

**A LETTER TO DAVID**  
**Thoughts on Improving Representative's Productivity**

**by**  
**Barry Alberstein, MBA, Ph.D.**

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**A LETTER TO DAVID**  
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Dear David:

The other day in our management meeting you asked a very important question. That is, you asked just exactly how do you improve Representative productivity? At the time it was at the end of two long consulting days and I responded with a kind of flip answer.

After the meeting, on the way home on the airplane, I started seriously thinking about that question and realized how, in many ways, it gets to the heart of the problem. In any case, after giving some thought to how to increase Representative productivity, I ended up with a list of 11 major points that I think really speak to the issue, at least from my point of view. I have included an additional sheet with this letter that lists the 11 points. What I'd like to do is to go through the 11 points, one by one, and give you some additional thinking as to why these are critical in my scheme of things. The points are not necessarily in order of priority, although they're reasonably close.

**DEDICATION TO CLIENT BUILDING PHILOSOPHY**

The first point in building Representative productivity, is instilling a clear dedication to a "Client Building Philosophy." As I mentioned in the meeting, I think when new Representatives come into the business they can be presented with at least two differing philosophies of what it's all about. The first philosophy, which is prevalent in most companies, is that we are an insurance or investment company, we sell products, and your job is to sell as many of these products as you can and consequently earn commissions, make money and be happy. This leads to a transaction based product driven mentality of selling and unfortunately, I think, misses the real beauty of the career.

The second approach is the Client Building Philosophy. This is a relationship driven, need based philosophy dedicated to building a stable Client base. This essentially says that you come to the business with an obsession. Al Granum calls it The Magnificent Obsession of obtaining 1,000 active Clients during your career. That is, at some point you're supposed to actually have 1,000 active Clients in your system. I think a reasonable variation of this goal might be obtaining somewhere between 500 and 1,000 active Clients. Note the difference between the two philosophical approaches. As a Client Building adherent, the purpose is not to rack up sales or commission numbers,

but to obtain Clients who will be loyal to you, who will seek your counsel, who will repeatedly buy from you, and who will keep what they buy. I think all of us understand that if someone has 500 to 1,000 legitimate, active Clients in their system, they are virtually *bulletproof* in their career. That is, they are protected against economic forces such as recession, inflation and fluctuations in the stock market and interest rates. Additionally, they are also protected against changes in products, politics and swings in company philosophy. Essentially, when someone obtains a sufficient Client base, they become a truly successful business person with a solid base.

The other thing that this allows, I think, is a much richer experience with your Clients. Client Building also entails the idea of staying with your Clients over the years, giving them the proper service they deserve and meeting their needs on an ongoing basis. The statistics reveal that in general, a good Client will buy “core products” (Life, Annuities, & DI) an average of five to seven different times from an Representative during their career. With the addition of ancillary sales, potential referrals and health and equity products, it's clear to see how critical Client Building really is.

Client Building, I think, is more than just a dedication to adding more Clients. It also entails a clear understanding of the Science of Client Building. “Science” is the process through which we come to “understand” phenomena. We truly “understand” something when we can both *predict and control* its behavior. Therefore a true understanding of the Science of Client Building would include understanding how the numbers actually compound; how a given number of referrals will lead to a certain number of Prospects which in turn will lead to a predictable number of new Clients. The more complete the Representative's understanding of the science of that process, the more successful and productive the Representative becomes.

I might add that all of these points are not points simply for the Representative to embrace, but of equal importance, perhaps more importance, is that their agency manager or General Manager and the company also embrace these points with a *consistent* philosophy up and down the management chain.

