

Embracing the L Plates

HOW TO BUILD YOUR FUTURE BROKING BUSINESS WITHIN 22 MONTHS



Over a third of people in the UK want to start their own business, with this rising to two-thirds of 24-35-year-olds.

Some of these people will be ambitious insurance account executives, currently working in sales roles and using their talents to generate income and profits for their employers.

Many of these account execs may think how amazing it would be, if they could be generating that level of commission income for their own brokerage. The stumbling block for most is exactly the same as it is for others who want to be their own boss - finance.

Getting the money together to start a new business is difficult. Banks do not want to lend to new start-ups. Many parents are already part of the predicted pensions timebomb and do not have funds to lend to their children. Few account execs have enough set aside to survive the six months that experts say they should expect to wait until they acquire a customer within a start-up business.

So the insurance brokerage dream falls flat. The balloon is burst before it is inflated.

But if you're willing to embrace L Plates and spend up to 22 months on a road to your insurance brokerage D-Day, it need not be.

Gauntlet Brokerage Builder is the solution for anyone who is going full throttle as an account exec but having to put the brakes on, before they even start to contemplate starting their own brokerage, due to financial concerns and more.

It's also the best way to ensure that, once you've passed your brokerage driving test, you won't go out and crash in year one.

Ready to find out more?

THE REALITIES OF STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Whilst starting a business is a dream for so many people, the realities of getting any sort of business off the ground are quite daunting. The odds are typically stacked against you.

20% of new businesses fail within the first year and 60% go bust within three years. Many of these are businesses run by self-employed individuals and sole traders, often also classed as micro-businesses. In other words, the typical start-up broking business.

Not all fail, of course. Those who succeed are business owners with a huge determination and passion, first-class managerial and organisational skills, targets and goals and a clear marketing vision.

But how do you know that you fit into this bracket? You may be able to sell insurance but do you know the first thing about how to run a brokerage?

If the answer is 'no', that's another good reason to consider the Gauntlet Brokerage Builder route, as you don't have to be an expert from day one.



OUR INSTRUCTOR CREDENTIALS

Gauntlet Group created the Gauntlet Brokerage Builder proposition in 2023, on the back of experience, stretching back to 2009, earned in helping start-up brokers create successful brokerages from scratch. These brokers have not had the luxury of any support and had to hit the ground running from day one.

We channelled all of the experience that we have gained from supporting our Gauntlet Appointed Representative Network brokers (our ARs) and decided we could use it to develop a new model of entry into life as a self-employed broker.

This model was intended to assist all the talented account execs out there who can't make the leap into an AR role direct from employment and who simply can't afford to get behind the wheel of their own brokerage straight away. We have seen so many over the years, who have been held back by circumstances.

The programme we have created as part of our Gauntlet Brokerage Builder proposition is one that de-risks the whole process for an account exec. They can start to drive their business whilst still in employment as a Broking Partner Designate with us and can decide whether or not life on the self-employed business road is for them.



In the 22 months that they have their L Plates affixed (unless they hit the ground running and can move on sooner), they learn everything they need to know about life on the self-employed broker road, whilst sitting alongside our expert instructors and benefiting from their mentoring.

THE THEORY TEST

The 22-months (or less if the account exec comes out of the garage flying) can be considered the equivalent of your driving theory test. In this case, we are testing the theory of whether or not you are cut out to be your own broking boss.

