a shortage of Spanish-speaking doctors to meet the needs of the growing number of Spanish-speaking patients, PacifiCare has developed a CD-ROM survey for patients to evaluate their health. The survey asks a number of questions in Spanish, but the results can be printed in English to give to an English-speaking doctor. The CD-ROM also offers recommendations based on the survey results, including when to see a doctor. PacifiCare's community outreach personnel have taken the disc to senior citizen centers and distribute it to all employers' benefit managers who request it.

PacifiCare also has a Spanish Web site, www.Pacificare-Latino.com, which has lots of health information in Spanish, including a 23-page guide on diabetes care.

There are cultural differences in the educational information geared to Hispanics vs. the general population, Bennett said. For example, a guide on alcohol use for the general population says, "The Choice Is Yours," but the Spanish version simply says, "Just One Drink."

"It's a lot more direct, as opposed to asking you to think about it. Doctors are highly respected in the Latino culture, and it allows medical organizations to be a little more prescriptive in the instructions they give," Bennett said.

To encourage more bilingual students to pursue medical professions, PacifiCare launched a Latino Health Scholarship program two years ago, and it expects to have awarded 100 scholarships by September.

Reaching out to the Hispanic market has helped the company reach even those who are comfortable speaking in English, Bennett said.

"We did a pilot program with Spanish language advertising in San Diego last year, and we had a significant number of new members enroll. Of all the new members that enrolled in San Diego, 53% were Latinos, even though only 27% of the population there are Latinos," Bennett said. "It shows people are listening. Even though many Hispanics don't speak Spanish, or speak English so well that it's their first language, I think there's respect that Hispanics or Latinos have for a company that addresses the specific needs of the Hispanic market. They say 'here's a company doing the right thing.'"



Russell Bennett

Uno, Dos, Tres—The Growing Hispanic Market By the Numbers

39.9 Million

Estimated U.S. Hispanic population as of July 1, 2003

13.7

Percentage of the U.S. population that is Hispanic

1 in 4

Estimate of the percentage of the U.S. population that will be Hispanic as of July 1, 2050

188%

Estimated growth of the Hispanic population in the United States from 2000 to 2050

67

Percentage of Hispanic-origin people in the United States who are Mexican

50

Percentage of Hispanic-origin population who live in California and Texas

43

Percentage of New Mexico's population that is Hispanic, the highest of any state

44

Percentage of Hispanic families that consist of a married couple with children under 18

29 Million

Number of U.S. residents age 5 and older who speak Spanish at home

50

Percentage of people who speak Spanish at home who say they speak English "very well"

\$1.2 trillion

Estimated purchasing power of Hispanics by 2010

35

Pieces of Hispanic-language direct mail received by Hispanics in a year, roughly one-tenth of what the average consumer receives in English-language direct mail

\$34,361

Average amount of money that Hispanic households spend a year

\$40,009

Average amount of money that non-Hispanic households spend a year

65

Percentage of 1,200 Latino registered voters who prefer the term "Hispanic" to "Latino"

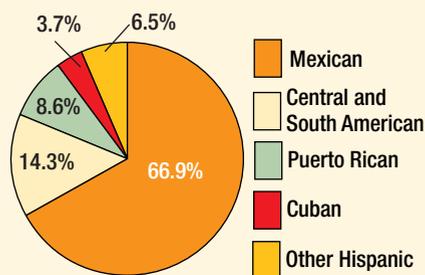
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies; Santiago Solutions Group; *Hispanic Trends*

At a Glance: U.S. Hispanics

Population

Hispanics by Origin, 2002

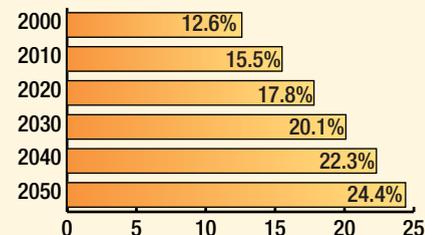
The majority of Hispanics in the United States are Mexican.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Projected Growth of Hispanic Population

By 2050, Hispanics will be one fourth of the U.S. population.



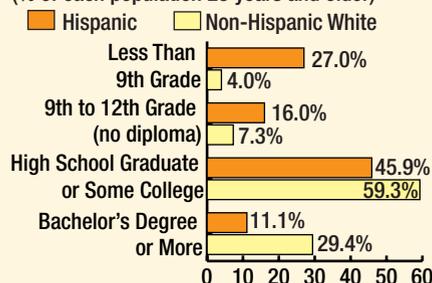
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Education

School Days

About 46% of Hispanics aged 25 and older have graduated from high school.