### **CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN NEED BASED SELLING**

The second key is a clear understanding of "Relationship Driven Need Based Selling." I feel the basic principles set forth in this philosophy of selling form the cornerstone of the way a professional Financial Services Sales Representative needs to sell. By that I mean a clear dedication to selling through the development of long term relationships with Clients and basing the sale upon mutually agreed upon Client needs and wants rather than the “features and benefits” of products. The fundamentals of this philosophy include:

1. Fact finding as the essential way of uncovering and understanding Client needs and wants.
2. A problem solving approach in which the Representative and the Client metaphorically get on the same side of the desk to solve the problems together
3. The problems are developed and recorded in what's called a "Discovery Agreement" which lists the needs, problems and potential solutions.
4. The Discovery Agreement is then agreed upon by both the Client and the Representative. This usually takes the form of a letter that the Representative sends back to the Client stating the agreement.
5. The process also includes the careful use of trial closes to develop commitment, emotional consistency and momentum toward the sale.

This approach has a philosophical underpinning built upon the importance of the Client/Representative relationship. It is built on the belief that people do not buy because they understand the product, but because of their belief that the Representative understands them. Put another way, the Client buys not because of *how we sell, but because of why we sell*. The foundation, then, is a complete "Fact Finding Interview" through which the Representative begins to understand exactly what the prospect's factual situation is, and *how they feel about it*. Included in Relationship Driven Need Based Selling is a dedication to what is known as the "**Right Triangle**" of the sales process. This is a triangle, or pyramid, with four levels. The bottom and broadest level is the development of the prospect's **problem**. The second level up is the clarification of the **desire** of the prospect to solve the problem. The third level up is the presentation of the **solution** to the problem. The pinnacle and smallest area of the triangle is the **close**.

The four layers of the triangle roughly represent the amount of time spent by the Representative in each of those areas. This clearly shows that developing the problem and the desire to solve it is what the Representative and the prospect should spend most of their time doing. The close often simply becomes an implied consent that flows logically from the development of the problem. I believe that the Right Triangle could have yet a wider and larger base at the bottom underneath the original base which could be labeled prospecting. If you don't do enough prospecting, you will never get to enough people to develop the problems with.

An additional consideration that some people include in relationship based selling is the notion of people's "Social Styles.". This theory divides people into four personality types. These are: amiables, expressives, drivers, and analyticals. It then shows how you can match your presentation style and sales material to each type. I don't think this is fundamental to succeeding, but it can be a useful addition in determining the Representative's closing presentation. The major principle is the importance of building the Client base through forming and sustaining solid relationships with Clients and tailoring the sales process to provide solutions to mutually agreed upon Client needs and wants.

## DEDICATION TO THE ONE CARD SYSTEM (A CLIENT TRACKING SYSTEM)

I want to move on to the third point which is a dedication to the "One Card System". Now, when I'm speaking of the One Card System I am referring to O. Alfred Granum's famous system for building a life insurance clientele. Taken in a broader sense a one card system can be differentiated from the One Card System. In some circles the term "One Card System" has become sort of a generic name for any Suspect/Prospect/Client tracking system. There are many very fine computerized Client tracking systems and, fortunately, all of them emphasize the importance of staying in regular contact with your Suspects, Prospects and Clients. The time honored Granum One Card System uses a file box with 3x5 index cards to accomplish this purpose.

The Granum One Card System is, however, in my opinion, much much more than simply a Client tracking tickler file system. Taken in its entirety it is a "relationship driven marketing and administrative system" for building a successful practice. It is far more than a Client tracking system because it includes an elegant activity and sales progress system in the form of "The Success Manual." It also includes other components such as the OCS Control Book, The Thousand Clients Book, as well as an activity point system and regular monthly Client Builder meetings for Representatives.

In this third point, however, I am only focused upon the importance of having some system for tracking and staying in touch with Suspects, Prospects and Clients. The reason that this is so important is that it ties into the dedication to Client Building. You can't really be serious about building a base of Clients, those who will buy from you again and again, unless you have some system for building relationships. Tracking your Suspects, Prospects and Clients allows the Representative to systematically build relationships by keeping in touch with all of them on regular basis.