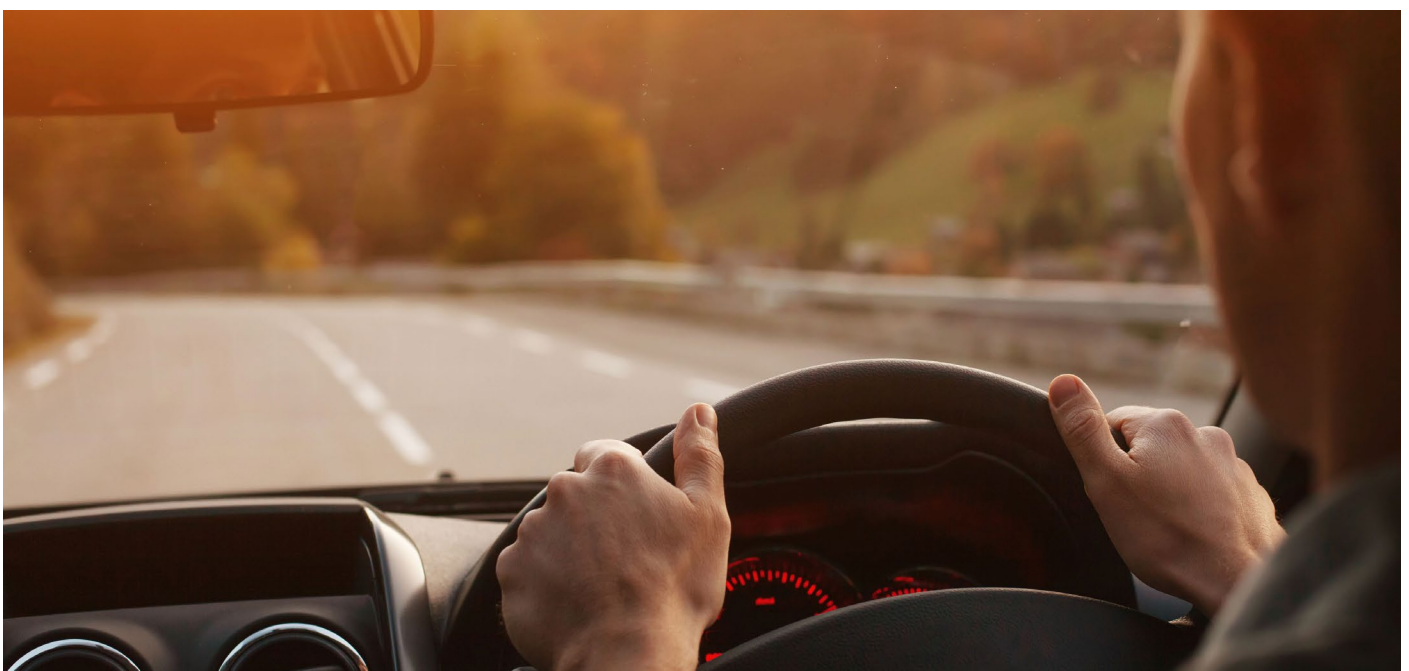
Just because you are great at insurance sales does not mean that you are the right person to be behind the wheel of an insurance business. If we together discover that you do not have the right skills set, drive, passion or temperament to be self-employed, we can together perform a U-turn. Continuing in an account exec role might be an option.

THE LESSONS

During your time as a Broking Partner Designate, you will learn valuable lessons, imparted by our Appointed Representative support team. They will use the knowledge acquired in guiding other ARs and take you through a route that we have carefully planned for you. This will help you overcome all of the hazards that you will encounter when you take to the road for the first time without your L Plates.

You will basically be learning to navigate your way through what you would encounter in your first days of business, whilst still being in an employed role.

You will learn all of the manoeuvres that can help you become a successful broker, gaining deep knowledge of our Acturis IT system and its functionality, our insurance products and insurer partners, our ethics as an AR principal and our ways of handling sales and marketing.



STEERING

During your time as a Broking Partner Designate, we have to be assured that you are steering in the right direction. For this reason, we set milestones - targets that you need to hit, in order to demonstrate that you are capable of driving your own brokerage.

We will provide lots of support in helping you motor through these milestones but, ultimately, we cannot take the wheel for you. It will be your future business and you need to demonstrate that you will be capable of driving it, when the L plates come off.

The more instruction you take on board and the more you apply the information you are given, the more you are likely to succeed.

ROUTE SELECTION

As you drive towards your D-day - the one on which you acquire your own trading name - you will be presented with various routes through which to generate sales. We know that **48%** of B2B salespeople are afraid of making cold calls, so will suggest other ways in which you can build your business.

We will take you through different marketing tactics, help you put your future website together and help you focus on your future brand identity.



You will be given the fantastic opportunity to take advantage of our investment in lead generation, with active leads continually available for you to pursue, to build your future business incredibly fast. Working alongside our direct sales team, you will learn how to take advantage of lead generation, use it to your advantage and nurture your acquired leads, so they become retained customers.

We will also help you consider whether you want to be a generalist broker or focus on a particular niche. You will need to consider the opportunities out there and identify where your skills fit into the insurance market, selecting your best route towards success.

As you test different strategies, you should be able to park certain tactics and opt for others, as you learn how your sales are best generated.

