

MULTILINE INSURANCE

The Proper Way to Ask

If your staff asks your multiline clients the right questions, they will sell lots of life insurance policies.

My clients frequently ask me how they can better train, prepare and develop their staff to acquire more business using cross-selling techniques and developing life insurance leads. If you want to do the same or haven't been successful in this area, here are some ideas that may help you.

Ask the right questions

Many agencies ask their staff to solicit "x" number of appointments by asking their clients, "Can we provide you with a free quote when your auto/home insurance is due?" When that time arrives, it usually results in a price comparison. This commodity approach to selling keeps us busy but is seldom successful.

Instead, start a discussion with a client about other insurance lines you do not insure by asking him an open-ended question, such as, "How important is liability to you?" The benefit of this type of question is that the client will have to do some thinking to come up with an answer other than a simple yes or no. Usually the client's response will be "very important." Your staff can then say, "Yes, many of our clients say that is very important to them, but why is it important to you?"

Asking someone *why* something is important to them is a personal but non-threatening question. It is a terrific way to demonstrate that you care and it will help strengthen your relationship with the client. It's also an easy transition for your staff.

Your staff will probably get an answer like this: "Well, I don't want to lose everything that I have if I get sued." Before finding out what the client has via a fact finder, a good question to ask is, "If you did get sued, how would you feel about your current level of liability limits?" You don't have all their lines of insurance so

you have no idea of their level of liability limits, but you're asking them how they feel. Almost all clients will say something like, "I'd be pretty nervous/scared/worried, etc."

Here's what you need to ask then: "Well, if we could spend about 30 minutes reviewing *all* your coverage, how would that make you feel?" Most clients always agree to a review.

Positioning life insurance

Many agencies put pressure on their staff to obtain life insurance leads. Many staff people tell me that they've been trained to ask everyone, "Can we provide you with a competitive quote on your life insurance?" or "When was the last time you reviewed your life program?" Neither of these works well. This is simply treating life insurance as a commodity and not as a needs-based sales process that is necessary for successfully insuring the lives of your clients.

You have already replaced your client's auto and home insurance. Now the client will start to worry, "Is he/she going to suggest replacing my life insurance, too?" The client has probably been told many times that replacing his life insurance is not a good idea. So they tell your staff, "No thanks!"

Keep in mind that most staff members are comfortable with their knowledge of P/C products when talking to clients. However, it is nearly impossible for them to master all life insurance products at the same level as P/C products. Many staff members have told me that they are afraid of clients asking them the cost of the policy or how it works. This keeps them from asking questions about life insurance.

Ask your staff people not to bring up the subject of life insurance. Instead, they



should talk about how they protect the client's income. People's cars and houses are valuable assets, but isn't income their most valuable asset? When you talk to the client about life insurance, he thinks of death. But when you talk about income, he can visualize the money coming in to his household each month and also see the money disappearing for mortgage, food, clothes, education, etc.

Tell your staff to ask this question: "Mr. Client, we've had your auto/home insurance here for 'x' amount of time and we appreciate your confidence in us to protect this valuable asset. But what are you doing to protect your most valuable asset—your income?"

You will get various answers like "I have it at work" or "What do you mean?" Your staff can say, "Well, Mr. X covers this with most of our clients. Is it OK to have him call you to review this?" You will be surprised at how many clients will say yes.

Many staff people take great satisfaction in helping your clients. By encouraging them to be more open with clients and asking these types of questions, you are enabling them to build stronger relationships with your clients and sell additional lines. □

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