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It's Life Insurance Awareness Month!

By Ayo Mseka

September is Life Insurance Awareness Month, the annual life insurance awareness campaign coordinated by Life Happens and supported by the nation's leading financial-services organizations.

The spokesperson for this year's campaign is Brooke Shields, actress, model, designer, and mother. Shields' story is being shared through a national TV and radio public service announcement (PSA) program that began broadcasting this summer and will continue until the end of the year. The PSAs are available on the Life Happens website, website: www.lifehappens.org, along with educational information and interactive tools, such as Life Happens' Life Insurance Needs Calculator, to help consumers evaluate their own life insurance needs and get the protection they need.

The business case for LIAM

The need for an awareness campaign has never been greater. The 2019 Life Insurance Barometer Study by Life Happens and LIMRA found that only 57 percent of Americans have life insurance, and four in 10 households without it would immediately struggle to pay for living expenses if their primary wage earner died. The risk to a family's financial stability if they forgo life insurance is incredibly high; yet, there are still many Americans who are living without it, leaving them vulnerable.

Reversing the trend

Through its partnership with Shields, Life Happens seeks to reverse this damaging trend by reinforcing the need for families to take long-term financial planning seriously, consider the benefits of life insurance, and take financial control now.

As a NAIFA advisor, you, too, can help reverse this trend by intensifying your efforts to persuade prospects to get more life insurance for themselves and their loved ones. Here are some of the tenets top-producing agents live by as they serve their clients:

- They establish themselves as good educators.
- They have a good "conversation starter" with each prospect and client.
- They know how to turn their knowledge into sales.
- They stay energized by networking with other successful professionals.
- They know that successful selling is how you get business, but responsive service is how you *keep* it.
- They follow through on their promises and always over-deliver.

You will find more of these "best practices" in this issue of the magazine, and at NAIFA's Performance +Purpose Conference, currently under way in Orlando, Florida. Dubbed the industry's most anticipated event, this year's P+P is the place to be for ideas that educate, inspire and motivate.

With many of your clients currently living from paycheck to paycheck and deeply worried about their financial future, LIAM and P+P could not be happening at a more opportune time. Make the most of these two exciting events and you will be doing your clients and your practice a world of good. [at](#)

Ayo Mseka

'The Longer I Sit Here, the Better it Gets'

These words from one of my clients illustrate the powerful effects of our products and services.

By Jill Judd LUTCF, FSS

A client recently came into my office for a review of her insurance and financial situation. We had reached out to her and suggested she come and see us.

As we began our discussion, she made it clear that she was not really sure why she was there at a point in her life when her time was so limited. It was easy for me to discern that she was uncomfortable and ready to get to the end of this appointment as quickly as possible. When I get a sense that something like this is going on, it becomes even more important to find out what's really brewing under the surface.

Taking care of our clients

As it turned out, my client, Martha, was caring for her aging and infirm husband. He had fallen ill, was bed-ridden, and was quickly losing his cognitive ability. She was stretched to capacity, had no additional help, and was deeply concerned about her finances.

Until recently, her husband had taken care of all the financial matters of the household and she now found herself in unfamiliar territory. I listened and recognized her challenges. I shared in her struggle. When she was satisfied that I understood her dilemma, she looked at me, resigned to her perceived fate. It was now my turn to help her through another of life's many challenges.

I started by saying: "Martha, I may have some great news for you. Did you know that many years ago, your husband bought life insurance through our company?" Skeptically, she shook her head, but still looked defeated. "Hold on," I said, "it looks like he has been paying on this for years. There is money in the policy that you can use to help pay for your husband's medical needs."

When she heard this information, she sat a bit forward, her look changing from defeat to interest. "Wait!" I added. "There's a second policy, same story. This one also has cash value, twice as much as the first." She leaned forward a bit more and asked: "You mean we won't be eating cat food?" I responded: "No, Martha, not a chance unless it's a favorite."

Across the country, NAIFA members find ways to help clients weather the storms and navigate the roughest seas.

I winked at her and she smiled. This is how we work as NAIFA members.

I continued the conversation by posing another question: "Martha, would you like some more good news?" With this, she nodded and raised her eyebrows in anticipation. "There's a third policy, also with available cash to help you with this rough spot," I said. With this, she slapped her hands on the desk, let out a hearty laugh, and said: "The longer I sit here, the better it gets!"

This is nothing new — it's what we do as NAIFA members.

The rest of the story is not unusual. It's what we do, every day. Across the country, NAIFA members find ways to help clients weather the storms and navigate the roughest seas. We are building plans that will sustain them when the worst things happen. We are asking the right questions and finding the best solutions to their insurance and financial situations. We do it with respect, care and a profound sense of responsibility.

Good financial professionals recognize the needs of their clients and provide products to satisfy those needs, but *great financial professionals* are part of a different breed — the NAIFA breed of financial professionals who always make sure they go the extra mile. [at](#)

Jill Judd, LUTCF, FSS, is president of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors and a State Farm Insurance agent in Capitola, California. Contact her at jill.judd@statefarm.com.



New Index Annuity Launched

Ameritas Life Insurance Corp. is pleased to “bake up” the Ameritas Income 10 Index Annuity (Income 10 IA), a flexible, premium deferred index annuity. Income 10 IA offers clients a choice of two Guaranteed Lifetime Withdrawal Benefit (GLWB) riders for their income needs: Income Protector for guarantees or Income Builder for potential growth.

Annuities play an integral part in long-term retirement planning strategy by providing guidance to clients in overcoming unnecessary risks and important optional benefits to help protect their financial future.

With the Ameritas new Income 10 IA, both GLWB riders also offer a booster option and a Principal Protection Credit.

Key features of this product include:

- Four index choices, including the new S&P 500 Sector Rotator Daily RC2 5% Index.
- Multiple crediting methods.
- Competitive rate banding.
- 45-day rate lock.
- Waiver of surrender charges for confinement, terminal illness and home health care.
- Partial Interest Credit for Index funds at death.
- Principal Protection Credit.
- Income 10 IA is the most recent annuity product offered by Ameritas. The Accumulation 7 Index Annuity was released in November 2018.

For more information, visit the company’s resource page.

New Advice Platform for Advisors and their Clients

Voya Financial Advisors, Inc. (VFA), has launched a new digital advice experience for its network of advisors and their clients.

The Voya Digital Adviser platform provides a hybrid approach for advisors and investors. It was strategically designed to combine the ease, automation and flexibility of a self-guided service while preserving the valuable interaction of a financial professional, according to the company.

“We are pleased to offer our advisors and their clients an innovative yet easy-to-use digital advice solution that includes the advisor as part of the experience,” said Tom Halloran, president of Voya Financial Advisors.

“While the typical direct-to-consumer digital service removes the advisor from the equation, our new platform ensures that the advisor remains integral to the process. This enables a client to receive the best of both worlds — access to self-directed investment advice model portfolios, along with the value and expertise of a personal advisor relationship.”

Research from Voya confirms that advisors recognize the power of digital advice solutions and how this technology can benefit their practices. More than half of the advisors in a recent poll believed that a hybrid digital advice tool could help grow their businesses by up to 10%. Many also confirmed that such a tool could complement their current service offering by making it easier to access important client information and reach younger or less affluent investors.¹

The new platform can help VFA advisors become more efficient as they look to grow their practice. With a minimum requirement of only \$5,000 to fund an account, advisors can support emerging investors who might not otherwise fit into their typical service model.

Meanwhile, through a predominantly digital experience, clients gain full access to their investments, along with advice “on-the-go” at an attractive price-point compared to a traditional advisory relationship.

The experience is streamlined and user-friendly, taking only a brief time to open an account, according to the company. After logging into the platform from their advisor’s website, the client answers a set of questions to identify his or her investment goals and risk tolerance.

Voya Digital Adviser then generates an account for the client to fund with a professionally built and managed portfolio. Clients have 24/7 access to view and manage their progress, meeting at least annually with an advisor to review investments. They also have the flexibility to easily reposition their assets. Advisors who offer this

service must have an investment adviser representative (IAR) license in each state in which they intend to conduct business.

“As the advice industry evolves, we are listening carefully to what our advisors need to grow successfully,” said Andre Robinson, head of Advisory Solutions for Voya Financial Advisors. “With our new Voya Digital Adviser, individuals can access advice when, where and how they want it, while advisors meet the demands of both new and existing clients.”

For more information, visit www.voyaFA.com.

Options for Whole Life Policies Announced

Clients looking for secure lifetime protection and excellent value for death benefit protection have two new options with Ohio National’s enhanced lifetime pay whole life products.

“Prestige Value IV and Prestige 100 II provide an excellent foundation of long-term protection,” said Christopher Calabro, CLU, ChFC, Ohio National senior vice president career agency distribution and marketing. “Clients can choose between one of the lowest priced participating whole life policies in the industry, which offers strong guaranteed² cash value growth supported by mid- and long-term dividends, or one that provides richer long-term cash value and dividend potential. These products are strong on their own but can have flexibility added through an array of riders.”

Both products can accept premium payments to, and endow at, age 100. The earlier endowment age helps contribute to both products’ improved long-term cash and death benefit values, based on current assumptions, that peak around a client’s life expectancy.

Financial professionals have the flexibility to customize a policy to meet their client’s needs with a suite of three paid-up-additions (PUA) riders, which feature an enhanced Flexible PUA Rider (FPUAR). These riders allow clients to pay an additional premium into their policy above the base, up to approved underwritten limits, to receive additional paid-up whole life coverage.

The PUA riders can also help improve the products’ abilities to build and distribute cash value or reduce the policyholder’s length or amount of premium payments on a non-guaranteed basis.

Policyholders, including those with variable incomes or business owners, will have greater control over their premiums when they experience changes in their financial resources with the FPUAR. With its improved flexibility, four unscheduled premium payments can be made in any policy year for policyholders to reach their maximum allowable premium.

Policyholders also have two years from the issue date to pay the maximum amount of flexible premium into the policy. Then going forward, their maximum FPUAR premium will be based on the highest amount paid in any of the last five policy years.

Prestige Value IV and Prestige 100 II feature a lineup of living benefits, including the Accelerated Benefits Rider (ABR), which gives clients early access to a portion of the policy’s death benefit in the event of a terminal or chronic illness. And, since both products are designed to have stronger long-term cash and death benefit values, policyholders may also see an improvement in the maximum benefit that can be accelerated in the years they are most likely to need the protections an ABR provides.³

More information can be found at prestigeforlife.com. 

References

- ¹ Online survey of 467 registered representatives of Voya Financial Advisors (VFA), January 2019.
- ² Guarantees are based upon the claims-paying ability of the issuer. Issuers not licensed to conduct business in New York. Disability income insurance is not available in California. Withdrawals and loans may reduce the death benefit, cash surrender value and any living benefit amount.
- ³ The optional Accelerated Benefit Rider provides for a partial acceleration of the policy death benefit in the event that the base policy insured is certified by a licensed physician as being chronically ill or terminally ill. By taking an accelerated death benefit payment, a lien is created against the policy death benefit. The lien accrues carrying charges at an adjustable rate we declare. The lien, including the lien carrying charges, will be deducted from the total death benefit otherwise payable to the policy beneficiary(ies) and will reduce the cash value available for policy loans, surrenders, or the exercise of any non-forfeiture option. The required premium for the policy must still be paid even if an accelerated death benefit is taken. If an accelerated benefit is taken and the policy lapses or otherwise terminates, a taxable event may occur. Any death benefit provided by an optional Accidental Death Benefit Rider is not available for acceleration under this rider.
Any accelerated benefit taken under this rider may be taxable. Clients should consult their tax advisor on all tax matters. Adding the rider to a life insurance policy or the taking of rider benefits may affect eligibility for certain public assistance programs and government benefits.

The Accelerated Benefit Rider is not designed to be a substitute for long-term care insurance, health insurance, or nursing home insurance. Rider benefits and features may vary by state.