Another reason why this is so important is that if we look at Granum's research, he would say that for 100 pretty good looking Suspects (Qualified New Leads), you'll end up doing 30 Fact finding interviews and out of that 30 Fact finders in the first year you'll get six new Clients (six new premium paying entities). In the second year, if you continue to contact all of your Prospects, out of the original 30 Fact finders you will pick up three more new Clients. And finally, in the third year, you will pick up one more new Client. This yields a total of ten new Clients and this is the famous 100/30/10 or *10/3/1 formula* that everyone hears about. The thing that is critical for the Representative to understand is that it really isn't a 10/3/1 formula. It's a 100/30/6 formula or a 10/3/.6 formula. This is because you only get .6 new Clients *in the first year* following the initial Fact finder. The last 40% of the new Clients come through, and only through, a system of repeated contacts generated by the one card system. In other words, if you don't have a one card system, you will lose 40% of your new Clients or 40% of your potential business.

The one card system tracks birthdays, age changes and non-automatics. This allows the Representative to systematically conduct annual planning reviews and be aware of birthdays and age changes. This is essential to maintaining an ongoing relationship with the Client. This, of course, directly translates into higher persistency rates, repeat sales, and continuing referrals. As I mentioned, the average Client will buy five to seven times if their Representative routinely keeps in touch with them.

The one card system is also terribly important in allowing repeated contact with telephone Suspects. The way I see this working is the Representative calls someone on the phone. The person says, "I'm not really interested, thank you." The Representative says, "Things have a way of changing. Do you mind if I keep you in my system?" The prospect says, "No, I don't mind." The Representative then asks, "What is your birthday?". The person now goes into the one card system as a "Suspect" (New Lead). All of us have had the experience of having someone call asking when our property and casualty insurance comes due on our cars, house, or whatever, and would we mind if they called us back at that time to give us a quote. Most of us say, "Fine, please do." We give them the date of the policy renewal and we *never* get the promised call.

The one card system reinforces the idea of the Representative as a professional who truly is organized and follows up by *doing what they say they're going to do*. It may be that the first time you call you won't get an appointment. Maybe the second time you call you won't get an appointment. But, by the third time you call with an age change notice for the suspect, they're impressed. I believe that the one card system, or some form of it, is fundamental in increasing Representative productivity.

### **CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF SALES CYCLE**

The fourth major point in increasing Representative productivity is a clear understanding of the Sales Cycle. By this I mean an understanding of how the Sales Cycle is divided into smaller, discrete steps which we may call boxes or modules that build upon one another, leading to the ultimate sale. The Sales Cycle of course begins with prospecting, leading to the pre-approach, then approaching the Suspect, then Fact finding, then putting the case together, then closing, and finally delivery, cycling back to prospecting again.

The important issue here, in my mind, is that each segment of the Sales Cycle has its own distinct purpose or mission. Each module or box needs to be looked at as an independent sale. The reason I feel this is important is that if the Sales Cycle isn't divided up in the Representative's mind into clear sub-sales, then the process becomes 1) too confusing and it's easy to lose track of where you are in that particular sale, and 2) the Representative only believes that they are successful if they actually sell something and receive money. By breaking the Sales Cycle into discrete boxes it allows

the person a sense of achievement as they move through each box. It allows more psychological victories and clarifies the goals of building relationships and obtaining referred leads.

A clear understanding of the module or box-like theory of moving through the Sales Cycle allows one not to mix and confuse various sections of the sales process or present them out of order. A typical example would be someone who *tries to sell on the telephone* during the pre-approach module. Another would be a Representative who attempts to do their approach or Fact finder on the telephone. Other problems might include closing before the facts are obtained, or mixing a close, an approach, some facts, a close, followed by more facts and another close, all in kind of a blurred sales process. This is not very professional, nor is it efficient.

