

Securing a Company Appointment

****INTRODUCTION****

Securing a company appointment is like getting a loan. When there is a lot of money to loan its easy, but when money is tight, only those perceived as the most sound financial risks will get the cash. The key word here is perceive.

In the agency business, it's easy to get an appointment in a soft market, but only those perceived to be the most "Professional" will get the nod when the market turns hard again. When is the company appointment most necessary? During the hard market, of course.

Perception plays a big part in securing the contract. Remember that when you deal with individuals, their perception of you is their reality. There are many agencies that are professional, but very few do those little "extras" that differentiate them from the other "me too" agencies. For the agent willing to go the extra mile, the reward lies in acquiring that company appointment others wish they had.

****ANALYZING THE NEED****

Too much time has been wasted in the past by both companies and agencies trying to form a relationship that never should have been pursued to begin with. In an environment of shrinking income and increasing expenses, it is too much of a financial and time drain to pursue a union that is doomed at the onset.

To maximize the effort in acquiring a company contract the agency must prepare a series of documents that will, when assembled, form the total package necessary to make the proper selection and secure that appointment. Completion of the AGENCY NEEDS ANALYZATION form will assist in determining the agency's needs.

****ANALYZING THE COMPANY****

It is very important for the agency to attract the "Right" company. After the agency has analyzed the need for securing the contract, a list of possible candidates should be created. The agency must then analyze the companies' demographics, automation, markets/services and future direction.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- o Determine the number of agencies representing this company in your marketing area. Your marketing area should be defined in the agency Mission Statement.

- o Determine from interviews with agencies and companies, how each company has historically dealt with:

- o The Hard Market
- o The Soft Market
- o Personal Lines
- o Commercial Lines
- o Target and Specialty markets

- o Determine from Trade Association publications and public records, the premiums written for the lines of interest to the agency. This should be done* for the past six years in order to determine a pattern. Since there is a specific need to be satisfied for the agency, it is necessary to determine the company's ability and track record in responding to those needs.

DEMOGRAPHICS (Continued)

o Talk to other agents when attending association or user group get-togethers. Get their opinions of the company:

- o Historically
- o Currently
- o Management and Personnel
- o Service
- o Products
- o Agency Support/Training
- o Overall Strengths
- o Overall Weaknesses

AUTOMATION

Too much time can be spent dealing with companies that use different automation than the agency. In the rush to "On-Line" with companies, agencies have failed to recognize the lack of efficiency in multiple input. In a typical interface today, the agent enters the same information onto the company's application, the agency quote sheet and then enters some or all of the information into the agency's data base and into the company terminal.

An in-depth analysis of the company's approach to automation should focus on the following items:

- o Does the company have the ability to interface?
- o Is interface accomplished with single entry?
- o What will interface do?
 - Rate
 - Issue policies/endorsements/renewals
 - E-Mail
 - Claims filing & inquiry
 - Application input
 - File retrieval
- o Is interface batch, on-line or a combination of those?

AUTOMATION (continued)

- o Does it require separate equipment?
- o Reimbursement by company for extra functions performed by the agency?
- o Do they use IVANS?
- o Is company an owner or partner with a specific automation vendor?
- o Will company accept the forms generated by your system?

While these are not all of the questions that are important, they are a step in the right direction. The form entitled "AUTOMATION EVALUATION" gives your agency the opportunity to set a point value on various items. This will provide a basis for comparing the acceptability of establishing a relationship with the various companies.

(This is an abbreviated sample)