'Running' Your Practice



PAVEL1964/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

It's all about having a vision and a great coach, thinking positively, making daily progress, and outworking the tough times.

By Brad Dufrane, CLF, LUTCF

In preparing for my last marathon, I drew many parallels to my start in the financial-services industry. Having the opportunity to recruit, train and coach new financial professionals, I get to relive those initial years often.

Typically, there is a great deal of excitement involved when you decide to run a marathon or make a career change. According to ilovetorun.org, it is estimated that only about 1% of Americans will run a marathon in their lifetime. It's a challenge that many people set out to complete. Working in the financial services industry is very similar to running a marathon — many people also set out to make this their career. Getting ready for this amazing career is very similar to preparing and running competitively.

Sometimes, the decision is the easiest part of the process. It's not hard to see why someone would be attracted to our industry. Substantial income potential, a flexible schedule and having a tremendous impact on others are just a few of the factors that helped me decide to get into this industry.

Similarly, when I entered competitive running, the decision to run was also the easy part. My wife, who had never been a runner, told me one day: "I am going to run a marathon." Although she had never run more than a mile at a time in her life, I watched her complete her rigorous training and compete and finish her first marathon. I greeted her at the finish line and proclaimed: "I am going to run a marathon." The decision was simple and easy.

You will experience obstacles and challenges. Are you ready to run through the pain?

The preparation, on the other hand, was another story. I remember going for what was to be my first 3-mile run. For the first 100 yards, it was awesome. Quickly into the run, it dawned on me the horrific feat I had ahead of me. I got a quarter mile in and turned to walk back because I had strained a calf muscle. What a start!

In hindsight, my lonely limping walk back was very similar to the first of the many trips I made to the break room my first day and week as a financial professional. When I called the people whom I thought were my "top 10 prospects," I recall that 8 of them said no. What a way to start! It is critical for you to understand that those defeating moments will not define your success.

Marathons and financial professionals

This is where the real comparisons between running a marathon and working as a professional can begin. On average, for big-city marathons, for every 1,000 people who register for a marathon, 820 of them will start the race and about 650 will finish, according to quora.com. In our industry, many set out for success and don't make it to the starting line; others start but fail to finish.

There are several things I could have chosen to do the day after I injured my calf. But what I decided to do the next day was to go out and walk a mile. It hurt, but I had to move forward because the clock was ticking on my training time and failure wasn't an option.

During the first few weeks of my career, there were several times when I felt like giving up or doing something else. I often asked myself: "What happens if I run out of people to call?" "What if I don't make a sale?" "What if I fail?"

Thankfully, I listened to the coaching I was getting and continued to make phone calls. Much like the clock ticking on the marathon, the retention clock early in the career is also ticking. To succeed, you must put one foot in front of the other. Remember that if you are moving, you are making progress.

The power of positive thinking can be tremendous, as well. Each time you run further than you had previously, you are in uncharted territory. Some call this a runner's high. I experienced similar feelings the first time I was out networking and talking to centers of influence.

The first day on the job, there was no way I could have envisioned a week when I would have 12 appointments, then 15, then 20, and even more. Thinking I would eventually get to 26.2 miles on my first "run" was a joke instead of a vision.

Sometimes you need a cheerleader; on other occasions, you need a coach, and often, I needed someone to kick my butt. For my marathon training, that someone was my wife. In my career, it was not only the great coaching I got at work, but just as important, was the support at home.

A vision of success

But as great as any guidance is that you will get from someone else, it will all come down to you. I went through a daily affirmation process when I ran. I asked myself: "What will it be like when I finish?" "How great will I feel?" "Who will be inspired by me, like I was by my wife?"

In my cubicle my first year in the business, I had a picture of the boat that I wanted to buy for my family. I ordered marketing materials from the Recognition Resorts where our annual meeting was to be held and had them sent to my office. I thought about how great it would be to be able to take my family on a much-deserved vacation and reward them.

In both instances — being a professional and running a marathon — having a vision of what it would be like, feel like and who it would impact, were things I thought about daily. I don't think anyone is born to run a marathon.

I also don't think there are some people who are naturally supposed to be financial professionals. It takes a willingness to do what most others are unwilling to do repeatedly. You must be POSITIVE, MOTIVATED and RELENTLESS in your pursuit.

In marathon training, you must make progress every day and every week, or you will fall behind. If you don't prepare, you run the risk of not making it to the start line. If you are not making phone calls daily, you are certain to be behind, as well.

What does a successful day and week look like? With running, you have your miles mapped out and you know the milestones. Having those same goals about the number of people you need to be in contact with each week is very important. Celebrate those days and weeks when you hit your goals. I remember the first time I ran 5 miles without stopping. It was a tremendous feeling. Similarly, when I started averaging double-digit referrals each week, it felt great.

Dealing with setbacks

Remember that there will be setbacks along the way. Whether it is missing a time goal for a run or not hitting a critical sales goal, you will experience failure. But how you react and what you do in the face of that failure will ultimately determine your success.

What if I had used my first week, month or even year in my business as a gauge of the rest of my career? I would have surely failed. Based on that first week, I didn't see myself running a successful practice and 23 years later, coaching, training and recruiting financial professionals.

Steps to success

If I had used my first week as a gauge of my marathon preparation, I would have made a bet that I wouldn't finish the training, let alone the marathon. Having completed that marathon and multiple marathons since then, I can tell you that it's all about moving forward in both cases.

In my opinion it really boils down to a few key factors:

- You need a great coach, at home and at work.
- Make progress daily.
- Think positively.
- Set a vision and a series of goals and share them.
- Outwork the tough times.

When we start in this great career, we are very optimistic and excited. Those who succeed will face many obstacles and challenges, but they will continue to run.

You will experience obstacles and challenges. Are you ready to run through the pain? [at](#)

Bradley Dufrane, CLF, LUTCF, is a Partner in the Syracuse sales office of New York Life Ins. Company. He is passionate about coaching, training and helping Financial Professionals reach their personal and professional goals. Dufrane is the 2017 and 2018 Partner of the Year for the New York Life Finger Lakes Offices.

Many Advisors Embrace Technology to Better Serve Their Clients



FIZKES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Technology complements client relationships among top female advisors.

By Ayo Mseka

A survey of female financial advisors taken at Edward Jones' Annual Women's Conference shows that rather than looking at new disruptive technology as a challenge to their practice, financial advisors are increasingly embracing technology to better serve clients and scale their businesses.

Only 1 in 10 (11%) of polled financial advisors cited disruptive technologies — which include advances in artificial intelligence and robo-advisors — as the biggest challenge to the financial advisory industry in 2019.

This is despite the substantiated growth in assets under management for robo-advisors, which is expected to reach between \$2.2 trillion to \$5.7 trillion by 2020, according to many analysts.

On the contrary, financial advisors are using technology as a way to complement and enhance the services they offer to the clients they already serve. When asked how they see their practice changing in the next five years, over half (57%) responded that they will offer a broader range of services to fewer clients, while 60% stated that technology will enable them to have more data and tools available to personalize advice based on their clients' life goals.

“While new and disruptive technology has put pressure on the financial services industry, it has also enabled financial advisors to better determine appropriate solutions for clients' increasingly complex needs,” said Katherine Mauzy, Principal of Financial Advisor Talent Acquisition, Edward Jones. “Financial Advisors are able to speed up cumbersome and tedious processes while creating a clearer path for more personalized, goals-based planning.”

Over two-thirds of respondents use CRM software to keep track of leads, prospects and clients.

Financial advisors are using a multitude of technological advances to enhance the way they interact with their clients. About two-thirds (66%) of respondents say they now employ client relationship management (CRM)

software to keep track of leads, prospects and clients. Another 60% also use web-based meeting tools to hold client meetings.

In this new digital age, online resources and even social media are increasingly becoming popular ways for financial advisors to interface with clients. 38% of respondents said they are increasingly using online resources to educate clients on investment offerings and strategies. Another 28% are utilizing social media to interact with clients, signaling their willingness to attract and retain a younger generation of investors who are increasingly more internet-savvy.

“As a firm, we are seeing on a daily basis how financial advisors are leveraging new tools to anticipate clients’ current and future needs, making client-centricity a reality,” said Ken Cella, Principal of the Client Strategies Group, Edward Jones. “This client centricity allows advisors to deeply understand the clients they serve and empowers clients to engage on their own terms, enabling both parties to make better decisions and to operate with more ease and speed.”

To keep up with constant changes in technology and client needs, financial advisors benefit from constant training and coaching. Eight in ten (80%) of the women advisors polled believed that ongoing training and coaching is the most important thing their firm can provide to help financial advisors grow their practice. Almost half (43%) say the biggest piece of advice for women looking to find success in the financial services industry is through mentoring and coaching.

Another 42% think that support designed for women financial advisors is essential, while 45% agree that opportunities to grow through leadership skills are important.

The survey of 107 top-earning financial advisors was conducted on the grounds of Edward Jones’ 2019 annual Women’s Conference, which took place at the firm’s St. Louis headquarters from February 21-22, 2019. [at](#)

The State of Financial Planning



@ISTOCK.COM/SKYNESHER

While Americans realize their financial planning needs improvement, few seek help from a financial professional.

By Ayo Mseka

According to the latest findings from Northwestern Mutual's 2019 Planning & Progress Study, 92% of U.S. adults aged 18+ agree that nothing makes them happier or more confident in life than when their finances are in order.

But despite this link between financial stability and emotional well-being, the majority of Americans still have room for improvement when it comes to their financial planning.

While there are some signs that behaviors are trending in the right direction, a gap continues to exist between intent and action:

- More than six out of 10 Americans (62%) say their financial planning needs improvement, which is down from the 70% who said the same in 2018
- 59% identify themselves as either disciplined or highly disciplined planners, which is an improvement over the 49% who said the same a year ago.
- Those who say they don't plan at all is down to 11% in 2019, vs. 14% in 2018.
- 30% haven't spoken to anyone about financial planning, an improvement from the 34% who said the same a year ago.
- While 64% of Americans agree there are likely to be more financial crises in the future, 20% say their retirement/financial plan has not been created to endure ups and downs in the market
- Nearly half (48%) report they don't have clarity on how much they can afford to spend now vs. how much they should be saving for later

"We see something of a classic disconnect between theory and practice in these numbers," said Tim Gerend, executive vice president, career distribution. "While there is near unanimous acknowledgement that getting one's financial house in order is good for our mental health, breakdowns occur when it comes to taking action. That said, it's worth noting that some progress has been made year-over-year. Hopefully that's a trend that not only continues but accelerates."

Advisor usage remains low

While Americans recognize that their financial planning efforts need improvement, few seek guidance from a financial professional. Only one-third (31%) of U.S. adults work with an advisor, which is flat to the proportion of the population who said the same last year.

Those who work with advisors report greater financial security, confidence and clarity than those who don't.

However, the benefits of seeking professional help come across distinctly in the data. Those who work with advisors report substantially greater financial security, confidence and clarity than those who go it alone:

U.S. Adults, Age 18+	With Financial Advisors	Without Financial Advisors
Feel very financially secure	66%	31%
Feel as if they're headed in the right direction personally	85%	71%
Are happy with their life	71%	50%
Have clarity on balancing spending now vs. saving for later	61%	50%
Set specific goals for the next 5-10 years	81%	67%
Are confident they will achieve their goals in the next 5-10 years	68%	55%
Have financial plans built to endure market ups and downs	73%	30%

“Too often, people assume that advisors are for people who have either achieved a certain level of wealth or have a complex financial situation,” said Gerend. “We remind people every day that the road to financial security starts with having a solid financial plan, and the road to a plan starts with having an advisor you trust who can give you the confidence you need to take action. The most important part is getting started, and it’s never too early to do that.”

