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Underwriter



**John J. Nelson Receives
the Harold R. Gordon Award**

HEALTH INSURANCE UNDERWRITER CONTENTS SEPTEMBER 2010

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You've Closed the Sale Now What?

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As a benefits broker, much of your time is spent introducing products to your clients, providing more information in follow-up meetings and answering questions. After many hours of hard work, you are thrilled when a client signs on for a new plan or an employee chooses a new voluntary product. Now it's time to sit back, relax and enjoy your commission... or is it? Contrary to what many may think, what you do after the sale is just as important as the work leading up to the sale.

How do you continue to engage your clients when the work of selling is over? The answer is to find ways to build relationships with them through three principles—consistency, communication and customization.

Consistency—Make Sure the Employer Gets What You Sold

You may have sold a product to an employer but it is important to continue to check in with your clients and make sure they are happy with the new program once it is in place. Is the program or service they are receiving consistent with what you sold them?

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines consistency as "harmony of conduct or practice with profession." It can also be defined as "steadfast adherence to the same principles, course, form, etc." These principles of harmony and adherence to regular behaviors should be applied to how you retain your clients after the sale.

You are often the liaison between the employer and the benefits provider, so make it a point to speak frequently with your clients about what challenges they're facing and then help them work with the benefits provider to smooth out any issues. Additionally, make sure you communicate all the specifics of the account to the provider so they will be able to administer the program well. If you are delivering what you promised and the clients are receiving what they signed up for, this will help build trust between you and the employers and help pave the way for future sales opportunities.

Another way to provide consistency in your accounts is to practice regular reporting to your client about the program. At Purchasing Power, we work with our brokers to prepare reports on how many people are using the program and what is being purchased so they can be fully educated on the program's progress and keep the employer informed. When you take the time to do this, the employer knows you are truly invested in their account and committed to its success. Over time, you will become less of a vendor and more of a partner.

Communication—You're Only as Good as What You Know

Although communication is important during the sales cycle, it becomes even more essential after the sale has closed. Your program won't be successful if your client's employees don't know about it! Start by setting a plan with your client contact at the close of the sale for how the program will be administered and communicated to the workforce. Ask them how their employees prefer to be contacted—e-mail, phone calls or face-to-face meetings. Find out what has been effective with other programs and build your action plan from there.

Create materials to showcase the new program and check in with your client contact to make sure employees have received them. If your client holds benefits fairs, make plans to attend—or offer to host an on-site lunchtime event to launch the benefit. Depending on the size of your client, employees may have numerous programs to choose from, so make sure you are differentiating

your program through interesting and engaging materials that are available at the worksite and online.

Lastly, work with your clients to set annual goals for their accounts. By understanding their goals for the pro-

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gram, you can align your strategy accordingly. These goals can be tangible and measurable, such as having a certain percentage of their employee base use the program, or intangible, such as improving morale or helping employees with their work-life balance. Once you are familiar with their needs, you can set your strategy to help them achieve these objectives and, in turn, produce a more satisfied client. Sit down with a representative from each account on a yearly basis and evaluate the program; doing so will help you provide better service and hopefully encourage more employees to sign up.

Customization Is Key

A third principle to remember after you've closed a sale is that customization is key. Although this year's sale may be complete, start learning more about your client to better tailor your benefits offerings to them for the next enrollment period. Use this knowledge to sell what will most benefit their company and employee base. If you're not sure what they need, just ask! Seek to understand your clients' priorities and learn more about their employees by asking good questions. Ask them what they think could improve their workforce and what their employees have been asking for. Some employers' workforces have very unique needs; if you can help identify these and put the right programs into place, it can produce a new revenue stream for you. Remember, there's a never a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to benefits.

As you win new clients and close sales this year, remember that the work is not over. By contrast, it is only the beginning of the relationship and the opportunity! Always think ahead to how you can better serve your accounts through consistency, communication and customization, which will help you build a foundation of trust with your clients. As you become more invested in your clients' businesses, you will likely build relationships that will produce satisfied clients for years to come. **HR**