

MARKETPULSE

Marketing Tips and Topical Issues for Insurance Agents

Number 5

WELL-QUALIFIED APPOINTMENTS

In real estate they say the key to successful sales is *location*. For insurance producers and teleprospector, the key may well be *qualification*.

Qualified sales leads make all the difference in the world between a productive meeting and a wild goose chase with a disinterested prospect. Producers talk about "practice quoting" – a futile effort with a disengaged prospect who is only meeting so he can keep his incumbent agent "honest". The solution to this and many other unproductive appointments is to *qualify, qualify, and qualify*.

The investigative approach

And the telephone – interactive and personal - is the ideal medium for this kind of investigation. Not only can you track and identify decision-makers, but you can query those people in very direct ways and find out mountains about their concerns and "buying attitudes".

"If we are able to make some worthwhile improvements to your current insurance situation, is there any reason you could not switch agents?" a teleprospector might inquire after finding out that a prospect has been with his current agent for 10 years. Depending on the reply, the caller will then determine if it's worth trying to schedule an appointment or not. When the prospect is receptive – open to meeting and willing to make a change for worthwhile improvements – the

caller can proceed with more questions to help the producers learn about the prospect's concerns and be better prepared for the meeting.

"What kinds of improvements would you like to see us make?"; "Besides reducing insurance costs, what other improvements are you interested in?"; "Are you completely satisfied with the HR support that you're getting from your current benefit broker?"; "Does your current broker provide assistance with government compliance for COBRA and other programs?"; "Would you like us to see if we can improve your work comp situation?"; Does your current agency have relationships with more than 40 top-rated carriers?"

The goal of teleprospecting may be to schedule appointments, but getting to that goal involves a process of inquiry that turns a large pool of uncertain 'suspects' into a much smaller group of qualified "prospects" - some of whom eventually become clients and referral sources for your agency.

Skilled teleprospectors have the investigative skills to gather information without annoying the prospects so they want to get off the phone. Patience, a sense of humor, and most of all, an attitude of friendly sincerity, can make the difference between a successful call and a well-qualified appointment or a frustrating conversation that goes nowhere. ☎

Professional Marketing Associates,
based in Amherst, Massachusetts,
provides high-quality teleprospecting
and other marketing support for
insurance clients countrywide.
To discuss ways telemarketing can
benefit your agency call Nicole Sharpe
at 800-783-2303

CLIENT PROFILE

Billings and O'Donnell recently became part of a national insurance organization – one of the ten largest in the country. For the last several years they have been growing their commercial lines division with the help of *Professional Marketing Associates'* tailored teleprospecting support.

PMA helped the agency develop an expansive target prospect list based on industry groups submitted by each of six active producers. Currently there are several thousand records in the prospecting database. Each month the PMA Account Executive caller for Billings and O'Donnell focuses on soon-to-be-renewing prospects that have been previously qualified. Turning these x-date leads into appointments for the producers is PMA's first order of monthly business.

Beyond that, the producers will provide periodic updates for new target groups. Sometimes the agency provides the calling lists and sometimes they request PMA to order a list according to SIC codes, business size and location specs. So in addition to converting x-dates to appointments every month, PMA continues to expand the pipeline of qualified leads.

"Now that we've been acquired we want to play up our national affiliation as much as possible," explains President Ross Billings. "PMA has always been effective at getting us into meetings with the kinds of businesses our agency thrives on. With our new 'clout', we expect the PMA appointments will prove to be even more productive." ☎