The *2019 Planning & Progress Study* was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Northwestern Mutual and included 2,005 American adults aged 18 or older in the general population who participated in an online survey between February 20 and March 5, 2019. [at](#)

cover story

Four Under Forty

A common theme emerges in the stories of the Four Under Forty Award recipients you are about to meet. They have made it to the top by being passionate about what they do, putting their clients first, and giving back to their communities. We hope you enjoy meeting them as much as we did!

By Ayo Mseka

Daniel Thompson LUTCF, FSCP



Small-Town Producer Achieves Big-Time Success

For someone with a financial practice in a small town, Daniel Thompson, LUTCF, FSCP, is doing quite well for himself. He is currently a top multiline agent with Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company (SFB) and has sold \$50 million worth of life insurance business over the past three years. He is a six-time qualifier for the SFB Round Table, has received the SFB Winners Challenge three times and is a four-time NAIFA Quality Award recipient. In addition, he qualified in 2016, 2017 and 2018 for the SFB Century Club, which recognizes the top 100 reps in the company. He also qualified in 2016, 2017 and 2018 for the SFB Sales Leadership Council, which consists of agents who represent the top tier of production in the company.

Thompson's path to career success started 11 years ago when he became a life insurance producer for SFB. He chose the profession because his brother and father-in-law were already in the business, and their passion, dedication, and love for their career inspired him to follow suit. "I knew life insurance was a product that I could quickly become passionate about and I was right," he said. "The first life insurance appointment I went on, I knew I had made the right decision."

Since that first appointment, Thompson has gone on many more appointments, which has led to his high level of success. The reasons for this success are not hard to figure out. First, he loves his clients, loves going to work each day, and loves being surrounded by high-energy colleagues. “We feel we are changing lives and legacies in our small town,” he said. “I firmly believe I am selling one of the greatest products ever created. I love how our industry comes together for the greater good and protection of our products.”

He also loves the lifelong relationships he has been able to forge with his clients as he works with them to protect their families and loved ones. “I love that I get to become a part of the family and stick with them for 3, 13, 30 years, and so on. In the 11th year of my career, I have started working with clients who were children when I started working with their parents. It’s a great feeling to know that when I sit down with a client, I am developing a life-long relationship with them.”

Thompson’s proudest moment to date occurred when he delivered his first death claim check. It was on a policy that had been on the books many years before he started his career. The client was an elderly lady who had no idea how she was going to move forward financially. When he arrived at her house, she had already penned in where the money was needed the most. Luckily for her, the policy had been on the books a long time and had performed well, so the money was a bit more than she expected. “While we sat in her kitchen that day and cried, I understood at that point that I was not just in the business — the business was also in me.”

Another success factor for Thompson is that every day when he drops his children off at school, he tells himself to be high-energy and to be kind. “You can go a long way in this world and in this industry by being kind and having high energy,” he pointed out.

Also, he tells new agents that they can have a bad day, but they cannot have back-to-back bad days. “Get home and regroup and find out what made that day unsuccessful,” he advised. “Understand what you did that made it a bad day. Were you lazy? Were you too loud? Were you too quiet? Why didn’t you make the sell? Why didn’t you get new prospects? Were you covered up in P/C insurance? Find ways to wake up in the morning and correct whatever you did the day before, which made it a bad day. You have to learn from your mistakes and correct them *immediately.*”

**“Knowing that I can change lives through my passion and product
knowledge is truly inspiring. ”
—Daniel Thompson**

In addition, one can never be “too prepared” for a client appointment, according to Thompson. He meticulously prepares for new appointments or annual client reviews, makes it a point to develop great relationships with all of his clients, and lets them know how much he appreciates their business. “They know when they leave that life insurance is my calling and I love my job,” he said.

Participating in NAIFA’s LILI has also helped accelerate his rise to the top. “LILI helped me focus on my strengths and weaknesses and how to correct those weaknesses,” he said. “It also helped me, after five years in the business, develop a system and form good habits. In addition, LILI increased my industry knowledge and boosted my confidence.” Writing his own eulogy during the LILI class was also something that turned out to be truly life-changing. “It gives you a great perspective on what you are trying to accomplish in this life and what you want to leave behind when you leave this world,” he said.

The power of NAIFA

An additional success factor for Thompson is NAIFA, which has played a pivotal role in his life and work. In fact, NAIFA has been a major component of his day-to-day operations since his first day in the office. “I have always believed in NAIFA and what it stands for and does,” he said. “NAIFA is invaluable to our industry and the protection of our products. The relationships I have formed through NAIFA have benefited me tremendously both professionally and personally. I have always viewed volunteer work through NAIFA as a necessity to my business and the products that I sell.”

With this in mind, he made it a point early in his career to be highly engaged in NAIFA, which he joined the same time he signed his contract with Southern Farm Bureau. He has served two terms as his local association’s president and continues to support NAIFA whenever he can. “I want readers to see what NAIFA has done for my career and the advantages of being involved,” he said. “I have loved every minute of being a NAIFA member.” The best years of his career, he added, have been when he has had the opportunity to attend NAIFA’s Annual Conference. Eight years after attending one of these meetings, he still has about 6 pages of conference notes that he refers to. “I always leave the conference rejuvenated and ready to get in front of more families,” he said.

Overcoming challenges

Like all successful producers, moving up the ladder of success has not been without its share of challenges. Among the challenges Thompson has faced and overcome are using social media to interact and build client relationships and adapting to different generations' preferences for doing business. "You have to be able to set appointments and discuss products through different channels today to be successful," he said. Also, as a multiline agent, he is basically on call all the time; as a result, he has developed an excellent P/C staff to help him with the day-to-day activities.

"NAIFA is invaluable to our industry and the protection of our products."

—Daniel Thompson

In addition, he said, the balancing of time becomes more difficult as you go through life. When he joined the industry, he was single and had some spare time on his hands. But in the past 11 years, he has gotten married and now has three small children and a successful practice. "You have to learn how to balance your time," he stressed. "The more successful you are and the bigger your client base, the more time you have to spend out of the office on appointments. You have to be prepared when you walk into the office every day and you must make the most of every minute you are there."

Helping him work through some of these challenges is his wife and biggest fan, Melinda. "My wife grew up in a life insurance family and knows the time and dedication it takes to build and service a practice. Her relentless support of my career is a huge part of my success," he said.

Giving back

Away from the office, Thompson enjoys spending quality time with Melinda and their three children, Maggie Lea, Dean and Cora. And despite his full schedule, he still finds time to give back to his community. He has been involved in many organizations, including the Rotary Club, the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, and the Young Professionals of Panola. "I have given large amounts of my time with each organization and have loved every minute of it," he said.

Because of his success in life and at work, those who know Thompson well are quick to point out that he is a good and hardworking family man who is making a life in the insurance business, not just a living. After 11 years in the industry, he still loves going to the office every day and thanks God for giving him the platform to do what he loves. "I truly believe that with the products I am selling to my clients, I am forever changing the trajectory of families' financial futures for generations to come," he said. "Knowing that I can change lives through my passion and product knowledge is truly inspiring."

Zachary Gray, LACP, CRPC



Thinking Big and Working Hard Have Taken this Adviser to New Heights of Success

Those who achieve success early in life often cite several reasons for their rapid rise to the top. Among the most frequently mentioned: innovative ideas, business savvy, ethical conduct, good timing and access to great mentors. Add hard work and tenacity to this mix and you quickly understand how Zachary Gray has managed to build several successful businesses at the ripe young age of 34.

Gray attended the University of Illinois, where he majored in Agricultural Education, with a minor in Finance. He chose the financial planning industry somewhat by default, he said. Upon graduation, he jumped at an opportunity to buy the farm his cattle operation still sits on, without thinking of the implication this might have on his job search. Since teaching opportunities looked bleak at the time, his passion for education found its footing in the financial-services industry. At that time, his grandmother was going through some financial challenges and her second husband had met with an untimely death, leaving her with more issues. On his mother's side, his grandfather had begun to pay out of pocket for his step-grandmother's long-term-care expenses due to her Parkinson's disease complications. Both situations had a big impact on their retirement and greatly influenced Gray's decision to help folks nearing or in retirement.

"I am not sure if I would be here had it not been for some of the strife they have endured," he told us in a recent interview. "Early in their retirements, they were thrown curve balls, different, but none-the-less very impactful. And sadly, that impact was negative. It is my mission to make sure we do all we can to ensure our clients do not have some of those same issues. This may sound cheesy, but we want to make sure our clients' golden years are truly golden."

Gray's firm resolve to make his clients' golden years truly golden has given him the zeal and determination to build a highly successful financial-planning practice, Noble Wealth Management, an independent financial practice he operates under the Wall Street Financial Group brand, and which he shares with his mentor, Carl Zeidler. The main office is located in Bourbonnais, Illinois, and Gray operates satellite offices in Champaign, Orland Park and Bloomington. The company's primary focus is on retirement planning, which encompasses income planning for retirement, investment management to achieve those goals, tax considerations, and discussions about estate planning.

Before starting Noble Wealth, Gray worked as a financial representative for COUNTRY Financial. In addition, he owns a cattle and livestock supplement business, sits on local non-profit boards like the board of Riverside Medical Center, and gives back to local charities through his firm's initiatives.

**"We want to make sure that our clients' golden years are truly golden."
— Zachary Gray**

Over the years, working hard and helping people have paid off handsomely for Gray. Since becoming independent in 2016, he has built three offices from scratch, developed a team of six people and brought in \$36 million worth of new assets last year alone. In the last few years, he has also produced at Court of the Table level, and this year, is on track to becoming a Top of the Table producer. “His growth has been astounding,” noted Zeidler.

Building blocks for success

Gray attributes this high level of professional success to several factors, including hard work. “I think growing up in a family where hard work was valued and expected has played a big role in any accomplishments I have had personally or professionally,” he said. “Seeing my parents work hard — my mother as a nurse who went on to get her doctorate and then become a nurse practitioner, and a father, who built his own business — has had a big impact on me. That, combined with growing up on a small cattle farm where the livestock had to be tended to come rain or shine, whether it is 10 or 110 degrees, has led to a solid foundation for me to build my business ventures on. These, together with the good fortune of seeing some of that work pay off early in my life or earning a football scholarship to the University of Illinois, showed me that hard work rewards those willing to put in the effort. Though luck may have had something to do with it, I strongly believe that one’s luck improves with the hard work that backs it up. Those reasons, combined with having a clear “why,” have helped me become intentional about growth in my family, growth in my faith, and growth in business.”

Being intentional about growth is no doubt one of the reasons that prompted Gray to sign up for LILI. “I highly suggest that anyone with the opportunity to do so take part in LILI,” he said. “It was the place I met my future business partner, Carl Zeidler. When I decided to become independent, Carl helped point me in the right direction and we even share the same brand today. While we run nearly separate businesses, our goals are the same — to do the best for the client each day. If this is all LILI did for me, it would have been enough. But it was so much more. The impact it has not only on our professional lives, but also on our personal lives, is life-changing. The main lesson I took from the course is you should always strive to be the best you can be for your clients, your family, and most importantly — yourself.”

Gray also attributes a lot of his personal and professional success to NAIFA, where he has served as all of his local chapter association’s Chairs and has been a member of the local Board for almost all of the time he has been in the business. “I attribute a lot of my success to NAIFA,” he said. “The gentleman who had a COUNTRY Financial office in the town I started in told me for years to join, and when I did, it was one of the best decisions I made. It gave me a chance to meet a ton of great people in the industry and learn about many facets of the business. NAIFA has played such a big role for me.”

Mastering time

Successfully managing all of the businesses Gray owns takes more than a penchant for hard work. It also requires the ability to recognize the fact that time is our most valuable asset — something Gray learned early on when he spent time with the Strategic Coach. Today, he tries to squeeze the most out of every minute of the day and tries to “own” his mornings. “I get up early to get my day started, instead of the other way around,” he explained. “While everyone is still sleeping, I am planning my day and trouble-shooting any areas that need attention. Today, I still use coaching and accountability partners to keep me on track, and I try to schedule everything I can. Also, I have built a great team to delegate things to and to help offset my weaknesses.”

