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It's The Relationship, Stupid!



By Duane Carey

Here's the scenario:

You're new to the financial services industry. You recently passed your NASD Series 7 and Series 63 exams to qualify

you to sell securities. You really know your stuff. You consistently bore your wife with discussions about options, Treasury Inflation Protected Securities, covered calls, and other things that make her eyes gloss over.

You truly love the subject matter and can't wait to build a portfolio of clients whom you can really help. And the commissions will be fantastic! Your broker-dealer had you spend your first two weeks on the job cold-calling your friends, relatives, and all the professionals in your life, including your doctor, lawyer, accountant, veterinarian, dentist, plumber, chiropractor, etc. That didn't turn out so well... Now you're on the networking tour, trying to meet as many people as you can. You hand out business cards like a Hare Krishna hands out pamphlets at the airport.

While chatting with someone at a networking function, you enthusiastically tell them that you would love to help them with their financial affairs. Now here's where it gets really interesting; you actually believe

that someone might turn over their financial portfolio – that's right, their life's savings – to someone they just met three minutes ago over lukewarm mozzarella sticks and Miller Lite. Why in the world would you think that?

The truth is, there's no free lunch, hard work ain't easy, it's a marathon, not a sprint, and [insert your own cliché here]. It takes time, energy, drive, commitment, and most importantly, relationships to build a client base. This is especially true in industries where the stakes are high, such as financial services, law, accounting, and child care.

Does this mean I have a negative opinion of networking? Absolutely not. In fact, I regard networking as perhaps the best return-on-investment for marketing your business. This is especially true for the fields of financial services, mortgages, and real estate, where the competition is ubiquitous. You just need to do it right. Following are some thoughts, albeit unconventional, on how to do it right.

It's not a numbers game

Sale is a numbers game, right? We certainly hear that all the time. Sales is a numbers game if you're simply smilin' and dialin'. Cold callers need to spend a lot of time each day making cold calls in order to reach their short-term goals. However, if you maintain a long-term perspective with consistently long-term goals, sales is no longer a numbers game;

instead, it's a quality game. Quality trumps quantity.

The "Elevator Speech" is over-rated

Don't worry about shoving a business card in someone's hand, instead worry about getting to know them and let them get to know you. Instead of focusing on who you are and what you do, focus on them. People don't buy from people with good elevator speeches, they buy from people they like and trust. Consistently demonstrate good character, and people will do business with you.

Become consistently involved

On rare occasions, you will immediately hit it off with someone you meet while networking. The two of you will become fast friends and work together for a long time. In most cases, however, it takes much longer to build a meaningful relationship. How do you do that? Face time. The more time you spend with people, the more they will understand who you are and what contribution you can make. Join your county's chamber of commerce and serve on a committee or help with some of the events. The time you spend with your new colleagues will be well worth the effort.

Another tremendous way to accomplish the requisite face time is to join a business referral group such as NRG. The opportunity to visit with a group of colleagues each week, and empower them as your auxiliary sales force for just \$400 a year, is one of the best deals going.