



KnowIT All



In last month's article, "Wrapping Up the Loose Ends," I reiterated some of the technologies of "The Automated Agent." In this final column, I will share with you some of my dreams and aspirations.

When I started in this business 19 years ago, making a sale and filling out all of the required applications and forms excited me. Today, making the sale still excites me; the drudgery of filling out the paperwork, however, has turned stale.

As the producer is aware, ensuring clients have all of the proper coverage and are on track with their retirement planning is a large undertaking that requires plenty of information. While many companies have made it easier to find information online, a comprehensive overview of a client's current information still takes some time to compile; time that could be better used focusing on sales, rather than on the process.

A Higher Standard

It is ironic that a highly computerized business still requires producers to fill in forms by hand. While some strides have been made in recent years to simplify the paperwork and associated processes, in my opinion the efforts are disjointed. Life company A has this application, Life company B that, a form for this, a requirement for that, a little disclaimer here, and more disclaimers there. To exacerbate the situation, every company has its own software and its own method of doing business. It makes me wonder how many millions of dollars could be saved each year if the insurance business worked toward standardizing things.

Technology has solved many issues for me. For lack of finding something more suitable, I have designed my own software that enables me easily to track and report my client's information. Preparing for an appointment used to take several hours, now it takes only a few minutes.

My thought was this: If I already have all of my client's information, why should I need to keep filling out forms and re-entering data? While I still am developing the software, it can retrieve client policy data from various companies and will fill in my paperwork for me.

Producer on the Go

I often have written of the anywhere, anytime access that I enjoy. Being able to access information on the go always has been a central theme of "The Automated Agent." As wireless and Internet technologies progress, more producers will enjoy this freedom as well. And, while it is not so prevalent today, meeting online to make the sale will continue to gain acceptance.

A great challenge I have tried to overcome recently has been integrating client information with my agency's Web site. I have spent several years looking for a cost effective solution to this problem and have been unable to find one. I believe that the producer should be able to refer clients to his or her Web site or agency's Web site to

obtain or update information in real time without breaking his wallet. Where there is a need, I will find a way.

Digitizing documents presents another challenge that many small companies have yet to address. If the producer frees himself of physical files and takes the time and effort to store paperwork electronically, how does he organize it all? How is it secured? How is it backed up? These are only some of the issues that I plan to incorporate into my future software designs.

The life insurance business is becoming increasingly competitive. Being able to spend more time at relationship building and offering additional value-added services will help ensure the producer will retain and attract new clients.

Future Vision

We all have dreams and aspirations. Many years ago I dreamt of simplifying many items involved in selling and tracking insurance and investments. As time has passed, my dream has become clearer. I now realize that the only way to resolve the many issues an agency or producer faces each day is to develop software and create a system that simplifies the process. Using the original software I have designed over the years as a basis, this is about to happen.

This year, 2003, I have incorporated a new business named Intra-Agent Services, Inc. (IAS, Inc.). IAS provides innovative back-office services to the independent producer. Intra-Agent Services, Inc. (<http://www.gointra.com/>) is my dream that will take "The Automated Agent" to the next level. In today's increasingly competitive world, it is important to have an edge.

There are so many aspects of a producer's business that can be improved. I intend to offer a centralized, easy-to-use system. My first-hand experience running an agency gives me a unique perspective with which to help other producers move forward.

As 2003 draws to a close, so does this column. It has been wonderful sharing my insights and experiences with the readers of Life Insurance Selling. Life marches forward, and so will technology. I sincerely hope that, in some small way, a piece of "The Automated Agent" will remain with you. Peace to you and the people you touch.

Respectfully, Gary Indianer.