For example, his cattle business partner, Lucas, lives on the farm and best serves those clients. He operates the livestock business remotely with a warehouse manager who lives near him and the warehouse, but the general manager for the business lives in a different state. The Modern Livestock business they just launched is run in a similar fashion, with partners in the business running it from Colorado.

A word to the wise

The years Gray has spent in building successful businesses have taught him many valuable lessons — lessons that can be highly beneficial to other financial professionals. One piece of advice for new professionals? He tells his team members that he would rather have someone with a strong work ethic join the firm than someone with all the brains in the world. He is very proud of how bright his team members are, but he wants them to know that work ethic wins out every time. “It may not always be easy, and it may not always be glorious,” he added, “but the impact you can have on other families is incredible. I’ve rarely been the smartest in the room, but I try to be one of the hardest working. “

“I strongly believe that one’s luck improves with the hard work that backs it up.”

– Zachary Gray

In addition, all agents should “always be learning.” To practice what he preaches, Gray attends over 10 events per year focused on growth. “Many times, that means business growth, but many times, it can be personal growth, or it can be family related, since many of these core concepts carry into many parts of our lives. I read more now than I ever have, listen to more books on audio than I ever thought I would, and seem to spend more time on coaching/consulting year after year. The impact this has had on my life has been significant.”

And finally, agents should think big and remove preconceived thoughts of what is possible from their minds. For example, as part of his involvement in LILI, he overheard some talk about MDRT, which he had never heard about. As he looked at the MDRT membership qualifications, he was overwhelmed, and based on conversations with some colleagues, they seemed out of reach. But when someone else told him it just wouldn't happen, “that is the day I made it a goal, and though I set that goal in May, I became a qualifying member by the end of that year,” he said. In his first year as an independent, he qualified for Court of the Table, and this past year, has qualified for Top of the Table.

“The point of this story is to stop thinking small,” he added. “I have to keep this in mind myself because, a few years ago when I was struggling to get the firm off the ground as an independent financial firm, I would never have guessed that I would have over a dozen employees and we would have four thriving offices in Illinois, with clients scattered over the country.”

Kate Kilgore Cihon, FSCP



Carrying the Torch

When Kate Kilgore Cihon, FSCP, joined the financial-services industry in 2010, she had big shoes to fill. Her father, Randy Kilgore, was a big-time producer in Denver and had served as NAIFA 's President. What is more, Cihon joined the industry after spending 10 years in a profession that is as far removed from insurance as one can imagine — public relations for Victoria's Secret Beauty — the body care, makeup and fragrance arm of the world-famous lingerie brand.

Today, Cihon is filling those shoes very comfortably and performing brilliantly as vice president at Randy Kilgore and Company in Denver, Colorado. The company specializes in personal financial-planning strategies for individuals and families and robust employee-benefit packages for small business.

Growing up, Cihon never thought she would join her father in the business. After receiving two degrees from the University of Colorado at Boulder in journalism and French, the insurance industry was probably the furthest thing from her mind. Little did she know that her college curriculum and a first career in public relations would

be a great training ground for her life's calling. As a member of the President's Leadership Class at the University of Colorado, Cihon learned the importance of leadership and what it means to be a servant leader. This training was the perfect foundation for her to be a great leader and mentor, since she understands what it means to serve others.

Starting out

When Cihon joined Randy Kilgore and Company, her dad told her she needed to learn how to sell life insurance —and that's exactly what she did. Thankfully for her at the time, most of the prospects in her natural market were getting married, having babies and buying houses, which created a steady stream of highly-qualified prospects. "I was actually thankful that I did not start out in this business in my 20s," she said. After she earned her stripes and proved herself, she started working with more business owners — a niche market of her father's. In this role, the company designs compelling employee benefit packages that focus on employee retention, while keeping costs affordable.

"The ideas I get through my involvement with NAIFA cut across company and industry sectors." — Kate Kilgore Cihon

Cihon has successfully made the transition from public relations to financial services. While for some, the world of beauty may seem miles removed from that of insurance, for her, there are some similarities between the two areas. "In the financial services industry, our day to day activities are similar," she said. "While building relationships with magazine editors and fitting a product into a story, just as it is in insurance and financial planning, we listen to our clients, ask questions about their current situation and their future goals, and then build a plan that is suited to their needs."

And working with her dad does have its share of advantages. "The pro is that I get to experience him in his element," she said. "My dad loves insurance through and through. He loves working with people. And, I get to understand a whole new side of him. I get to see his passion for this business shine through and help the many clients he has served over the years."

And the cons? "We are together ... A LOT, which can be a pro as well as a con," she said. "It's sometimes difficult to separate my dad from my business partner. Sometimes I just want us to hang out as dad and daughter and not talk about business. But the business is his passion and it's hard for him to turn it off. Work/life balance doesn't really exist. In fact, I prefer to call it a work/life integration."

Achieving success

This work/life integration has turned out to be a good thing for Cihon. She is a six-time qualifier for the Million Dollar Round Table and most recently, achieved Court of the Table status. And despite her busy schedule, she still finds time to give back to several nonprofits, including Junior League, which, she said, "has not only been a great source of friends, but also a great training ground for me in terms of volunteerism and learning how to be a contributing member to my community." She has also completed five years on the Board of Directors for Newborn Hope, which provides resources for Colorado babies and families impacted by prematurity. Having been a preemie herself, this organization is near and dear to Cihon's heart.

Her recipe for doing so many things successfully is quite simple: Take a few minutes at the end of every day to set yourself up for success the next day, write down the top three things you need to do the following day, and then tackle those things first.

She also gained some critical insights on making the most of the day by reading *When*, a book by Daniel Pink, which helps you identify if you are a morning or a night person. "By knowing which category you fall into, you can identify when you will be the most efficient and most effective and which type of work you should handle during various times of the day. I know I need to handle my most important, revenue generating things in the morning — the tasks that will move business forward. I save the afternoon for case design and more thoughtful/creative work. The book really helped me identify patterns in my workday and has allowed me to maximize my day based on when I work best."

An additional success factor for Cihon is that she sees her role as a female financial professional as a differentiator instead of as someone striving to overcome obstacles in a predominantly male-dominated profession. "As a female, I'm clearly more in tune with the female members of the household," she said. "More often than not, in a household, the female is making the financial decisions and keeping the budget. By being an advocate for true family planning — whatever your family may look like — I feel as if I'm delivering value. As a female financial

professional, I can identify with a young mother who's running on little sleep and just wants to make sure her family is taken care of. And I can sympathize with a woman business owner who feels pulled in many directions because of the demands of her business, but still wants to be present for her family. Being a woman in a male-dominated industry has its challenges, but for me the positives far outweigh the negatives."

**"Our products give people peace of mind and help them plan for the unexpected, while preparing a path for greatness for the future."
— Kate Kilgore Cihon**

And what advice does she have for female financial professionals who are new to the industry? "YOU CAN DO IT," she said. "There is SO MUCH opportunity in this business and so much room for growth. I recently read that the average age of someone in our industry is 51, with 38% retiring in the next 10 years. Just 10% of financial advisors are under the age of 35. Women love working with women. We are great listeners and ask a lot of questions (even for directions, ha ha). The most critical piece of advice I could offer a young agent is be a force for good, lift others up and don't be get caught up with the competition. There are so many people who need our help, and so few of us to help them. Get out there and do it!"

NAIFA's gifts

Helping Cihon "to get out there and do it" is NAIFA, for which she has been a long-time volunteer. She is currently the president of NAIFA-Denver and has worked closely with associations across the state and the Colorado State Board as they moved through the QME transition. She serves on the NAIFA Young Advisors Team Committee and the Performance+Purpose Conference Planning Committee. She is also presenting a workshop on business succession planning, together with her father, at this year's P+P.

Cihon holds NAIFA in high esteem and describes the association as "truly career insurance. NAIFA volunteers and staff are exceptional. People sometimes ask me why I am involved in NAIFA. 'Aren't you just surrounding yourself with competitors?', they ask. But people who ask these questions do not realize that we are ONE NAIFA — we are all standing together for the greater good. The work that NAIFA does on both a national and local scale benefits our industry. And the ideas I get through my involvement with NAIFA cut across company and industry sectors."

Aside from the work that NAIFA did to secure a role for agents in the Affordable Care Act and to help vacate the DOL fiduciary rule, there are too many other NAIFA gifts to mention, she said. "In all honesty," she added, "the gifts I have received from NAIFA are the people I have met along the way. These are friends, mentors and people I know I could call on in an instant if I had an issue with a client, a case I'm designing, career advice, or a shoulder to cry on. My friends and colleagues in NAIFA are some that I hold most dear."

Members of this supporting cast include her father, as well as other NAIFA heavyweights. As she told us, "having grown up in the industry, I was blessed with the opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the greatest leaders. I remember being new to the industry and hearing Larry Lambert, NAIFA Past President, give a speech, titled, "A Noble Calling." This speech had an impact on me when I was not even in the business. I thought, "Wow! The work my father does is truly life changing. What an honor! And now, I could not be more thrilled to carry the torch."

Other NAIFA members like NAIFA Past Presidents, John Nichols, Bob Brown and Keith Gillies, and Van Mueller and Eszyflie Taylor, have also given their time, effort, and expertise to further Cihon's career and for that, she remains truly grateful.

Cihon is also grateful every day to be in the business of helping others succeed. This industry is truly a great fit for women, she said. You can design your own destiny and forge a path on your own terms. "And our products give people peace of mind and help them plan for the unexpected, while preparing a path for greatness for the future."

As for her own future, Cihon sees herself doing more of what she is doing today — but doing it better, more efficiently and more effectively in order to help more people. This business is tough, she admitted, and it takes a while to break into it. "So, learn what you want to do, where you want to be, and how you want to get there," she said.

"I truly feel like I'm on the precipice of something great," she said, "and I just hope that in the years to come, I can help more people achieve their financial goals."

Consra Rosales-Pacheco



Achieving the American Dream

Fourteen years ago, Consra Rosales-Pacheco migrated from Venezuela to the U.S. This was not an easy decision for her. She had just qualified as a CPA, was completing her master's degree in taxation, and had a thriving career. Unfortunately, the political situation in Venezuela was becoming increasingly complicated and extremely dangerous, with numerous robberies, kidnappings, and daily violence. After her husband was kidnapped three times, the family had no choice but to move to the United States in search of security and in pursuit of the American Dream.

Today, Rosales-Pacheco has achieved the American Dream. She is the Managing Partner of the Nashville General Office of New York Life Insurance Company, where she has been "for almost 7 wonderful years." She leads a team of more than 40 financial professionals and they proudly serve all markets. "It is our mission to provide financial security and peace of mind for all our clients," she said. "It is only natural that being a Latina-Woman, people from those markets gravitate toward me more than others. But I enjoy every opportunity I get to help. I am blessed to have a diverse team of advisors who focus on educating people in their communities about different strategies for wealth accumulation and preservation."

"Our wonderful team is diverse, and everyone is different," she added. "I am committed to their training and development, which are crucial to their attainment of the tools and resources they need to successfully achieve the results our clients desire. I enjoy motivating my team and helping us stay focused on our mission. I lead by example with honesty and integrity and I surround myself with passionate people who do the same."

Over the years, Pacheco's stellar accomplishments have not gone unnoticed and have earned her numerous awards and accolades. She quickly achieved New York Life's Executive Council level for both 2012 and 2013. And in 2013, she achieved the Life Career Success Award, Life Producer of the year, the Life Foundation Award, Centurion Award, New Org Agent of the Year, Life Case Rate Leader, and MDRT membership. In January 2014, she was promoted to Partner, achieving the Gathering of Eagles Award and View from the Top in 2014 and 2015. She was also named Partner of the Year for the South-Central Zone in 2015.