It is critical, in my view, that the Representative understand the purpose of the pre-approach or telephoning, is simply to get an appointment, nothing more. The goal or the purpose of the approach is to move the suspect to Fact finding, to create an environment and situation in which the Suspect is comfortable sharing facts and feelings. The purpose of the Fact finder is to get to the "inner person." That is, to have a clear understanding of the financial and emotional makeup of that person and their situation. This allows a clear identification of and agreement upon their needs. The module of putting the case together involves taking the needs that have been identified in the Fact finding process and using one's expertise to assemble the best recommendations possible for the Client. The purpose of the close is to get the Prospect (they shifted from a "Suspect" to a "Prospect" after the Fact finder) to actually take action in the form of a check, an application or a physical exam. Finally, the purpose of the delivery is to reinforce the sale, obtain referred leads and set up the process leading to the next sale. This of course cycles back around to prospecting which is gaining identities of people who would make excellent Clients and borrowing the influence of the nominator so that they can be met on a favorable basis.

My feeling about a clear understanding of the Sales Cycle goes deeper than just understanding the modules and their purpose. Additionally, it includes mastering each segment of the Sales Cycle so that the skills in each segment are superior. This is fundamental to succeeding in the life insurance and financial services sales business.

I believe that there are three kinds of knowledge that are necessary to succeed in life insurance and financial services sales. One of them is technical or product knowledge. The second is mastery of the sales skills, which really is a clear understanding and mastery of the Sales Cycle. The third type is psychological knowledge. This involves understanding the psychology of yourself, of self-esteem, self-motivation, and self-discipline. Additionally, it includes an understanding of interpersonal psychology or how to create the relationship with the prospect and Client. Finally, it is valuable to understand the psychology of motivation. This includes understanding how the relationship between Representatives, supervisors and the company as a whole affect

morale and productivity. These are touched on in the section on a caring, mentor relationship with the supervisor and the agency as a success culture.

### **MASTERY OF REFERRED LEAD PROSPECTING**

Let me move to the fifth point on the list, the mastery of referred lead prospecting. I did not label this key an "understanding of the referred lead process" or an "appreciation of the referred lead process," but a "**mastery**" of the referred lead process. This I think begins with a genuine acceptance on the part of the Representative that they do, in fact, get paid in two ways. They receive commissions on the business that they do with their Clients, but of equal or more importance is being paid by professional or personal introductions to other potential Clients. This is indeed payment and the Representative must understand that they are professionals and as professionals they are paid, and they are paid in two ways. It is not just rhetoric but the truth and they need to understand that.

Secondly, I think they need to understand that referred lead prospecting is a process that we teach our Clients. It is not something that we ask them to do for us. It is, in fact, something *we teach them* to do with us. I think the standard way in which Representatives are taught to ask for referred leads in the insurance industry today is to assume that the Client is happy with the service that has been offered, and then ask the Client can they think of anyone who might benefit from the services that the Representative offers. I envision this as basically tossing a giant medicine ball to the Client. The medicine ball represents the work of referred lead prospecting and in tossing the ball, the Representative has just passed the work onto the Client. I think this is a mistake and I believe that the process of getting an initial affirmative and then feeding names and categories, as is seen in the Granum six-step referred lead process, is a much more effective way of handling the procedure. However, that is only part of the referred lead process. Today, using search engines on the Internet the Representative can create "Prompting or Feeder Lists" to help the Client simply recognize possible referrals from the list.

I believe we begin to teach the Client how to do business with us the moment we walk through the door. I think it is important to tell the prospect that we "work on essentially a personal or professional introduction basis." This should be done within the first minute of meeting with a potential Client. Additionally, the process of referred lead prospecting needs to be reinforced in the approach when the Representative explains how they're compensated.

A trial close surrounding the idea of obtaining referred leads can be attempted in the approach. After explaining the compensation process, the Representative can say "does that sound fair to you?" When the potential Client says "yes," essentially a trial close has been completed around the idea of later requesting referred leads. The point is that mastering referred leads is critical. It must be structured into every interaction



with the Client. It must be reinforced constantly by supervision. The anxiety of asking for referred leads is diminished by constant drill and repetition in simulated role play situations.

