LifeHealthPro

Anatomy of a Sale

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Is closing a life insurance sale dead? When was the last time you gained new business by shoving something down a prospective client's throat?

Here's what I'm thinking: you will not get new clients through high-pressure tactics. Selling intangibles is all about trust. Trust is the foundation for the financial services business. Life insurance is, and will always be, sold and not bought. Ethical salesmen and women who are persuasive are positioned with enormous opportunity in these unstable times.

Life insurance is a key tool in rebuilding America's prominence in capitalism. Saving money is essential to the long-term sustenance of consumer spending, the gas in the tank of the global economy. Life insurance helps Americans save money. Life insurance helps Americans save taxes, preserve the family business or farm, replace wealth given away to charities and self-fulfill a pension obligation in the early stages of a worker's career. Life insurance is the perfect hedge fund for human capital.

Clients become wealthy through hard work, saving money, investing over time and holding onto what they have. As Ben Feldman said, "We help you keep together what you've worked so hard to put together." That's life insurance. It's sold and not bought. How then, should agents sell insurance in this world that's being shaken to the core?

Wouldn't you agree that the steps in the sales process are usually discovery, planning, implementation and review? In times like these, the sales process requires more time and multiple meetings to gain trust and insight into a client's needs.

Discovery is the first meeting, where you start with something like the Doug Carter question: "What would you like to develop, change or improve about your wealth planning and management?" Then you need a scripted process to discover what's important to him. Dan Sullivan recommends the three-year question: "What must happen over the next three years for you to be happy in your personal, professional and business life?" Bill Bachrach coaches advisors to ask, "What's important about money to you?"

Then you are quiet and take notes about what is really important to your prospective client. You keep asking for more detail about his answers so that you can create a record of what's most important to him. Bachrach calls this the ascending values conversation.

Once you discover what's important to your client, then ask questions about his goals and present situation. Where is he and where does he want to be financially? Then ask the prospective client if designing a plan for him to fulfill his dreams, goals and plans would be the kind of plan he would like. Finally, ask if this is the kind of relationship he would like to have with his financial advisor.

This leads to the planning meeting. It's here that you present your strategies and value-added solutions. Before this meeting happens, you need to assess the details of the client's present situation: where he invests his money, what his estate and retirement plans are, his tax-savings strategies, his family and beneficiary designations.

The planning meeting is the key to getting prospective clients thinking that maybe their current advisor is missing something or is not tying their planning with what's really important to them. The planning meeting should review what's important to the client, what's missing in his wealth planning and management, and what resources are needed to accomplish what's needed.

When you boil all this down, your new potential clients need a clear explanation of three things: the why, the what and the how of your plan. Next month, we'll break down the implementation meeting and how you answer those questions.

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