Moving to America

While moving to the U.S. was a difficult decision for Pacheco, choosing a career in financial services was a no-brainer. She had been involved in finance all her life. Both of her parents were CPAs, and from a very young age, she was exposed to the financial-services world. The deciding factor, however, was recognizing the need for financial-services education in communities, combined with the flexibility the career offers and the opportunity to grow professionally.

As she settled in her new country, Pacheco faced many obstacles. She already had to leave behind her sisters

and her mother, who was ill at the time. “It was difficult,” she said. “But I knew that I had to find a way to escape the constant turmoil and risk that were part of everyday life in Venezuela in order to seize new opportunities for my family.” Coming to a new country, not knowing anybody, not speaking any English, and not having permission to work in spite of her education, were additional obstacles she had to face.

“To attain your vision, evaluate your current reality and determine what is missing to help get you there. Then build a plan to achieve it and align your vision with your mindset.”

– Consra Rosales-Pacheco

But these circumstances did not dampen her enthusiasm or weaken her resolve. She began studying, and while she was expecting her first child, spent every available moment learning English. And then, “in 2007, God blessed us with our permanent residency when we won the visa lottery, which allowed me to work,” she said.

Armed with her work permit, Pacheco began to restart her career and build a name for herself in the U.S. She got an opportunity to get back into accounting, working as a bookkeeper for a non-profit organization in Philadelphia. “This was the beginning of a long and amazing journey of nonprofit involvement, fueling my desire to help others in the community,” she said.

Promotions quickly followed and she soon joined the ranks of management. A couple of years later, she challenged herself again and accepted a position as the senior auditor for the Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance, now known as CareerSource Tampa Bay, where she also got to work helping the community.

While she continued to excel and grow, she still yearned for a position where she could leverage her knowledge and skills to directly help people with their finances. This yearning to do more for others is what took her to New York Life in 2012. “I started as a financial services professional in the Orlando general office, and quickly fell in love with the career,” she said. “What I love the most about the industry is the opportunity to change generations by helping one client at a time, as well as hire, train and develop new talent,” she added. “I have enjoyed watching many advisors grow in this wonderful career and create a significant impact on their communities and their families.”

Pacheco got the opportunity to witness this impact firsthand when she delivered her first death benefit check to a family. “I was fortunate to have sat with that family a few months before, and we had built a plan to protect them and build wealth for their future. When the husband unexpectedly passed away, it was a shock, but I felt tremendous satisfaction and pride knowing that the family was going to be financially OK and that they would be able to grieve without experiencing financial anxiety. They were able to keep their house and afford their living expenses and the children still had the chance to get the higher education they had planned for. The moment the widow gave me a strong heartfelt hug of gratitude with tears running down her face is something I will never forget,” she said.

This experience solidified Pacheco’s love for her career, and this love, she believes, is a significant contributor to her high level of professional success. “I love what I do and more importantly, I believe in what I do with all my heart,” she said. “I have never felt that I “have to go to work”; in fact, I feel that I “get to go help others” every day. The accolades and awards I have received are simply the result of doing my work with love and passion. I truly understand that we have a very significant mission and responsibility to help others in this business. I don’t take that lightly and it’s a constant motivator for me.”

The support system from her family at home and at New York Life is another big reason for her success and growth. “I believe if you are passionate and determined, this opportunity is life changing and I am proof of that.”

“With NAIFA, you are surrounded by like-minded people who can help further your professional development. So why wouldn’t you want to join NAIFA?”

– Consra Rosales-Pacheco

Also contributing to her professional growth is NAIFA, which, she said, represents, serves and advocates for insurance and financial advisors and helps financial professionals protect and grow their business while promoting ethical conduct. “With NAIFA you are surrounded with like-minded people that can help further your professional development. So why wouldn’t you want to join NAIFA? The organization has kept me informed about what is happening and has helped me understand the issues that are relevant to our industry. It has

provided me with the facts and recommendations that have allowed me to take an active interest in advocacy to make a difference in our industry. I encourage everyone to get involved.”

Away from the office

Pacheco’s passion for helping others goes well beyond her career at New York Life. She is a great believer in giving back to the community. “I have been associated one way or another with giving back to the community for a very long time, so it really is second nature for me,” she said. “As a child I watched my mother do so much for others, and that was her legacy for us. I believe that eventually everyone will have to deal with the consequences of their behaviors or actions. I choose to plant good seeds since I believe that you will reap what you sow.”

Over the years, she has worked with several organizations, including ELLA (Entrepreneur Latina Leaders of America), which will soon become a nonprofit organization. “I am very privileged to have the opportunity to mentor and serve Latina disadvantaged women entrepreneurs to help them advance in business or start a business,” she said.

In addition, she has served on the Board of Directors for the Apopka Family Center, now known as the Apopka Family Health Center, which has evolved from providing local medical and dental care in rural Apopka, Florida, to providing care for approximately 70,000 Floridians each year.

Pacheco is also very family-oriented and considers her late mother her greatest influence. “She was a single mom with 3 girls to look after,” she said. “She was very determined, a very hard worker and the kindest person I’ve known. She was a CPA and while holding management positions in the equivalent of the attorney general’s office of Venezuela, she also managed to attain her law degree. Although she worked a lot, she always managed to be present for all our activities. She always gave back without hesitation, even when we were tight financially and set that example of consistency and fortitude for us.” Pacheco was blessed beyond belief when she was able to bring her to the U.S. to live with them and enjoy the last years of her life.

She also considers herself blessed to have her husband, Daniel, and their two children, Valeska and Samuel, in her life. “My family is a huge motivator for me,” she said. “My husband works with me; so, we get to spend time together in and away from the business. Our kids are very active, and we enjoy them and their activities. My family keeps me grounded, focused and always looking forward to our next adventure!” She also loves to dance and enjoys traveling with her family and experiencing different cultures.

Words to live by

In the 14 years since Pacheco migrated to the U.S., she has overcome obstacles others would have found insurmountable. Throughout it all, she has stayed upbeat and hopeful, always on the lookout for ways to overcome the next challenge and make the most of the next opportunity.

With this can-do attitude, we were not surprised at the answers she gave us when asked to share a few “take-aways” for our readers. This is what she said:

- *Don’t place limitations on yourself.* Remember this quote from Henry Ford: “Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t, either way you will be right.” Your mindset and your attitude will determine your success or failure.
- *Find out what your vision is.* To attain it, evaluate your current reality and determine what is missing to help get you there. Then build a plan to achieve it and align your vision with your mindset. If you see it, you can be it!
- *Finally, dream big dreams, enjoy life, love what you do professionally and always remember that with hard work and through God, the sky is the limit.* **at**



OLIVIER LE MOAL/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

How to Rev Up Your Sales

If business is slow right now, don't despair. These great ideas will help speed things up and soon put you back on the fast track to more sales.

By D. Scott Brennan, Michael Begley, CLTC, CLU, and Robert Arzt, CLU, ChFC, LLIF

Unmet goals. Lackluster production. Slipping sales.

If the above sounds familiar, why not implement some of the ideas featured in this article? Offered by some of the best minds in the business, they might be just what you need to rev up your sales and make 2019 your best year yet.

From D. Scott Brennan

Take your heart and brain to the gym. A career in sales is always challenging, particularly when you're a young advisor. In my early years selling life insurance, I was so grateful to live and work with a positive attitude, and it remains the most essential element of my business approach today. Kindness and gratitude are contagious, and an optimistic approach will lead to new prospects. You will undoubtedly face challenges; however, with preparation and persistence, you'll find reasons to keep going.

Be upbeat. The onset of nerves when cold calling never goes away, but channeling worry into courage can reduce your fear of rejection from clients and prospects. Rather than agonizing over a potential denial, focus on the positive reason you chose to do this work every day. We work in a rewarding profession helping clients reach beneficial outcomes and shifting to this mindset will allow you to approach each sale with fervor.

Before I pick up the phone, I think of the checks I've been able to deliver to grieving families, which helped alleviate their financial worries at a difficult time. Approach prospects with a missionary zeal. Be steadfast in your pursuit to help others, because only you know the value you can offer. Remember that there is an element of courage in every sale.

Be steadfast in your pursuit to help others, because only you know the value you can offer.

Creative sales ideas always help you differentiate yourself from the competition. For example, I like to send prospects a dollar bill in the mail just to pique their curiosity. When they call me, curious as to why I mailed them a dollar bill, I tell them they're tax-free dollars, and I have many more just like them if they're interested in talking to me. Unorthodox approaches like these are memorable and often increase the likelihood of getting a response, which serves as your entry to a conversation and a potential sale.

Be prepared. Young advisors need a sales tract. Ad-libs are for amateurs, and improvisation can prevent you from making your best first impression. The most successful salespeople start every meeting with a strategy of what they want to communicate and how they want to do so, which makes their messaging more effective.

At the start of each meeting, ask every client two questions: "How are you doing on time?" And, "What would you like to cover so that when you leave here, you will say 'That was a good meeting.'"

One caveat, however, is to not enter sales conversations with a memorized mental script. Recitation can appear robotic, and genuine conversations are essential to forming meaningful relationships. Crafting informal talking points beforehand will help you feel confident, which can be difficult to achieve in the first few years of your career. Prospects will notice your poise and choose an advisor who demonstrates that he or she is self-assured and knowledgeable.

Be grateful. One of the best ways to stay connected is to be present where your feet are. When heading to a client meeting, leave your phone in the car and make sure you have a song in your heart. Another way to stand out and stay grateful is by writing handwritten notes. Every Monday morning, I write encouraging notes to friends and acquaintances who are sick.

A handwritten note can be powerful in lifting spirits and serves as a weekly reminder for me to stay grounded. With an upbeat and fearless attitude, along with a well-prepared, unique sales approach, a young advisor will lay the groundwork for a rewarding and sustainable career, as well as a great life. [at](#)



D. Scott Brennan has been an MDRT member for 36 years and served as MDRT's 2013 President. Brennan has multiple COT and TOT qualifications and is an MDRT Foundation Legion of Honor Excalibur Knight. He is also the 75th recipient of the John Newton Russell Memorial Award.

From Michael J. Begley, CLTC, CLU

This simple tweak may help your clients close a critical coverage gap. As financial professionals, you build your livelihood by helping people achieve their financial goals, whether that means preparing them for retirement, college expenses or a variety of other objectives.

Clients need income to meet those goals; so, you help protect that income in several ways. For example, you advise clients to prepare for an unexpected job loss by building up savings and helping ensure they have enough liquid assets to weather the storm until they can find another job. Similarly, you help clients figure out how much life insurance they need to protect loved ones from the income loss that would follow their death.

When you ask a client what their most valuable asset is, a home is probably their answer more often than not. But for many clients, it's simply not true. Without adjusting for income increases, a 30-year-old client making \$50,000 annually would earn \$1.75 million by age 65. How many 30-year-old clients own \$1.75 million homes?

We insure our homes. But why do so few of us insure our ability to earn an income if we are to become sick or disabled? The good news is that as financial professionals, you're uniquely positioned to address this problem and all it takes is a simple tweak to the conversations you're already having.

When you're helping clients understand the appropriate type and amount of life insurance protection, you can also help them understand that there's a complementary product designed to meet a parallel need: disability income (DI) insurance.

DI insurance not only helps meet the essential needs, it can also help prevent cuts to the other expenses – critical to clients' financial futures.

If life insurance protects loved ones from the income loss that follows an untimely death, DI insurance serves as protection against the loss of income that follows an untimely illness or accident.

Once an illness leads to lost income, clients still have to put a roof over their family's heads and food on the table. But what happens to life insurance premiums or to funds intended for retirement or college expenses? Often, those payments intended to secure a financial future become seen as non-essential expenses and get cut.

DI insurance not only helps meet the essential needs, it can also help prevent cuts to the other expenses that you know are critical to clients' financial futures. Without this protection, a client's entire financial plan is more likely to be compromised.