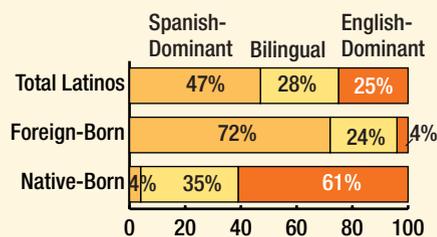
(% of each population 25 years and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

English-Speaking Hispanics

Hispanics born in the United States are more likely to prefer English to Spanish as their primary language.



Source: Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation

New York Life always has included the Hispanic market in its outreach, but it stepped up its targeting five years ago, when it began to hold a national Hispanic marketing conference for its independent agents. What started as a study group has grown into an annual conference, with more than 130 attendees expected this year, Job said. New York Life offers continuing education in Hispanic communities about insurance and offers support to agents. It has a Spanish-language Web site and a toll-free phone with bilingual phone operators, in addition to bilingual agents.

Hirschhorn of MetLife said MetLife is interested in the Hispanic market because the population is underserved. "They have tremendous finan-

cial-services needs that aren't being met," she said.

According to a MetLife survey, 75% of Hispanics described themselves as being concerned about disability, compared with just 53% of the general population. More than a third of Hispanic employees living in the United States have parents who are financially dependent on them, compared with just 5% of workers overall. While more than half of Hispanic workers surveyed said they worry about having money to care for elderly parents/in-laws, compared with just 29% of non-Hispanics, they lag behind the general population in terms of financial and retirement planning.

Only 6% of Hispanics have more than \$60,000 in disability insurance,

Income

Earning More

While Hispanics still lag behind the general population in earnings, the mean income of Hispanic households is on the rise.

Mean income of Hispanic households increased from \$32,359 in 1972 to \$44,383 in 2001.

Percentage of Hispanic households in the lower-income bracket (\$34,900 or less) fell from 64.3 in 1972 to 51.8 in 2001.

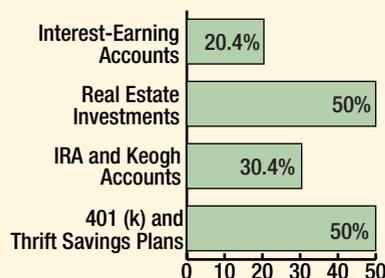
Percentage of Hispanic households earning more than \$100,000 increased from 1.5% in 1972 to 7% in 2001.

Percentage of Hispanic households in the middle-income bracket (\$35,000 to \$99,900) grew from 34.2% in 1972 to 41.3% in 2001.

Source: "Hispanic Consumers in Transition: A Descriptive Guide" by HispanTelligence, the research division of Hispanic Business Inc. Dollar amounts are in constant 2001 dollars.

Growing Net Worth

The net worth of U.S. Hispanic households increased by 41.4% from 1998 to 2000, mainly because of increases in:



Source: "Hispanic Consumers in Transition: A Descriptive Guide" by HispanTelligence, the research division of Hispanic Business Inc.



Courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau, photo by Lloyd Wolf

“More than 75% of all U.S. Hispanics either speak English exclusively or are bilingual and speak English well or very well.”

Source: "Hispanic Consumers in Transition: A Descriptive Guide" by HispanTelligence, the research division of Hispanic Business Inc.

compared with 16% of the general population, Hirschhorn said. Also, only half of all Hispanic households earning more than \$75,000 own life insurance, she said.

Approaching the Market

Insurance companies seem to know the importance of reaching the Hispanic market. Many insurers have hired executives with titles ranging from vice president of "emerging markets"—which may include other minorities—to vice president of Hispanic or Latino marketing to lead the charge.

Most insurers have at least some marketing material translated into Spanish and have hired bilingual agents, claims handlers and call-center

workers to field calls from policyholders who speak Spanish predominantly.

Insurers are increasing their advertising to target this market. Overall, the insurance industry increased its advertising in the Hispanic media by 80% from 2000 to 2003, according to the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies.

Yet that spending still represents just 3.6% of U.S. insurers' overall advertising budget, and insurers could be doing much more to reach the prized Hispanic market, said Manuel Machado, president of the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies.

The AHA estimates that health insurers should be spending about 12% of their total advertising budgets on

the Hispanic market, while life insurers should be spending 10% and homeowners/renters insurers should be spending 8%.

Spending in markets such as New York, Los Angeles and Miami might need to be even higher to reflect the higher concentration of Hispanics there.

"Hispanic consumers are largely a young population with growing families. They own homes. It's important for life insurers and homeowners to target this market," Machado said.

Some companies have launched full-scale, national advertising campaigns to target Hispanics.

