

Backchat Insider's Market matrix

ONE STEP FORWARD

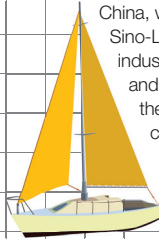
Just horsing around

Dominic Burke has once again loudly rebuffed rumours that Aon will take over JLT, which he seems to have to do every few months, poor chap. But the JLT chief can't be too dismissive of his opposite number at Aon UK, Rob Brown. It turns out Burke is chairman of Newbury racecourse, while Brown's firm sponsors races there. It would be rather amusing if the takeover talk had been sparked by someone spotting the two chatting about the funding for the 3pm steeplechase instead of how to combine the two broking giants.



All smooth sailing?

Lockton chief executive and keen yachtsman Julian James took a break last week to do some sailing in the Solent, I hear. Julian also spends a lot of time in China, working hard to expand Sino-Lockton relations. With the industry starting to wind down and go on holiday, perhaps the Lockton chief executive could combine the two? A cruise down the Yangtze, perhaps?



Rallying round

I don't know about you, but I always enjoy putting my feet up to watch a bit of the Tour de France on TV. However, some of the insurance industry decided that they wanted to get a bit closer to the action and do some cycling themselves. There were aching legs in the AXA, Brit, Chaucer, Validus and Zurich offices last week after a team of 10 rode from London to Paris, taking three days and covering 340 miles. The event raised £15,000 for Action Medical Research.



TAXI!

Wilkins' happy hour

Choosing a region to expand into can be a tricky decision for many insurers, but not for IAG. Chief executive Mike Wilkins took a practical approach when his firm had to choose between expansion in Latin America or Asia. With his tongue firmly in his cheek, Mike said the reason he chose Asia was simple: the time zone difference was closer to his native Australia.



Now you see him ...

The magician Dynamo has made his name through stunts like appearing to walk on water, and now has his own TV show. So where next for the rising magician? The 2012 Broker Network and Countrywide conference, apparently. I hear that the magician has many fans within Towergate, some of whom are hoping to book Dynamo to appear at their annual conference next year. Watch this space.



Asplin's not revolting!

While most of us are watching the crisis in the eurozone unfold in the news, DAS boss Paul Asplin had first-hand experience of the troubles on a business trip to Athens earlier this month. Asplin navigated his way through riot police, street protesters and striking workers to thankfully make it back home safely. "Athens is a lovely place, but it was a little bit edgy this time round," he tells me.



CHEERS!

A grave undertaking

The International Underwriting Association's annual summer press party was a spine-tingling affair this year, I hear. Held at The London Bridge Experience, guests were taken on the long walk round the attraction, which included the rather frightening London Tombs. But the group was in safe hands, led by IUA honcho Dave Matcham, who courageously volunteered himself as the leader. "He was just like Braveheart," one guest quipped.



Pretty sweet deal

It takes a very good businessman to sell anything to Lord Alan Sugar. Yet broker software house Durell Software managing director Robert White managed it. Durell was at the cutting edge of video game design in the 1980s, before moving into general insurance. White once negotiated a deal to sell 100,000 copies of a game to Lord Sugar, to include with some of the early Amstrad computers. If there is ever an insurance industry version of *The Apprentice*, the smart money is on White to win it.



TWO STEPS BACK