By helping your clients understand DI insurance's ability to meet these needs, you can also help them see it as an essential component of their financial plans. It not only complements and shores up the other types of protection they're already purchasing, it also helps them continue working toward their goals.

As financial professionals, your work helps individuals support their loved ones and secure their financial futures. To meet those goals, it is important to help clients understand the risks they don't know they have. One important part of meeting that challenge is helping them understand that protecting the income that drives their entire financial plan may require more than one approach and more than one type of insurance. [at](#)



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From Bob Arzt, CLU, ChFC, LLIF

Want to sell more? Stop selling! Start listening! Product-focused salespeople think they have a product solution they want to sell, and their sales process with a prospect usually supports that solution. Their questions are designed to elicit the responses to support the identified product sale.

And their questions are often viewed as manipulative. After all, most consumers know the questions that are more geared to making a sale than those designed to understanding them and their financial goals.

On the other hand, customer-focused advisors seek to understand their prospects as unique individuals who have needs, wants, and goals. Customer-focused advisors may or may not be able to satisfy all of their prospects' objectives and aren't afraid to say so.

Great customer-focused advisors make a difference in their clients' lives. How do they do this? It's more about the questions they ask and their ability to connect with prospects and clients.

Active listening is a skill that is well worth pursuing.

Customer-focused advisors are also great listeners whereas product focused advisors are just waiting for the prospect to stop talking so that they can tee up the next leading question. In my coaching practice, we advise advisors to listen 80% of the time and only talk 20% of the time during the all-important data gathering session. Salespeople in my courses tell me that they thought they were great listeners until they attempted to institute this 80/20 rule. Active listening is a skill that is well worth pursuing.

A case in point. Jed is a coaching client who wanted to become a trusted advisor to his clients. He told me he used a multiple-interview approach. I asked him how he prepared for his client interviews. He said he didn't prepare in advance and that he used a standard fact-finder to gather the appropriate information.

I asked Jed to select a recently completed fact-finder for a client to review with me. He scored high on getting all of the factual information about the prospect. However, he failed miserably at getting the answers that spoke to the core of who the prospect was and what was important to the prospect and his family.

Here are some questions that Jed could not answer about his prospect:

- What was getting in the way of achieving his most important financial goals?
- What would the consequences be if his most important financial goals were not met?
- What benefits or rewards would he enjoy if his financial goals were met?
- What does his ideal life look like?
- In what ways do he and his spouse differ on financial matters and financial goals?
- What is one dream goal that if achieved would make all the difference in the world to him and his family?

In addition to answering these questions, make sure you address the next set of questions when preparing for interviews with your prospects:

- What is unique about your prospects?
- What questions can you ask that would be meaningful to them?
- What follow-up questions can you ask?

Also, during the data-gathering interview, make sure you:

- Focus on the prospect and give him 100% of your undivided attention.
- Make him feel comfortable and adapt your style to his.
- Get him talking about himself and what's important to him.
- Listen to what he says and how he feels.
- Maintain eye contact with him.
- Take notes. [at](#)



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In the Spotlight This Year: Fiduciary Duty and Best Interest Proposals

The SEC and several states are focusing on standard-of-care issues.

By Gary Sanders

Continuing a trend that began in 2017, standard-of-care issues remain a hot topic on both the federal and state levels. These issues revolve around the duties, obligations and responsibilities that registered representatives of broker-dealers (RRs), investment adviser representatives (IARs), insurance producers and other financial professionals owe to their clients.

The biggest “headline grabber” was at the federal level, when, on June 5, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) finalized Regulation Best Interest (Reg BI), which significantly enhances the standard of care that broker-dealers and their registered representatives owe to their clients.

Reg BI will require broker-dealers and their reps, among other things, to (1) act in the best interest of the client at the time a recommendation is made and (2) address conflicts of interest by establishing policies and procedures designed to identify and disclose, mitigate or eliminate any such conflicts.

The SEC also finalized new disclosure requirements for firms and their representatives. The Form CRS disclosure is intended to serve as a short (two- to four-page) summary of the client/firm/advisor relationship and requires disclosure of “all material facts relating to the scope and terms of the relationship with the retail customer.”

The required disclosures include:

- (i) The nature of the relationship between the firm and the client
- (ii) The material fees and costs that apply to transactions, holdings, and accounts.
- (iii) How firms and their representatives are paid.
- (iv) The type and scope of services provided to the retail customer, including any material limitations on the securities that may be recommended to the customer.

The rules also contain title restrictions that will limit the ability of RRs to use the words “advisor” or “adviser” in the rep’s title or name unless he or she is also an IAR. RRs will, however, continue to be able to use these words in connection with their firm’s name or to indicate their membership in NAIFA.

These actions by the SEC follow the adoption in 2016, and subsequent invalidation by the federal courts in 2017, of a restrictive Department of Labor fiduciary duty rule that would have expanded the circumstances under which a person would be considered a fiduciary in connection with retirement accounts and that would have adversely impacted the ability of mid-market consumers to access financial products and professional advice and service.

The SEC has finalized new disclosure requirements for firms and their representatives.

While NAIFA remains concerned about certain aspects of the new SEC rules, overall, the new rules appear to present a workable approach that will significantly raise the standard of care that broker-dealers and their reps owe to their clients while also preserving the different business and compensation models by which consumers access products, advice and service.

States propose fiduciary duty standard of care

While the SEC activity has received the most attention, state lawmakers and regulators have made it increasingly clear that they are not willing to stay on the sidelines.

Despite concerns raised by NAIFA and others that the adoption of a “patchwork quilt” of differing and possibly conflicting state and federal requirements would prove to be harmful and more costly to consumers, several states are considering legislation or regulations that would impose a fiduciary duty on firms and advisors.

Massachusetts is the latest state to jump into the field, joining Nevada and New Jersey in proposing a fiduciary duty standard of care for RRs, IARs and their firms. Earlier in the year, the Maryland legislature considered a similar fiduciary proposal that would have also included insurance producers within its scope. But NAIFA-Maryland and its industry colleagues were successful in educating lawmakers about the adverse impact the bill would have on smaller investors, and the bill was killed in committee.

NAIC standard-of-care activity

Not one to be left out, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners is drafting revisions to its Suitability in Annuity Transactions Model Regulation that would include an enhanced standard of care requiring insurers and producers to place the consumer's interest ahead of the insurer's/producer's interests when recommending annuity products. NAIFA has been heavily involved in the NAIC's deliberations on these issues, and our state chapters have been key players in fighting these harmful proposals in the various states. [at](#)

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Obeying the Letter and Spirit of Laws and Regulations Governing My Profession

In all professional activities, seek opportunities to express and reflect the values of NAIFA.

By Frank C. Bearden, Ph.D., CLU, ChFC

For this issue of *Advisor Today*, we will provide some reflection upon the seventh obligation from the NAIFA Code of Ethics: To conduct all business dealings in a manner that would reflect favorably on NAIFA and my profession.

Favorable actions

This obligation is a summary statement concerning all of our actions related to practice, encouraging us to remember that seemingly incidental actions may not be taken as incidental by others. Favorable actions include desirable behaviors like courtesy, consideration, good listening skills, and reflecting interest in the concerns of others. Here are a few of examples that illustrate these points.

When a client is excited over the recent success of a daughter or son in school, what should we do? Initially we should indicate an active interest in the nature of the daughter or son's success. We might ask what the son or daughter did to have this achievement. Was a great deal of sacrifice involved?

But prominent in what we might say or do should be clear indicators of our interest in the client's child and this bright spot in his or her life. If we speak of our own children and their academic successes, we should let the client have the limelight and reflect happiness over the achievements of their child first.

When a client is expressing his or her desires regarding the planned inheritance of family members, we should wait until the client completes his or her thoughts before adding our thoughts. We should avoid unintended expressions of rudeness that come from interrupting someone who has not finished speaking to us.

On these occasions, clients can sense our lack of interest in their comments, and we may be providing an inappropriate comment in response as we have not heard the completion of the client's thoughts.

We can earn professional respect by first providing respect to our clients in being good listeners. They will be more impressed by our desire to know what their concerns are than by our ability to "speak over" them in stating what we think.

We can earn professional respect by first providing respect to our clients by being good listeners.

We should meet the time commitments we make for follow-up appointments and provide all information we promise to provide. As stated in the third obligation, we should honestly and thoroughly discuss all points in any calculations and other information we provide — both information that is favorable and that which is not favorable.

Our dress should be that of a professional, indicating that the time we spend with a client is valued. When we communicate respect for our time with a client, we are likely to gain respect for our time, as well. We should reflect the attitude that we are proud of the services we perform for our clients.

In all activities of our professional life, we should seek opportunities to express and reflect the benefits and values of NAIFA. We should portray affiliation not only as a membership of which we are proud, but also one that improves the service we can provide to clients.

Each of these professional considerations should be reflected when we interact with other professionals, as well as with our clients. When we make this kind of behavior a natural part of conducting our business, we cast a favorable impression of NAIFA and our profession. [at](#)

Beyond Physicians



@ISTOCK.COM/EMIRMEMEDOVSKI

Tap into other disability income insurance markets you might be overlooking.

By Dana Campion, RHU

Skim the surface of prospects for disability income (DI) insurance and you'll find physicians — lots of them. Makes sense, right? They're high earners with specialized skills that don't easily translate into other occupations. They have also invested a great deal of money and time on their training. As a result, their professional culture values income protection.

The sales numbers back it up. In 2016, nearly one-third of new individual DI premium dollars came from doctors and surgeons, a Milliman survey showed.¹

Skim the surface and you'll find these sales. You'll also find plenty of competition from other financial professionals, not to mention gatekeepers like office managers, schedulers and medical school or residency administrators. Pharmaceutical and medical device reps are there, too, competing for physician face time.

Dive deeper, however, and you can find high-earning professionals in other markets, including some who also wear white coats.

Executives

Second only to physicians, executives made up almost 20% of new individual DI premium in 2016, the Milliman survey shows. While group long-term disability plans can provide adequate coverage for their employees, the maximum monthly benefit can leave executives with a proportionally larger income gap. Also, the group plan likely does not make up for variable compensation, including bonuses.

Selling DI insurance to one executive can lead to multi-life selling opportunities. They tend to be part of executive teams, which means you can sell to the group and possibly offer them a discount. And as the decision makers for their companies, they can lead you to larger multi-life cases with executive carve-outs and underwriting on a Guaranteed Standard Issue basis.

Accountants and attorneys

Together, attorneys and accountants made up more than 8% of new individual DI premium in 2016, according to the Milliman survey. Not only do these markets represent a significant portion of existing DI business, the overall

populations of accountants and attorneys also are poised to grow, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers show. With projected increases of 10%² and 8%³ respectively, the number of accountants and attorneys is expected to outpace the average growth of all occupations. Attorney offices are great candidates for multi-life opportunities too.

Selling DI insurance to one executive can lead to multi-life selling opportunities.

Accountants and attorneys also represent networking and referral opportunities because they are centers of influence in their clients' lives. If they see the value in the DI coverage you're selling, their clients might, too.

Other white coat professionals

Coupled with the potential for high earnings, the burden of student loans can be a powerful motivator in convincing someone to buy DI coverage. Like their counterparts in medicine, white coat professionals such as pharmacists, veterinarians, optometrists and dental specialties typically stand to lose more than others when disabilities sideline them from earning a paycheck.

Carving out your own markets

While others continue to skim the surface, you can identify other niche markets and craft custom marketing plans to reach professionals in those fields. Some of the most helpful tools are free. The Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics website offers handbooks on hundreds of occupations detailing their pay, work environment, educational requirements and growth projections. You can see if the field is growing or shrinking.