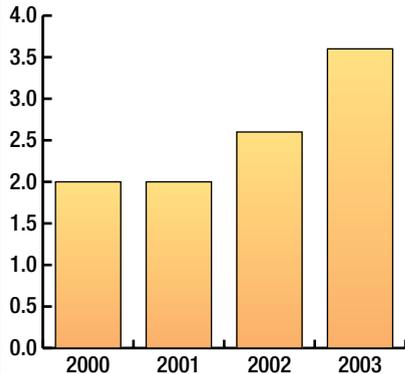
Allstate recently launched an advertising campaign featuring Hispanic

The Big Picture

Got Spanish?

Insurers have increased their spending in the Hispanic media by 80% from 2000 to 2003.

% Advertising budget spent on Hispanic media



Source: Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies

actor Esai Morales, who's best known for his work on the television series *NYPD Blue* and *American Family*. The ad series—"Asi Piensa Allstate" or "That's What Allstate Believes"—tells about the benefits of having Allstate insurance, including "quality insurance at an affordable price," the company said.

Jennifer Davis, director of multicultural marketing for Allstate, said many companies take a general market commercial and simply do a voice-over in Spanish.

"A direct translation doesn't get to the heart of the person, or the heart of the company," Davis said. "You've got to communicate your brand in a way that's meaningful to the customer or potential customer. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. You have to speak in a way that's relevant to them, not what's relevant to you."

For instance, one of the commercials features Morales outside of a Hispanic wedding. At one point, while he's talking about insurance, children dressed up for the wedding run behind him. The dancing bride and groom, surrounded by guests, can be seen in the distance in one shot.

Morales "is not the only person in the setting. That wouldn't have the sense of energy that our research has told us that Hispanic customers are likely to relate to," Davis said.



"There's a big difference between the Spanish spoken by Cubans vs. Mexicans. Insurers need to be sensitive to those issues."

—Andre Urena,
Latin American Agents Association

Insurers shouldn't overlook the workplace as a selling opportunity, Hirschhorn of MetLife said. "While 25% of employees overall have no specific financial planning, that number jumps to 37% for Hispanic employees. These are people already in the workforce," she said.

MetLife's survey found that one in 10 employers are looking for multilingual benefits communication, and 77% of that group indicate a need for Spanish-language material.

Marketing material in Spanish is great, but Hirschhorn said it may be more important to increase the number of bilingual financial-services representatives. "More than a third of MetLife's financial-services representatives are members of a multicultural segment," Hirschhorn said. Of the company's 5,000 financial-services representatives, 135 are Hispanic. But the company hopes to hire more. "We have more people working on this now than we've had in our history," she said.

MetLife also tries to participate in local events in Hispanic communities around the country.

Reaching Out

Addressing the Hispanic community and specific Hispanic neighborhoods is important, said Deborah Vela, an inde-

pendent insurance agent and owner of the Vela Insurance Agency in Denver. Vela, who said she's had great success selling St. Paul/Travelers insurance to her customers, said, "When people who are Latinos have a Latino agent who can speak in Spanish, it means the world to them. One of the things that insurance companies are doing to focus on the Hispanic market is to give it more personal attention."

For instance, Vela, with the support of St. Paul/Travelers, is active in her local community by being involved with a Latin women's organization and a program for first-time home buyers.

"We do no advertising at all, and we are swamped. People who appreciate us recommend us to their friends and family. They appreciate I'm trying to educate them and treat them with respect. Some of them have owned a home for 10 years, and no one has ever explained their homeowners policy to them," Vela said. "We offer them coffee and try to make it more of a family environment, not just a business. We're here to help them, not just take their money."

Urena, of the California-based Latin American Agents Association, said many Hispanics prefer a one-on-one, face-to-face visit with an agent. Some of his clients have tried to buy insurance through a toll-free number or

Big Spenders

Here's what the top insurance advertisers spent on Hispanic media in 2003: (\$ Thousands)