THE CODE

Another area that you will cover off in detail during your time with L plates attached is that of the 'code' under which we operate. You will learn all about the FCA regulations that will apply to your future business and what you will need to do, on the compliance front, to help us, as your AR principal, meet all of the compliance regulations.

Getting a grasp of this before opening the doors of your insurance business is a big plus point, as you will not have to take time out to get to grips with all requirements and can simply forge ahead, knowing exactly what you need to do.

You will also learn about Gauntlet Group's principles and ethics, learning how to match its high standards. There is no compromise on this point and, should we find those standards not being matched, we will perform an emergency stop and end our contractual arrangement with you.



BREAKING THE CYCLE

By joining Gauntlet Brokerage Builder you - or your account executive candidates, if you are a recruiter - can break the cycle of continually heading to jobs that then prove unsatisfying after a short period of time. Those account execs caught in this cycle are often those who should not be in employment but running their own brokerage. They are often too independently minded or too committed to top levels of customer service to work within a big organisation.

By entering the Gauntlet Brokerage Builder programme, you can escape the vicious circle of one dissatisfying job after another and, if you work with a recruiter, they can earn a fee by putting you forward for the programme.

REMOVING THE L PLATES

Once a Broking Partner Designate passes 'the test' and completes all expected of them, they can remove the L plates and leave with a ready-to-go brokerage, in which they can hit the ground running from day one.

All of the preparation work will have been done for you during your time as a broking partner designate and you can move over the clients that you acquired during your time with the programme, giving you a ready-made client base.



Furthermore, you should also have benefited from one of the major contributions to growing a business - word of mouth recommendations and referrals. This is a primary factor in 20-50% of purchase decisions.

If you have built a rapport with your clients, you should also be able to retain them for several years into the future - or for their client lifetime. Experts say it is anywhere up to 30 times more expensive to attract a new client than to retain one, so you should have a good client base that you can keep hold of and use as a platform for growth, without all this new client acquisition expense from day one.

WHY OUR DE-RISKING OF THE SITUATION IS SO KEY

Our Gauntlet Brokerage Builder appointed representative option de-risks the process of an account executive leaving employment but then failing as an AR and self-employed broker.

Every year, 304,000 businesses fail in the UK and, as we said, 20% of those fail in the first year. The finance and insurance annual business death rate is 11.6%, so more than one-in-ten businesses in the sector.



WHEN BUSINESS ANALYSTS LOOK AT THESE SITUATIONS THEY BLAME FACTORS SUCH AS:

- insufficient focus on key areas of the business
- not paying attention to fixed costs, profits and sales
- no clear sales focus
- confused and unclear marketing
- not having KPIs and a clear strategy
- not having enough cash in the business to keep trading
- over-reliance on just a few clients
- poor management and leadership
- lack of clearly defined systems and processes
- being out-competed

The Gauntlet Brokerage Builder programme will make you consider and address all of this, whilst your L plates are affixed, so that you are fit and ready to trade once you graduate into life as a self-employed broker and Gauntlet AR.



LIFE WITH YOUR P PLATES

The Gauntlet Brokerage Builder approach greatly reduces the risk of your future brokerage failing, if you continue to apply the same strategies going forward and retain the clients you have already acquired.

If you continue to operate to the AR blueprint we provide, you should not be out-competed, as you will be backed by the buying power of the Gauntlet Group, giving you highly competitive pricing for your insurance quotes. You will also have access to over 200 insurers and facilities.

Additionally, you will, as an appointed representative, benefit from all that Gauntlet Group continues to offer you, as your business partner. You will be able to continue to focus on sales, having the broking and administrative team at Gauntlet handling your placement (if you wish them to), your administration, your compliance and your accounting.

You will also be able to tap into marketing resources, have access to all of the latest sales campaigns and have Acturis IT at your continual disposal, providing further sales inspiration and focus as to where to direct sales efforts. You will also be able to network with other ARs, to share knowledge and best practice, at three events a year.

Our direct sales team will continue to mentor you, if needed, and provide sales inspiration and leads. You will also have your own website and have an online quote-and-buy facility on there, plus an online document vault that your clients can access, to view their policies at any time.

Add to this the knowledge that, when you do want to step back, you can go into reverse and move clients into Gauntlet, taking as staggered an exit as you wish, and it's all a hugely attractive way to start, run and, eventually, wind down your own business.