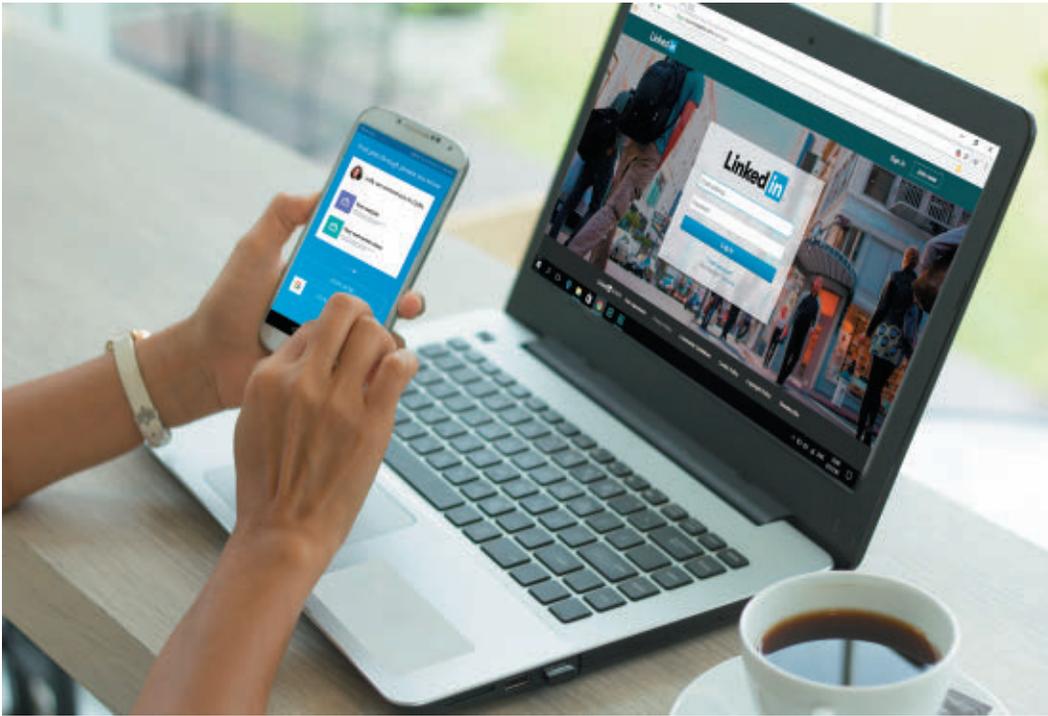
Once you zero in on an occupation, free referral databases like *ReferenceUSA* can help you find people performing that job in your area. If you don't talk to them about income protection, who will? [at](#)

Dana Campion, RHU, is a regional sales director for disability income insurance with Ohio National Financial Services. He can be reached at dana_campion@ohionational.com, [linkedin.com/in/dana-campion](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dana-campion) or 206.496.3403. For more information, please see ohionational.com.

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Using LinkedIn to Attract and Retain Clients



13_PHUNKOD/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Follow the steps outlined in this article and LinkedIn will soon be one of your top marketing tools.

By Patrick Brewer, CPA, CFA

LinkedIn is the perfect social media platform for financial advisors. It's a professional network where users are already in a business-connection mindset. You can filter users by years of experience, company, role and more, making it easy to target the clients you want. And the best part is, it's free.

Why should financial advisors give LinkedIn another chance right now?

Advisors used to flock to Facebook to reach new prospects, but the percentage of advisors relying on Facebook for initial contact has been dropping. There are two reasons for that: privacy, data security flaws, and the skyrocketing cost of reaching users. To make the platform more profitable, Facebook made reaching new customers a "pay-to-play" game. Since early 2018, users couldn't grow their audience on the business pages unless they were willing to pay for "sponsored" content.

We will probably see this trend across other social media platforms. For example, Instagram has already started to drop its organic reach in favor of ads, and YouTube will likely follow suit. Which brings us back to LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has not moved to the "pay-to-play" model yet. But that might be a strategic move on its part. If it drives thousands of users to its service now, then the eventual shift to "pay to play" will be more profitable. So, this window of opportunity might not remain open for long.

But at the moment, LinkedIn's organic reach is remarkable. Here's how you can take advantage of it as a financial professional.

Step 1: Connect. Send connection requests to 500 target clients — people who appear to be a perfect fit for your business. Use LinkedIn's advanced search to narrow down your results: senior executives, doctors, small-business owners, etc. After they accept your request, do not spam them with messages trying to arrange a call. Instead, follow the next step.

Step 2: Start Your Awareness Campaign. About 30-40% of your initial requests will likely be accepted. That's 150-200 new connections. After you see this jump in your audience numbers, start a heavy awareness campaign. Create video content and post it to the newsfeed. You don't have to invest thousands of dollars on a professional camera or post-production. Your iPhone and a simple tripod will do. Share stories and experiences, educate your audience and highlight your philosophy that will resonate with your target client.

If you're not using LinkedIn to find new clients and nurture existing relationships, you're missing an opportunity that is free today.

Focus on the outcomes your target clients desire (where do they want to be in 5, 10, 20 years? as well as on addressing things they want to avoid such as tax pitfalls, late retirement, etc.) For example, if I were targeting senior executives, I might do an informational video on how to design their lifestyle to retire before the age of 55.

Step 3: Keep Their Attention. Continue producing short and interesting videos for 90 days. Aim for two or three videos a week.

On day 91, start sending personal messages to each of your target client connections and offer them a “freebie.” Ideally, this should be something that will make them curious about what a financial advisor does and how working with you could benefit them. Your aim is to shift them from being a consumer of your video content to someone who thinks of all the ways you could help them reach their financial goals.

If you're not currently using LinkedIn to build intimacy and relevance with ideal prospects and nurture relationships with existing clients, you're missing a great opportunity that happens to be free today.

Get busy and start creating relevant content for your ideal prospects. Then, start conversations and turn them into clients. If you start implementing this strategy now, you can capitalize on LinkedIn's reach before it's gone for good. [at](#)

Patrick Brewer, CPA, CFA, is the Founder and a Partner at SurePath Wealth, co-founder of Brewer Consulting, and host of “The Model FA” podcast. Connect with him on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Optimizing the Big Blue Introduction Machine



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Use these steps to learn how to get more introductions from LinkedIn.

Bill Cates, CSP, CPAE

While social media platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter can be good tools for creating awareness and word of mouth, the best social media platform for creating introductions is LinkedIn.

A few words to the wise

LinkedIn is merely a link in the chain (pardon the pun) of what it takes to build a thriving business through referrals and personal introductions. Before I get into the checklist of actions you can take to use LinkedIn as an ongoing source of new clients through introductions, we need to cover a few basic principles for you to keep in mind.

Be Super Referable. Before asking someone for referrals or introductions, you want to ensure that you are referable. One barometer of your being referable is that you are receiving unsolicited referrals. Another way to know if you're referable is by conducting *Value Discussions*. The *Value Discussion* is the first and most important step in our VIPS Method™ for asking for referrals without pushing or begging.

One barometer of your being referable is that you are receiving unsolicited referrals.

At a review meeting, it would sound something like this: *Laura, let's put the market aside. Let's put the economy aside and talk about something we CAN control — namely — our communication and overall working relationship. First off, is there anything not working for you that I should know about? Anyone drop the ball at any point in time (After that discuss — if anything ...)? Tell me what is working for you. How do we continue to earn your loyalty?*

Leverage Borrowed Trust. A key ingredient in this process is the trust and respect that exist between the referral source and the new prospect. The higher in regard the prospect holds the referral source, the more likely the recommendation or introduction will pique the interest of the prospect and lead to an exploration of your value.

At one of our most recent Referral Champions Boot Camps, one of the attendees said, “When I’m discussing introductions with my clients, I always suggest: ‘Let’s see if we can come up with one or two people who would take my call just because you asked them to.’” This attendee is clearly going for high-trust relationships. Are you?

Turn a Client’s Willingness to Refer into a Solid Introduction. Referrals are just about worthless if you haven’t been introduced to the new prospect. Without a strong introduction, the connection is never made. And by introduction, I don’t mean your prospect telling their colleague, “George. Bill is going to call you.” I mean an electronic handshake where your referral source jointly emails or texts you and their colleague. A great email or text introduction always has a little “insistence” built in. It can go something like this: *George. I strongly urge you to take Bill’s call for a meeting with him if it makes sense. It will be worth your time.*

Getting a solid introduction is a collaborative process with your referral source. Make sure that whatever you do, all parties are feeling comfortable and your referral source at least piques the interest of the prospect enough to take your call or respond to your email message.

The LinkedIn referral optimizer checklist

Here are a few things that will help you use LinkedIn as an effective introduction tool:

1. *Your profile should be complete and up to date.* In the Summary or Experience section, talk about your WHY. Why are you excited about your business, the benefits you bring, and the company for which you work? People will be more willing to work with you if you connect with them on two levels at the same time. They must connect with your value and believe that you have the experience and knowledge to help them. And they must connect with you as a person. Sharing your *client-focused why* will help you connect on the emotional level that’s so important. People considering doing business with you need to think they can trust you.
2. *Make your Professional Headline benefit-oriented.* Forget your title. Put that in the Experience section. Put your simple branding statement here, but make sure you speak about tangible benefits. This is your branding statement. You do have one, don’t you? Here’s an example: *Helping my clients stay clear and confident about their financial future.*
3. *Connect with all of your clients and centers of influence.* Connect with any clients with whom you have a growing relationship, for instance, you’ve met or spoken a few times and connected well with them. Make your invitation personal — not the standard LinkedIn template. If you just spoke with a prospect on the phone, this makes for a pretty nice connection. Now you can invite them to connect with you on LinkedIn. You can say something like this: *George. I enjoyed our conversation this morning. Let’s get connected on LinkedIn. I often post short articles, news, and ideas I think you’ll find valuable.*
4. *Post valuable information to your LinkedIn feed at least once per week.* This should be *compliance friendly*, of course. Make sure your posts bring real value to the reader and they are not just promotional.
5. *Use your clients’ first-level connections for possible introductions.* Start with the people who have endorsed or recommended them. Check out their profiles. As a financial advisor, you can’t accept LinkedIn recommendations or endorsements, but your clients can and do. These are usually good, possibly high-trust relationships. Of course, you want to do searches on LinkedIn for different terms that match the criteria of your ideal clients. Then look and see what first-level connections your clients have with the search results.
6. *Once you identify possible introductions from clients and centers of influence to people on their profile, take your request off line.* While you can use LinkedIn to ask for the introduction, you’ll be more effective by asking either in person or over the phone. Don’t make the mistake of hiding behind the technology. Using email and LinkedIn messages will significantly reduce the number of your results. Once you see the connections, give your clients a call or wait until you meet with them to suggest the introductions.
7. *When you begin to suggest possible introductions to your clients and COIs, start by acknowledging the fact you are connected on LinkedIn.* Ask them if they are using LinkedIn for their business. Asking them about their experience in using LinkedIn will reduce the feeling that you’re stalking your clients. The truth is that anyone who puts a profile up on LinkedIn understands that others may be looking at their connections. It’s the whole point of LinkedIn. So, you don’t ever need to feel like you’re stalking your clients.
8. *Once your client or COI has agreed to introduce you to one or more people, formalize the introduction.* Discuss the method, the message, and the time frame. This is often where the process breaks down for some. You can say something like this: *Laura. I suspect that George would much prefer to hear from you before he hears from me. Let’s craft an approach that will feel comfortable for the two of you and, hopefully, pique his interest in hearing from me.*

LinkedIn was built for introductions. More and more advisors are using it to create connections, which turn into introductions, which turn into new clients. Stop dabbling with LinkedIn and make a commitment to make it work for you. [at](#)

Bill Cates works with financial professionals to increase sales by attracting high-quality clients through a steady and predictable flow of referrals. To learn more, go to www.ReferralCoach.com or email him at BillCates@ReferralCoach.com.

10 Easy Ideas for Getting Social Media Content



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Try some of these ideas and you will never run out of content for your social media marketing.