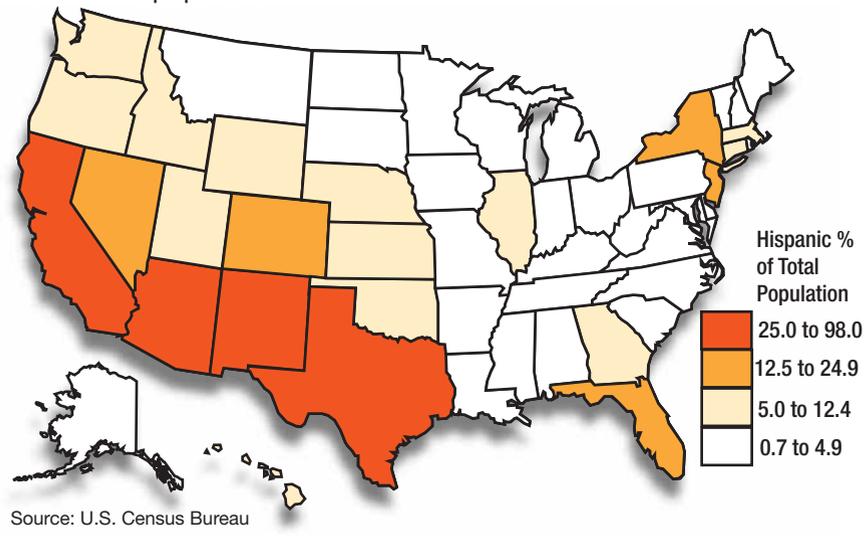
Company	TV and Print General Markets	TV and Print Hispanic	Total TV and Print	% of Ad Budget Spent On Hispanic Media
State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance Co.	\$136,476	\$ 13,466	\$149,941	9.0%
Berkshire Hathaway	135,597	92	136,689	0.1%
Allstate Corp.	128,669	4,139	132,808	3.1%
Progressive Corp.	101,101	21	101,122	0.0%
Aflac Inc.	57,313	2,147	59,460	3.6%

Source: Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies

The Big Picture

In Your Neighborhood

In California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, Hispanics are 25% or more of the population.



over the Internet, but then go back to a traditional agent.

"They might pay more, but they like the personal touch. Price is not everything," Urena said. "I can tell you we don't necessarily sell on price, we sell on service."

Walk into Urena's office and you may find an agent teaching a customer about auto insurance using Hot Wheels cars crashing into each other. "Once they get it, they refer their family and friends. I do very little advertising; most of my business comes from referrals," Urena said.

Lorraine Brock, vice president of diverse markets for Nationwide, agreed that the agent-consumer relationship is vital. "We believe we're getting our producers in the marketplace where this growing population is. We want to make sure our agents are well positioned and have a bilingual capacity to sell to the community," she said.

Nationwide's agents try to make their offices "family friendly" by having a television and an area where children can play, Brock said. Hispanics often visit the agents' offices with their entire families in tow—children and grandparents, too.

"We're interested in hiring more Hispanic agents and employees. We believe it's the key to our success in the marketplace," Brock said. Of Nationwide's 4,000 exclusive agents, more

than 300 are bilingual.

Urena also is launching a national organization to be called the National Association of Latino Insurance Professionals. "Now that Hispanics are learning about insurance, there's a great demand for our product. Most agencies in our group are new and hungry. We're getting calls from around the country. The need is tremendous," Urena said.

Believe in a Brand

Advertising may not be needed by individual agents, but it certainly helps get the brand name into potential customers' minds, Urena said.

Creating a strong brand is important, Brock said. "We believe the key is to create brand recognition. This market is brand loyal. We know Hispanics, when they are from other countries, come here and purchase the same products that they purchased there. We want to establish in the minds of these consumers that we are friendly, easy to do business with, and we have their best interests at heart."

Unfortunately, Urena said, no insurer has been able to do a big push into the Hispanic market to create a name brand for itself.

"It baffles my mind that there isn't an insurance company named the same in Spanish as in English," Urena said. "Or a company that's offering endorsements to cover drivers who

Learn More



State Farm Group

A.M. Best Company # 00088

Distribution: Exclusive agents

New York Life Insurance Co.

A.M. Best Company #06820

Distribution: Independent agents

Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

A.M. Best Company # 06704

Distribution: Captive agents

Allstate Insurance Group

A.M. Best Company # 00008

Distribution: Exclusive agents

St. Paul Cos.

(Member of St. Paul/Travelers Cos.)

A.M. Best Company # 00080

Distribution: Independent agents

Nationwide Group

A.M. Best Company # 05987

Distribution: Independent contractors

PacificCare of California

(Member of PacificCare Group)

A.M. Best Company # 68705

Distribution: Direct selling, brokers and consultants

cross boundaries (into Mexico). I'd love to be a part of one. When that does happen, they will be very successful."

Making Sense

Montemayor, the first Hispanic insurance commissioner of Texas, said insurers need to do more to reach the Hispanic market.

"Certainly, they need to be more keenly aware of what this population is," Montemayor said. "I'm not a diversification nut, but I think it makes good economic sense for insurers to diversify their board of directors and corporate governance."

After a decade of "chasing redlining," Montemayor said he's never found an insurer with a map split by a red line.

"Some areas are woefully underserved, but I don't believe there's a grand design or evil design behind it. Why would there be? Insurers only make money if they sell insurance," Montemayor said.

"In order to succeed in our society, you need coverage for health, liability, property, life.... There's not an insurance culture there [in most Hispanic countries]. You need to bridge that gap, and educate them on how important it is to have insurance," Montemayor said. **BR**