THINGS TO CONSIDER DURING YOUR TIME AS A BROKING PARTNER DESIGNATE

You may be wondering why it would take 22 months to lay down the road to your broking D-day. Here are just a few of the things you will be considering during this time:

MISSION STATEMENT

What will your future brokerage stand for and aim to achieve. Your mission statement can be an expression of what success looks like for you and your business and should help you benefit from the Law of Attraction - a theory that you can attract into your life those things that you focus on and desire.

VALUES

What values will your business have and how will you translate these into your daily offering as an insurance broker. How can you use them to attract like-minded clients?

GOALS

We will set programme goals but you should be thinking about your own goals for the future, which will become your daily motivation. Will that revolve around growth and employing other people? Will it involve hitting a bigger financial target? Will it be to maintain a high-level of income whilst creating more family time? Self-motivation and self-reward are crucial to your business success, so do not overlook them.



COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

This is a big thing to be doing whilst your L plates are on. Who are your competitors? Where are they located? Do they have a physical presence, or is it online? What do they do that is different from what you intend doing? Do you have any advantage over them?

Carry out a SWOT analysis of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and try to do the same for them. What does this tell you about an area that you could focus on or target?

Carry out a keyword search on Google and see where your competitors are ranking for it. Review their website and see what could be assisting a high ranking or resulting in a low one. Do they have a blog? Do they have enough content on each page - at least 500 words, ideally. How regularly do they post? Do their articles have authority? How compelling is their web copy?

Also check out your competitors on LinkedIn. How many staff members are listed? What do they talk about? What comments do they generate?

What do they do on social media and in the press? Do they pop up in Google Adwords. Where do they advertise, if anywhere, in traditional press? Do they have a podcast? Do they pay for Facebook ads? Are they active in the local community?

Try to use a tool such as SEMrush that might tell you about their web traffic and whether they have backlinks from sites that might also work for you.

Also, if they are a Limited Company, check out their trading figures. How well are they doing and what does it tell you about the opportunity you will have?

Try to predict how they might react when you enter the market and be prepared for it.



CONSIDER NICHE

Whilst it's always attractive to just go for any sort of business when you start trading, sometimes it can be hugely advantageous to just concentrate on a niche - one in which you can specialise and on which you can develop a real focus. There can be less competition within a niche and marketing can be more effective and less costly, so don't rule a niche out, even if you also offer other insurance products as well. If you have expertise in one area, leverage it to the full.

MARKETING PLAN

Having considered all of the above, you will be expected to develop a marketing plan, which will include the tactics that you think will work for you. Every plan will be different, according to whether you like face-to-face engagement, have no issue with cold calling, want to source your own leads or have a true community focus, where you are building local trust through corporate social responsibility strategies and community engagement.

- How much will you network? Will you join any networking groups? Will you need to set aside budget to purchase sales leads and what will your anticipated rate of return be on those, in terms of commission earned?
- Will you need to sponsor anything locally, if you wish to be a true community player?
- Should you take on a content writer and PR support, or someone who will create social media ads for you?
- How much will you try to generate leads for your Gauntlet online quote-and-buy facility - something that you do not have to manage too much but will generate another strand of income for you?
- How can you optimise your LinkedIn profile?



ACTURIS

You will be spending time not just getting to know Acturis, if it is new to you, but also really taking a deep dive into its functionality and learning how to master all the extra capabilities and modules, often tailored, which sit on the Gauntlet system.

Using the data and insight that Acturis can provide can be enormously valuable for your sales campaigns, whilst mastering its use can also streamline your operations and save you enormous amounts of time. You can make it your friend, to work hard for you, so you can cut back on your working hours, if you want to.

RAPPORT BUILDING

You will be able to build a rapport with all of the employees within the Gauntlet back office team, who will become your future mothership. This will really assist you when you launch your new business, as you will already fully understand who does what and what help is available.



BRANDING AND COMPANY NAME

You will need to choose a company name - one that resonates with customers in some way and which also motivates you. You could base this on your own name, or select something completely different - a strong trading name, perhaps conveying something relating to insurance. You may otherwise choose to benefit from your partnering with Gauntlet and leverage some of the kudos of being part of the network, by having Gauntlet in your business name.