Finally, the referred lead prospecting style of doing business needs to become identified with the agency and the company. It needs to be taught that this is the way we do business. We are professional and this is how we do it. It should not be taught as a technique that is helpful in your career, but as a process that is *fundamental* to who you are, how you do business, how you're going to build a Clientele and be professional.

### **CARING MENTOR RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERVISOR**

This moves us to the sixth point of a caring, mentor relationship with the supervisor or agency manager. This again seems to be critical for success. As I've stated many times, there is little power in the position of being an agency manager or supervisor. The truth of today's marketplace is that the Representative is repeatedly and consistently wooed by brokerage managers from a wide variety of other life insurance companies, some of whom have agency systems and some of whom do not. The major tool then, of the agency manager or supervisor, in developing Representative productivity is a caring, mentor relationship.

The philosophy really needs to be one of: "I am your personal business consultant. How can I help you? I am not only interested in you making money, but in your entire career development. I care about you and where you're headed in your life. I care about what your life is about. I am interested in your family and your children. My contract with you is very simple. If you will do the work, if you will put in the effort, I will put 110% into doing everything possible to make you successful. You do the work, and I will bend myself into a pretzel doing everything possible to help you to succeed. If you do not do the work or put in the effort, however, then our contract is broken and I am no longer obligated to burn the midnight oil thinking of ways to help you be successful.

It is this understanding that creates the imprinting necessary for a lifetime relationship between a manager and a Representative. When the manager meets with the Representative in the hall, in their office, for coffee, wherever, and begins the conversation with, "How is it going? How can I help you?" it needs to be a genuine question. That is, I am truly looking for ways to help you. I am not merely passing time.

This relationship builds as the manager looks for opportunities to reward or reinforce the Representative. Simple things such as personal notes in the Representative's mailbox noting minor successes, birthdays, family events, sales or good activity all are extremely powerful and say that you care.

I believe that the manager needs to have a dedication to the whole person - their whole life - not simply how many sales they made. Lou Holtz, the famous football coach from

Notre Dame, says that there are three questions that everyone asks in their mind about everyone else that they deal with:

1. Can I trust you?,
2. Are you truly committed to excellence?
3. Do you care about me?

I believe that every Representative asks themselves those questions about their manager repeatedly. Can I trust you? Are you committed to excellence, really? And do you really care about me? To the extent that those are answered correctly, you develop a caring, mentor relationship. This is fundamental to high productivity in an agency and for a Representative. Needless to say, there are some Representatives who are individually strong enough that they do not require a relationship to help them along. However, these are people who are unusual and would probably succeed and be productive in virtually any environment.

### **CLEAR MEASUREMENT OF ACTIVITY PATTERN**

The seventh key to increasing Representative productivity is clear measurement of a high activity pattern. Measurement improves performance, or, put another way, you get what you measure. I think that the use of the Success Manual or some like measuring technique is fundamental in developing Representative productivity. If the Representative does not measure what they are doing on an ongoing basis, there is no way to make an analysis of their business activity. Yes, you do have the number of kept appointments from their Daytimer, and you have their submitted and paid for commission, but you really have no idea how the Representative is structuring their day and you cannot identify any skill deficits because you do not have sufficient data.

Only by being able to examine the ratios contained in the Success Manual data or by using a computer program such as The Alberstein CAM Report™ can you truly pinpoint where the Representative is having problems. Additionally, soon Representatives begin to understand the relationships between the numbers and can identify for themselves where they are falling down or where they have a skill deficit. Without measurement there is no way to truly understand that. All you have are hunches, suspicions, and intuition and you are relegated to the role of a "Cheerleader."

A true professional approaches their business with a logical, almost scientific mind. They run their career as a business, not like a hobby. All businesses that are successful have sufficient accounting and management data with which to gain an understanding of what is really going on. The Representative needs this information as much or more than any other business does.

