

## The Oddest Insured Things

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September 1, 2011 from *Bloomberg Businessweek*



How much is your arm worth? That's nearly an unanswerable question. For some, it's a necessary one. The arm of a professional football player, the leg of a famous dancer, or the tongue of a top-flight coffee taster may well hold exceptional economic value

Through the years, personal inventory items ranging from Bruce Springsteen's voice to football player Troy Polamalu's hair have been insured against damage. Sure, these policies double as publicity stunts, but they're not all silliness. "You can make a good economic argument about why a particular actress's cleavage is worth a lot of money to her," says Jonathan Thomas, accident-and-health underwriter at Watkins Syndicate at Lloyd's of London.

Thomas estimates that worldwide premiums for body-part insurance add up to \$1 million to \$2 million. Expand the market to include all one-off insured entities such as works of art, sporting events, and the production of movies and the premiums amount to billions, according to Robert Hartwig, president of the Insurance Information Institute.

### **Bruce Springsteen's voice**

Amount: \$5.7 million

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

Bruce Springsteen insured his voice with Lloyd's of London for \$5.7 million. Articles about the insurance go back as far as 1988, but Lloyd's would not comment on the time period of the insurance or the policy's cost. Springsteen publicist Marilyn Laverty also declined to give details on the policy.

### **Abraham Lincoln's Hair**

Amount: \$35,000

Insurer: Fireman's Fund

A private collector asked Fireman's Fund to insure a framed lock of the 16th President's hair for \$35,000 over a few years during the 1990s.

### **Change of Heart**

Amount: \$25,000

Insurer: Fireman's Fund

A car accident involving a drunken guest ranks as the top liability at a wedding, according to an arm of Fireman's Fund called Wedsure. Food poisoning comes in second. Anything can go wrong at a wedding, including a change of heart. A mere \$25 buys peace of mind on that front, with money invested in the wedding up to that point repaid should bride or groom bail out.

### **Ilja Gort's nose**

Amount: \$7.1 million

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

Dutch wine producer Ilja Gort, who owns Chateau la Tulipe de la Garde winery in France, insured his nose in 2008. He would not disclose the cost of the insurance but said: "It's not cheap." The contract covers a complete loss of smell and mandates that he not box or ski. As Gort put it, he has to minimize risk with "a chateau of people hanging on my nose."

### **Loch Ness**

Amount: \$1.6 million (\$9 million in 2011 dollars)

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

Cutty Sark offered one million pounds for the capture of the Loch Ness monster in 1971. Lloyd's wrote Cutty Sark a policy at a cost of \$4,073, stipulating that if some brave soul actually hauled in the monster between May 1, 1971 and Apr. 30, 1972, the insurance company would pay a cool million, according to "The Monster in Loch Ness" by Karl Borch in the *Journal of Risk and Insurance*.

### **America Ferrara's smile**

Amount: \$10 million

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

This one falls squarely in the publicity stunt category. In May 2007, Aquafresh White Trays (GSK) took out a \$10 million policy on the smile of America Ferrara, star of TV's *Ugly Betty*.

### **Alien Abduction**

Amount: \$10 million (paid out at \$1 a year for 10 million years)

Insurer: Saint Lawrence Agency

"You cannot get this insurance unless you have a sense of humor," says Saint Lawrence Agency owner Mike St. Lawrence. Since he established the insurance in 1987, he says he has sold about 25,000 policies. It's not all fun and games. He is currently paying out on a pair of claims deemed legitimate.

### **1,000 Kegs of Syrup**

Amount: \$12

Insurer: Fireman's Fund

The very first insurance policy issued by Fireman's Fund was a half-interest in 1,000 kegs of "Boston syrup," taken out in 1863. The cost was \$12 in advance. Although history isn't clear about what constituted Boston syrup, we suspect it was molasses, which was particularly popular as a sweetener.

### **Troy Polamalu's hair**

Amount: \$1 million

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

Head and Shoulders (PG) paid to insure the curly locks of Pittsburgh Steelers strong safety Troy Polamalu. The NFL player features prominently in Head and Shoulders ads, so his dark tresses qualify as something of a legitimate liability for the company. The publicity doesn't hurt either.

### **Gennaro Pelliccia's Tongue**

Amount: \$16 million

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

The chief coffee taster for the Dunstable (U.K.)-based Costa coffee-shop chain had his tongue insured by Lloyd's for \$16 million in 2009. With 10,000 taste buds on the average tongue, that added up to about 1,000 pounds apiece.

### **Santa's Beard**

Amount: Unknown

Insurer: Lloyd's of London

Known as "Santa to the Stars," Brady White first insured his beard in 1992. White discloses neither the amount of the insurance nor his year of birth, saying only that he is "ageless." He renews the policy each year and calls it "not terribly expensive. For me, it's well worth it." If White were to lose the beard, he would also lose the ads and appearances he does for the likes of Neiman Marcus, Cartier, and the Beverly Hills Hotel.

### **Fantasy Adrian Peterson**

Amount: \$1,500

Insurer: Fantasy Sports Insurance

More than 32 million people participate in fantasy sports in the U.S. and Canada, according to the Fantasy Sports Trade Assn. This game provides owner simulation through a season as a sports fan chooses players and wins or loses according to player statistics. With high entry fees, it's no surprise that some fans might wish to insure their investment through a season that can often cost \$200 or more. One of the highest dollar-figure policies taken out in Fantasy Sports Insurance was on NFL Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson last year for \$1,500. The policies generally cost 10 percent of the insured amount, so in this case, the price was \$150. The insurance didn't pay out, but the fantasy team probably did well because Peterson placed fifth in the league, with 1,298 rushing yards.

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## **Reflect & Research**

1. What would you insure? Do you have a skill or asset that you would insure? Your innate ability to sense the nearest donut shop, your long locks of hair, or even your rookie Mickey Mantle card?
2. What other crazy things have people insured? Get online and find another interesting insured risk and the cost of that policy.
3. Let's take this into the business world, what are some examples of risks you would insure against if you owned your own restaurant or store, for example?