You will have time to do some informal focus group testing of names, with friends and family. Check that the name sounds good when read out and also comes across as professional. Ensure that it is easy to spell and remember as well. Make sure it will not breach any other firm's legal trademark or be the same as another insurance firm who could benefit from your marketing, just because consumers get confused and contact the wrong business.

Part of this decision-making process should also relate to whether you can get a URL for your chosen name, at which you can host a website.

LOGO

Having chosen a name, you will need to work on your visual identity and develop a logo. Your colour and shape choices will be important here, so take some time to consider colour psychology and what your logo may be conveying to people. Again, you will have time to test options on those whose opinions you respect.



WEBSITE

You will be expected to get your website ready, whilst on the programme, so you will need to think about website content, the navigation, the look and feel and the font you want to use.

Are you going to use your website to help drive sales? If so, you will need to think about SEO and having a news or blog area, in which articles and resources which will tick the box of Google and Bing, can be housed.

How helpful will your website be? This is what Google wants to see.

What messaging will you have on there? Remember that most customers will check you out online before they trust you enough to approach you, so make sure your website reflects what you would want to say to them, if you met them in person.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Are you going to carrying out social media marketing? If so, you will need to secure your social media channel names and start thinking about your social media strategy. Which channels will you use and what sort of content will you create? How will you check that your posts are free from the spelling and grammatical errors that can put clients off? How frequently will you post and what you will you say? How will you keep this going? Will you need to use a social media scheduler or external agency?



PHOTOGRAPHY

You will need some good professional photography, whether that is for your LinkedIn profile (which you should never leave without a photo, as a photo builds trust and to not have one looks shady), or for your website or social channels. Your photo is your business card in many ways - your shop window, as what people are actually buying is you. People want to do business with people, so present them with the best version of you, so they can get a feel for you and decide whether to pick up the phone and call you. A poor, blurred image, in which you look scruffy or have a plant growing out of your head, due to poor staging, will speak volumes about your business ... but not in a positive way.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND PR

Are you going to build trust in your sector or local area by establishing yourself as a thought leader on particular topics and by creating ongoing PR? This can be a major route to growth and one much under-estimated by many businesses. Remember that PR materials can serve a double purpose and become news and blog content too. Be wary about trying to use AI for such content, as it can be full of facts but also entirely meaningless as a piece of copy, with no real point to it, logical flow or rhythm. Unless you are going to shape it to suit your messaging and intent, it can backfire, making you look more amateurish than informed. As AI-generated content becomes more available, it becomes incredibly easy to spot. That then leads clients to beg the question why you had to resort to it in the first place and were not able to commit your own thoughts to paper.



SUMMING UP

Gauntlet Brokerage Builder is just one of four routes through which you can become an Appointed Representative and it is not right for everyone.

If you have some resource behind you, you may be better off looking at the standard AR route, where an enhanced commission split will reflect the fact that you have taken the risk and done all of the groundwork and planning yourself, bringing your own clients with you.

If you are an existing directly authorised broker, then you should be looking at Gauntlet De-authorisation Fast-track and changing your status to AR, so as to have a less stressful life and more access to market and higher commissions.

On the other hand, if you are part of an AR network that is frustrating you, because your vision and ethics are not aligned with that of the network, or because you are denied access to insurers or not allowed to handle big risks, you might wish to do something that is becoming a very popular choice - switching to Gauntlet.

Whichever route you wish to take, we are very happy to discuss it with you, whether it results in you putting the L plates on for a period of time or joining us very swiftly.

Remember that the appointed representative route is the only really feasible way to start an insurance broking business these days, with the input provided by the 'mother ship' (the AR principal) being invaluable. When you add up all that Gauntlet provides to its AR partners, it's almost a 'money can't buy' proposition. To gain all that you are offered by Gauntlet yourself, you would have to commit to a level of outlay that most individuals could not even begin to contemplate on day one of opening their brokerage - or even many years into trading.

GAUNTLET

— BROKERAGE BUILDER —

To assess this for yourself, just talk to us or, if you fancy being part of Gauntlet Brokerage Builder programme, no matter where you are based in the country, send your CV to NigelLaw@GauntletGroup.com. More information can also be found at <https://appointedrepresentatives.com>.

Do your research, back yourself and apply and the L plates could be on, allowing you to drive towards your own D-day before you know it!