Included in the idea of measuring a high activity pattern, it is important to stress "fixed activities." That is, activities that the Representative has control of themselves. Sales

are not fixed activities. Sales depend upon the cooperation of someone else. The number of daily dials that one makes, how you dress, what you say, and when you work are not dependent on someone else. They therefore can be fixed activities. The number of days worked in a month can be a fixed activity, controlled by the Representative. To some extent, the number of appointments made can be a fixed activity. The number of daily requests for referred leads can certainly be a fixed activity.

Clearly, some are completely controllable by the Representative, others are partially controllable. But clear goals in the important activity categories and a commitment to the daily achievement of certain fixed activities seem to be the cornerstones of high productivity for many outstanding Representatives.

This ties into the notion of a structured business day. That is, a clear plan for how the day is to be divided up, and scheduling what activities are assigned to what time slots. Examples would be:

1. Beginning each day with one to two hours of telephoning
2. Have sacred time slots for appointments (including your dialing time)
3. No opening the mail until 4:00 in the afternoon

The closer an Representative can come to a structured day, the greater the sense of control, the less anxiety and the more successful the Representative becomes.

I think it can also be said from management's point of view, that "you can expect what you inspect." Unless management *clearly, regularly, methodically and repeatedly* reviews the Representative's Success Manual it will soon be set aside and eventually discarded. Without management's measurement of the Representative's activity pattern, the Representative will feel, 1) that management doesn't really care about it or me, and 2) it's not really that important or they would check it.

Notice that the key says clear measurement of a high activity pattern. High activity is fundamental to Representative productivity from a number of different points of view. 1) It is their own built in insurance policy. That is, if they engage in enough of the sales cycle activities, they are virtually guaranteed by the law of numbers a certain amount of success. But perhaps of more importance, the business delivers so many resounding punishments and setbacks to the Representative that it is difficult to maintain one's momentum and enthusiasm unless there is a relatively high activity pattern. With a high activity pattern the Representative has the opportunity to be reinforced or have a few good things happen every day. This keeps them pumped up and on the success track.

If they move to a low activity pattern, if a few things go wrong, then there isn't any counterbalancing reinforcement and the Representative begins to spiral into a down mood, reduced activity and eventually a frozen depression. Although many

Representatives have trouble fully understanding this; a high activity pattern makes them *more emotionally resilient* and actually makes the business more fun.

### **INSURING ECONOMIC HUMAN LIFE VALUE AS MISSION**

The eighth key is insuring Economic Human Life Value as a mission for the Representative. It is terribly important for a life insurance Representative to have a mission or sense of purpose in their work. Their career must be emotionally meaningful to them. I believe our culture has an inherent fear of death and dying, and a fear of the acceptance of responsibility. The life insurance Representative brings with him or her questions about the death and dying process as well as questions of how personally responsible the individual has been. Because of the difficulties of the issues, and the non-tangible nature of the product, our culture has developed an aversion to life insurance Representatives. All Representatives understand this. In fact, virtually everyone in our culture understands this. Consequently, it is a very lonely, high rejection business.

In order for a Representative to be productive and stay the course, they must to have a personalized, meaningful mission. By that I mean it is important for the Representative to understand *why they are in the business*. They need to understand the tremendous good that they do in their sales process. The stronger the mission of the Representative, the greater the acceptance of the identity as a professional life insurance Representative.

The Economic Human Life Value is essentially the capital or monetary earning value of an individual during their productive years. This is, for most people, the greatest asset they have. Insuring that asset means protecting families and businesses. This surely is worthwhile.

When the Representative truly comes to understand the concept of the Economic Human Life Value, and embodies it as part of their mission, it becomes much more psychologically congruent for that Representative to ask for referred leads. If the mind set in the Representative is, "I want to ask for leads because I want to make sales, which means I want to make money" they are not nearly as committed or convincing in building the relationship necessary to obtain referred leads.