By Tiffany Markarian

Content marketing is key. The challenge is finding the time and good ideas to come up with compliance-approved material. Below are 10 easy ways to keep your social media pipeline full. This will prevent you from going weeks or months without posting any updates.

1. **Repurpose past posts.** Many financial professionals think you can only post the same content once. But in reality, social media posts should be used multiple times to get traction. If you previously shared an article, post it again a few weeks later with a different title or image. Social media influencers use this strategy often to ensure that their followers never miss a post.
2. **Make use of special interest days.** Special interest days provide unique social media ideas. **National Day Calendar** (www.nationaldaycalendar.com) is an online website that provides a full list of unconventional appreciation days on their “Calendar At-A-Glance” tab. Examples include:
 - March 13th — K9 Veteran Appreciation Day
 - June 1st — National Cancer Survivors’ Day
3. **Build a social media calendar.** When you create your annual business plan, make sure you build a Social Media Calendar. You can build a template for the next 12 months based on events you know will be happening or you can choose a different financial theme each month. Once your Social Media Calendar is built, you can research compliance-approved content that is in line with each theme in advance. This takes the pressure off in planning content.
4. **Pre-schedule your posts.** Once you have your Social Media Calendar built, you don’t have to create content every day. Facebook allows you to pre-schedule posts on your company page up to 6 months in advance.
5. **Recycle old PowerPoints.** If you host or attend seminars, repurpose the compliance-approved presentations for content ideas. There are probably 3 to 5 different strategies featured in each presentation, which could be ideas for content.

6. **Share content as a graphic.** Social media posts that use pictures have the highest engagement. There are several apps that can help add visual effects to your content:
 - Word Swag.** This allows you to add a quote or text to an image. There are premium features that also allow you to add your logo. You can share a post this week and share it again later, using a different image.
 - BrainyQuote.**[®] This allows you to share a famous quote as a graphic.
 - Canva.** This enables you to create content or posts quickly and easily, even if you have little to no graphic design skills.
7. **Make the most of industry awareness months.** There are several months dedicated to celebrating financial and insurance concepts. These include Disability Insurance Awareness Month in May, Life Insurance Awareness Month in September and Long-Term Care Awareness Month in November. Each of these opportunities can be turned into multiple content posts per month for the respective topic.
8. **Monitor your competitors.** Let's face it. Some of your competitors are great at social media. You don't need to follow the competition but monitor what they are doing. They may have stumbled on great sources for compliance-approved content that you can use as well.
9. **Follow the influencers your clients follow.** Follow the top social media influencers for each target market you work in. You may be able to submit their articles for compliance approval and reshare their content.
10. **Display your company's culture.** Clients love to see photos of you in the community or in the office. Examples include:
 - Attending professional development events
 - Volunteering for a charity
 - Celebrating anniversaries/employee birthdays
 - New team members hired

The 10 strategies described in this article will help you drive more engagement from your followers and showcase the resources and value that make you and your team distinct. [at](#)

Tiffany Markarian has been helping financial advisors and professionals advance their business and marketing momentum since 1995. She is a frequent author for industry journals and a keynote speaker for professional associations, firms and broker/dealers. She can be reached at tiffany@advantusmarketing.com or Twitter @AdvantusMktg.

Don't Wait for the Perfect Marketing Plan!



@ISTOCK.COM/BOONCHAI WEDMAKAWAND

Instead, approach each piece with an incremental mindset and learn from your choices along the way.

By John Pojeta

On a recent trip, our VP of Operations, Bob Zupanek, and I were in Texas. We stepped out of the airport to hail an Uber. A few minutes later, a big white truck picks up and we start our journey to our hotel.

Along the way, the driver, a gentleman in his 70s, told us about how he built a successful business. When his sons took over the business, they added modern marketing tactics to the mix and the business is now hitting new levels of growth. He is no longer involved in the business and he is hoping his sons will remember “to take care of dad.”

That hit me because I had heard variations of this same story again and again as an advisor, and our callers hear them daily on the phone. Families build up businesses with no real plan for their financial future. They bring in profits. They expand services. They hire spouses and siblings and cousins. And then they hand off the business, expecting the new heirs to take care of their elders the same way their elders once took care of them. But this rarely works out that way.

But what went wrong? Surely several advisors pitched our driver about the importance of life insurance, 401(k) plans and business succession plans. Why didn't anyone get through?

This is because the best plan on paper is often impossible to implement because it is too big, too cumbersome, and too intimidating.

For someone like our driver, immediately implementing a full financial plan might not have made sense to him. Perhaps he never saw the urgency, he was too busy growing his business and he missed the opportunity to put something in place — even if it wasn't perfect.

That's the trap. When we know what perfect looks like, we do not realize that having an incomplete solution is better than having none at all. When we can't make the perfect move, we often don't move at all. And then, several years later, we are not even where we started. We are worse off because the rest of the world and the market have moved on while we stood still, waiting for the perfect moment, the perfect circumstances and the perfect plan.

But perfect never happens. Instead, we worry that making a less-than-perfect step forward will turn into a slippery slope to chaos. In practice, incremental improvements are actually the best path to a robust, multi-dimensional sales pipeline.

In practice, incremental improvements are the best path to a robust, multi-dimensional sales pipeline.

The flipside of inaction is the slow “build” in the laboratory where we plan, measure, and draft until we have this giant plan that has all of the bells and whistles the experts said we should have. When we try to do everything at once, we miss the opportunity to iterate and learn from our choices along the way.

Building your sales pipeline

In other words, we should be willing to build in stages — whether we are talking about marketing or financial planning. For example, we often talk about sales pipelines and how they should contain the following:

- Appointments with potential prospects
- Referrals from existing clients
- Relationships with key centers of influence
- Repeatable methodology integrated into a backend system that allows you to:
 - Build a well-organized and consistent drip marketing system Implement personal one-on-one follow-up with prospects that goes beyond sending emails and flyers
 - Host quarterly seminars designed to engage prospects and current clients
 - Achieve consistent outbound activity, in good times and bad
- Greater consistency of activity and pipeline building efforts designed to lead to new business opportunities and sales.

And that is just the pipeline. Your broader marketing efforts might also include digital advertising, social media, and direct mail.

The advisors we know who are the most successful in our industry build their pipelines over time. They start an appointment-setting program and gradually layer in new activities and new improvements. Their drip marketing may be lackluster to start, but they work on it. And then when that’s buttoned up, they add more events. And then they add more money to their advertising budget. It’s a process with hundreds of adjustments and course-corrections along the way.

To find success, we have to approach every piece of our business with this incremental mindset. Otherwise, we can get lost in the chasm between where we are and what we imagine our perfect business to be. [at](#)

John Pojeta is vice president of business development at The PT Services Group. He researches new types of business and manages and initiates strategic, corporate-level relationships to expand exposure for The PT Services Group. Pojeta joined The PT Services Group in 2011. Before that, he owned and operated an Ameriprise Financial Services franchise for 16 years.

Finding Success in the Special-Needs Market



DAVID TADEVOSIAN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Learn how to create a uniquely structured financial-planning process for clients who have dependents with special needs.

By Richard F. Miclitz, CFP

I began my financial advising career in 2000, but it wasn't until five or six years later that I encountered clients and prospects with difficult situations they needed help navigating due to having a dependent with special needs.

I recognized how challenging this set of circumstances was and turned to more experienced financial planners for guidance. We found that pooling together trusted attorneys, accountants, advisors and a host of other resources was very helpful for our clients. Not only did I learn how to properly and comprehensively serve these families, I also discovered that delivering comfort and meeting client goals could be very gratifying.

The special-needs market is greatly underserved. As more financial planners enter the workforce, they should be prepared to help anyone in this set of circumstances.

Dedication to clients who have dependents with special needs begins with these tips:

1. Be the quarterback of your A Team. When you're addressing special needs, as with any other consideration, you have to understand the challenges your clients could face. For instance, a retiree is typically concerned about a health-related problem or outliving their money.

Clients who have dependents with special needs are also worried about providing a guardian and ensuring their money lasts over multiple lifetimes. As the quarterback, you must anticipate and recognize these challenges, even if your clients don't explicitly voice them. Recruit the professionals who have the skill sets and experience you and your clients are looking for.

Clients may know they need tax consultations, legal documents, investment services and other resources that go beyond traditional financial planning. As a result, you must introduce your clients to trusted attorneys, accountants, tax consultants and other professionals who are dedicated to helping them and addressing their unique situation. Any advisor intending to serve this community must build contacts and relationships with estate planning attorneys who have experience with special needs considerations, specifically experience in drafting supplemental needs trusts.

When approaching these families, it's critical to have an A Team of resources and professionals familiar with the situation. Many of my clients have been pleasantly surprised by the level of support we are able to provide through this holistic approach.

2. Draft letters of intent. It's no secret that financial planning involves many high-level concepts that can be overwhelming for a client. Insurance products, investments and supplemental-needs trusts are important but, in the special-needs arena, client concerns tend to be more granular. Parents and guardians of dependents with special needs are worried about daily routines and what will happen when they aren't around to provide care or supervision.

One effective way to ease your client's mind is to have them draft a letter of intent. Although not legally binding, this document provides the next guardian or caregiver with specific and important knowledge of the dependent by outlining their day-to-day life, including likes, dislikes, hobbies and routines. Communicating and documenting the client's wishes and concerns help to develop solutions, while providing them with a sense of comfort.

3. Educate yourself. As advisors, we learn what we live in the industry. I was just beginning my career when I realized how challenging, complex and ever-changing these cases can be. Keeping up with law modifications and new developments or concerns in the special-needs community can be intimidating, which explains why these families are so underserved.

Being a planner isn't about earning certifications or memorizing concepts, but about reshaping the way you think about financial planning.

However, when I earned my financial-planning credentials in 2010, I learned a valuable lesson: Being a planner isn't really about earning certifications or memorizing concepts, but rather about reshaping the way you think about financial planning. When we talk to a client about advancing the financial health of their family, we share our belief system with them.

My advice to other advisors is to learn as much as you can, so you can create your own uniquely structured financial-planning process for clients who have dependents with special needs. Getting involved and continually taking advantage of any educational or training opportunities will help you become an expert in the long run, and your clients can only benefit from that expertise. [at](#)

Richard F. Miclitz, CFP, is a financial advisor with Penn Mutual's Primary Financial, based in Edison, N.J.

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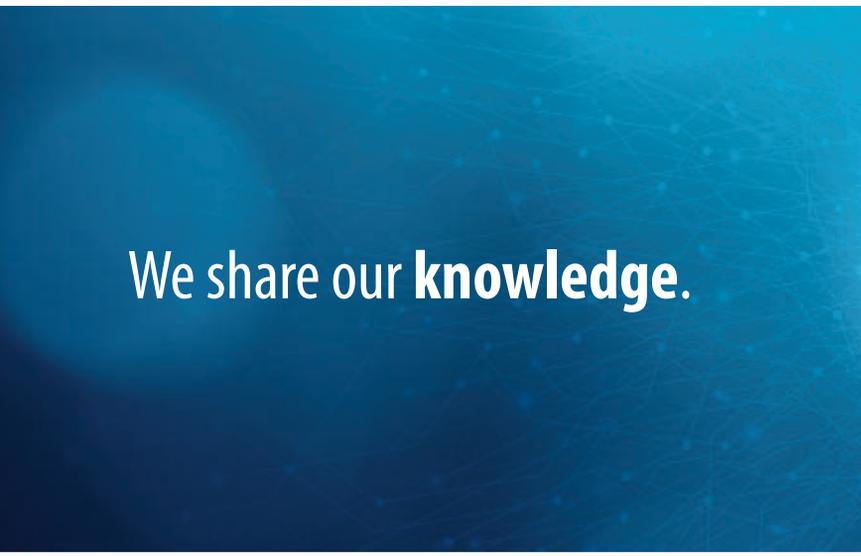
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