

# Selling to Seniors? It's Easy... Just Listen

Seniors are making news! Medicare reform, retiree cutbacks, business downsizing, and company scandals make it a tough time to be a Senior! Yet, these troubled times provide a challenging opportunity to direct your time and talents more confidently to the Senior market.

Roger Sierens, a Senior marketing expert, is a very successful Senior Agent who each year sells millions in annuities, long term care and life products. Sierens knows successful insurance sales is all about relationships, and relationships grow out of trust. "When making this initial phone call to set the appointment," says Sierens, "I show a personal interest, and, most importantly, I listen.

This is the beginning of building a relationship. Listening is one of the greatest arts that has been lost in our society today."

It seems simple, yet how often are we so busy thinking about the next statement we're going to make, that we don't listen to what the other person is trying to tell us? Take off your sales hat for a few minutes and just listen to your prospect. It will lay a solid foundation for a long-term relationship. It's a simple approach, and it works!

(Source: *Senior Market Advisor*, October 2003; "From Attendee to Client" by Roger Sierens)

## What are the Basics of Good Listening?

- Be committed; have the desire to listen to your customer.
- Maintain eye contact with your customer.
- Honor silence. Don't feel you have to fill up pauses with the sound of your own voice.
- Don't interrupt when your customer is speaking.
- Respond verbally and non-verbally. Smile, nod, shake your head. Be aware of how body language translates for both you and your prospect.
- Eliminate distractions. Don't try to ask questions or elicit responses with a television blaring across the room.
- Empathize with your customer and put yourself in his/her place.
- Adjust your listening style to your customer's communication style. If they speak slowly, you should speak slowly.
- Withhold judgement. Be completely open-minded and receptive.

Source: American Management Association: Self-Test: Are You a Good Listener?; Michael Kelly, Kelly Speech Communication, "Speak & Listen for New Results."