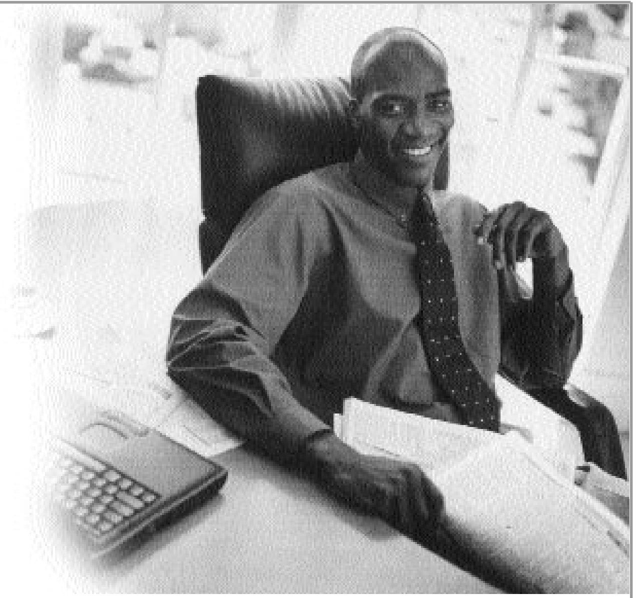
How to *Win Sales* and *Influence Customers*



According to the January issue of *Life & Health Advisor*, there is a widely held misconception that people buy what they need. The truth is, people generally buy what they want, rather than the product or service they may need. However, "people will eagerly buy what they need from the salesperson or organization who understands what they really want," says the *Life & Health Advisor*. Since this is the case, how does a salesperson win sales and influence customers? Below are six different ways a sales professional can provide what a customer wants.

1. **Know the business you are in.**
   Everything you do as an Agent, from the time you walk in the door, should revolve around building trust between you and the prospect. Trust is achieved through credibility, and credibility is earned with knowledge. You cannot have one without the other. Agents with a strong presentation and the ability to answer complicated questions in a knowledgeable way come across as a credible professional. Once you have established your credibility, you begin to gain a client's trust. Clients who believe you have their best interest at heart are more likely to buy, so know your stuff.
2. **Set expectations early.**
   Making sure you understand your clients final objective and letting them know what they can expect from you as their advisor goes a long way to building a long-term relationship. "Producers should determine what clients want to accomplish in order for there to be a successful relationship," says the September 2001 *National Underwriter*. Clearly defined expectations coupled with an active follow through allows an Agent to better serve their customers and ensures they are meeting their customers' needs.
3. **Create an advocate.**
   Not all clients are interested in the product you're selling, and not all prospects are willing to buy, but they deserve your time just the same. By taking the extra time and helping a prospect find out what is best for their situation, you have established yourself as an advocate, a person who is essentially a spokesman for your business. You may have lost a sale, but you have an opportunity to gain a supporter. Don't be afraid to ask for the referral.
4. **Spoil your clients.**
   Service after the sale is essential to keeping and maintaining a long-term customer-Agent relationship. Katherine Vessenes of Vestment Consulting suggests, "Make it a point to visit with your clients at least five times a year in a non-business setting."
5. **Communicate with your customers.**
   According to the *National Underwriter* (9/01), follow-up with each and every client after a visit, "this can help your clients feel that they accomplished what they wanted." When an Agent actively follows-up with customers there is a wealth of information that can be obtained. By tuning into your customers after a sale, an Agent also reinforces customers' expectations set up earlier. The more you communicate with your client the more trust you build.
6. **Stop selling and start coaching.**
   Once trust has been built between a customer and an advisor, what next? When a relationship moves past salesperson-buyer, it is a natural step for the Agent to assume the role of a coach. According to Ms. Vessenes, "a coach is a trusted advisor, one who helps clients achieve their goals and provides ongoing support." As a coach, it is important that you help your clients every step of the way. Customers' lifestyles change and, so too, do their financial needs. As their advisor, it is up to you to foresee these changes and make yourself available to help fulfill their needs. "Help your client overcome their financial fears and help make their dreams come true," says the September issue of *National Underwriter*.