If they truly feel that what they are doing is of great value and importance to people, they can capture this vision and use it to help them feel more consistent and congruent about asking for referred leads. In short, there is tremendous power in knowing your purpose. If one wants to have truly productive Representatives there needs to be an emphasis on the importance of the mission in life insurance sales.

### **TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE NEED IDENTIFICATION**

The ninth key is technical knowledge to improve need identification. I mentioned earlier in this letter that technical or product knowledge is one of the three areas of knowledge necessary for continued success in the business. I sometimes feel that technical knowledge is over-played as a success factor, particularly when it is tied to a merchandising or sales idea. I think that the true value of extensive technical knowledge lies in the ability of the Representative to identify more needs in their Clients. It seems to me that the more successful Representatives are simply better "need finders".

I have this image that they have problem templates in their heads and as they are talking to their Clients, they are shifting these templates in and out of focus in their mind. For example, is this a buy sell? Is this a gifting situation? Is this a deferred compensation opportunity? Is this an executive bonus scenario? Is this an insured savings need? The more technical knowledge an Representative has, the more able they are to understand and identify a wider variety of Client needs. In so doing, they open up more cases. They open up bigger cases and, in fact, become much more productive. I am a big believer in technical knowledge but only when it is tied to improved need identification, not when it is used to mask Representative anxiety by trying to impress Clients.

#### **AGENCY AS SUCCESS CULTURE WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

The tenth key is the agency or company as a success culture with high expectations. I believe that every Representative wants to be associated with a group of professionals, a group of champions, *a group of winners*. It has been said that if you want to be a great spirit, then surround yourself with great spirits. Remember again the three questions that Lou Holtz believes everyone asks about other people they meet. Can I trust you? Are you committed to excellence? Do you care about me? When an agency or a company provides an environment where the answers to those questions are yes, you can trust us, yes, we are dedicated to excellence and yes, we genuinely care about you, then you have high morale, high camaraderie, high expectations and the beginnings of a success culture.

As a part of this process, I think it is important that each agency have a number of high activity, high production Representatives to serve as role models. Every agency needs leaders that show that the system can work and that it is possible to be successful and happy in the business with a high activity pattern. Additionally, these people can serve as excellent joint work associates for newer Representatives. I am a big believer in joint work and I think it's one of the ways that a new Representative feels safe, learns the most, and is able to sell cases that would otherwise not be available to them.

I believe the agency success culture is enhanced by the use of "Client Builder" or Productivity Enhancement Meetings." These allow Representatives to meet in peer groups on a once-a-month basis. Here they can support one another, exchange

information and observations on one another's business, and refocus on their career development. The meetings offer an opportunity to review monthly and yearly activity patterns, and to set and track goals with their peers holding them accountable. I have personally conducted over 3,500 Client Builder groups and have found them to play a major role in building an agency success culture. It seems to nicely combine focus and accountability with caring and growth.

### **CONTINUAL BUILDING OF SELF ESTEEM**

The eleventh and final key in increasing Representative productivity is the continual building of the self-esteem of the Representative. It is estimated that people talk to themselves or have an ongoing dialogue about 70% of their waking hours. During that time it is estimated that about 70% of everything we say to ourselves is negative. If you multiple these two together, it suggests that half of our waking hours are spent thinking negative things about ourselves. If we add into this the unrelenting pressure of prospecting and swimming upstream against the cultural fear of death and dying and responsibility, we can see that the potential damage to the self-esteem of a life insurance Representative is truly remarkable.

My belief is that to counter this there needs to be an ongoing program of constantly building the self-esteem of the Representative. This I feel can be done by the company and agency management to some extent. The company and agency want to clearly espouse the philosophy that they feel that the Representative is the cornerstone of their business. Furthermore, they want to demonstrate that they truly understand and appreciate their Representatives and value them as people as well as producers.

