

MARKETPULSE

Marketing Tips and Topical Issues for Insurance Agents

Number 6

THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

THERE'S A PRESUMPTION that selling is about "telling": why your product is better; how your agency offers more value, and so on. Of course we need to make prospects aware of the value of what we offer, but, and this is a big but -- prospects have a natural resistance to our 'sales pitch' and the more we push, the more they tend to retreat or push back.

A better approach is to get the prospect involved in the selling process in a way that makes him your ally in that process. By using questions and probes, you have a powerfully effective way to do that. Rather than making assertions like, "We're one of the largest agencies in the state", you can engage the prospect so that he's actively considering his needs against the value of what you have to offer - "You're currently working with a smaller agency. Are you comfortable that you're getting all the insurance resources you need? Are they prompt in issuing bonds and certificates of insurance?" If you're a smaller agency competing against a bigger one you can try other kinds of questions: "You're with a pretty big insurance agency now. Are you comfortable that you're getting the personal attention you need? Do they review your policies more than once a year or only at renewal time?"

Instead of talking about your agency's claims support, you might ask a P&C prospect how he feels about his current agent's attentiveness in helping to adjudicate claims. If he's very satisfied and the incumbent seems to be doing a good job, you can move on to another possible area of concern rather than wasting time going for points when it may not be worth it.

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Another example of using questions effectively, on the employee benefits side, might be asking a prospect about her hassles with compliance issues. Are they on top of all the details? Do they find it a pain to keep up with government filing requirements on a regular basis? When your prospect is actively reflecting on the extra effort it takes the HR people to keep on track she or he is going to be more interested in finding out about your agency's online compliance assistance and other services that will lighten the load in his office.

One of the beautiful advantages of asking lots of questions is that they not only engage and motivate the prospect but they help you zero-in on his most significant concerns. Through the process of asking your questions and listening to the prospect's answers you can determine the "conditions of satisfaction" required to earn a his business. And the more you know about your prospect's concerns, the more focused you'll be in offering the right kinds of solutions to earn the account. ☎

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

CLIENT PROFILE

Professional Benefit Solutions, a seven year-old brokerage based in the Southeast first heard about PMA from an enthusiastic testimonial posted on a well-known broker-to-broker web site.

In discussing his needs with PMA, Partner Samuel Perkins said he and another producer wanted help finding new opportunities with companies of 50 or more employees. They just didn't have time to prospect *and* service clients, *and* sell new accounts, etc. "My time is better spent investing in centers of influence", he said. His concern was that he didn't want to "throw leads against the wall and see how many stuck." He investigated several telemarketing services and weighed the advice of experienced colleagues who encouraged him to take a *quality over quantity* approach.

After speaking with PMA references and careful consideration, he decided PMA was the firm with whom he felt most comfortable. And the firm that would be the best PR representative for their agency, while productively generating solid sales opportunities.

Eight months into their first year with Professional Marketing Associates, Sam is quite satisfied with his choice, "I think the appointments are going fine. The volume has been increasing in the last several months since the initial ramp-up time. There've been some very good ones. We've only sold one for sure at this point - a nice 70 lives account and there are a couple of others you've gotten us that we have some good traction with. If we close a sale there, that will pay for PMA teleprospecting for years to come."