I feel it would be beneficial for companies and agencies to engage in an ongoing program of providing and encouraging the use of books, tapes and videos espousing positive mental attitude, high self-esteem and personal growth. The idea of having a "Book (or tape) of the Month Club" could be helpful. Representatives who completed a twelve month reading program could receive special agency recognition.

In building Representative self-esteem, a company has to create an environment where the Representative is constantly reminded of the *great value of the work that they do*. Management needs to constantly look for and reinforce positive self-talk. This is not to be confused with a "rah-rah" sales management or "motivational" promotion. This is a more adult and serious attempt to share comments like, "I believe in you". If a mistake is made, the response is: "You're better than that. That's just not like you. I know you can do this."

Paint the picture of long term career development and what the hard work of Client Building can lead to. Help them to see the freedom they are creating for themselves and their Clients. Challenge them to grow and see themselves as bigger and better. Representatives get beaten down enough. Try to be a "bucket-filler" without

abandoning "Tough Love" and all the while staying focused on your "contract" with the Representative that says you'll give 110% if they will do the work.

Continued and repeated training in the basics of the business, the sales cycle, product knowledge, and psychology leads to improved self-esteem. *Teach them the trade, not the tricks of the trade.* This is what really succeeds and builds self-esteem. When you know you have taken a shortcut you never really feel good about yourself. Help them to plan and then encourage, cajole, teach and challenge them to follow their plan for what they want. When a person truly understands a process, they begin to feel more and more confident. This confidence translates into more sales, bigger sales and a happier more productive Representative.

This really concludes the eleven major keys. I might throw in a couple of other ideas at the end simply to round out the package. One can't revisit the basics of the philosophy and overview of what builds great careers enough. The fundamentals of relationship driven need based selling, referred lead prospecting, the One Card System, and Client Building, never change. This may sound foolish but I believe that virtually every meeting the company or agency puts on should somehow be related back to these fundamentals. A success culture is developed by *repeating the truth over and over again.*

All company and agency materials should be **logically integrated into a system** that supports the values of integrity and Client Building. A true success culture is achieved when managers, company officers and representatives, agency staff and Representatives all understand and share a similar philosophy and sense of purpose. As this ideal is approached, Representative productivity will continue to rise.

I think that emphasizing the **physical health** of the Representative is important. In order to truly succeed at this business, one requires a certain amount of physical stamina. I think anything that promotes exercise, nutrition and the physical health of the Representative is useful in moving toward Representative productivity. It also builds Representative self-esteem.

Additionally, I feel information on the role of the **Representative as a business person** is very useful in increasing productivity. The Representative needs to feel confident that they are running a business and they have the accounting and personnel management support and skills necessary to accomplish that. There is very little business leverage available to the life insurance Representative, other than writing bigger cases or leveraging time by using more standardization in proposals or office procedures.

The one area of significant leverage lies in the development of marketing **assistants** and/or support staff. I believe that one significant support role an agency can provide for an experienced Representative is assuming the lion's share of the work involved in

selecting, hiring, and training assistants for Representatives. This would save the Representative a great deal of time. Representatives typically do not have the time, expertise nor temperament to perform these tasks. (Many don't even know where to begin!) This is a major opportunity to increase Representative productivity by helping the Representative to maximize his/her "offensive time".

I think that concludes my thoughts on these topics. Naturally, each key that I have listed is a major area unto itself and could be discussed in great depth at a later time. The long and the short of it is that I gave you a quick answer on how to increase Representative productivity and I wanted to supplement that answer with some serious thought on the matter. I'm sure there are different lists as to what are the keys to increasing Representative productivity. From my perspective, I really believe that the eleven points I have listed are what it's all about. I honestly believe that a clear commitment to these principles will help to produce great Representatives, great managers and ultimately a great company.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this rather extensive letter and I truly hope that some of the ideas will be helpful for you.

Sincerely,

Barry Alberstein, MBA, Ph.D.