



[KEEPING TRACK OF WHAT WORKS — AND WHAT DOESN'T — CAN HELP YOU SUCCEED]

Joe Betcher has learned a lot over the years — from his and his fellow producers' mistakes as well as from their successful techniques and ideas. And he keeps track of it all in a notebook. It's a collection of advice he treasures greatly.

"I'll write down a quote, line or technique that I or other producers have used to show a client why a product, service or strategy really is in his or her best interests," said Joe. "The notebook's now a few hundred pages.

"Every so often, I'll review it to remind myself of these ideas," he added. "You never know when you'll be able to use one of these lines or techniques to help a client or prospect. I've been in situations where something from the book jumps out and I'll repeat a successful line — or avoid saying something that may not have worked in the past."

SPOTLIGHT

Joe Betcher: Building Your Business Through Referrals and Strategic Alliances

What makes Joe Betcher, the New England Financial producer who heads Betcher Financial Group in Sterling Heights, MI, a detached office associated with New England Financial-Detroit, so successful? Last year, at the age of 33, he became one of the youngest producers to qualify for Chairman’s Council. This followed his qualifying for Masters Conference for the prior four years and Leaders Conference for nine years.

Part of it is due to his drive, his competitive spirit, his refusal to fail, and his focus on getting the job done regardless of how long it takes.

What’s more, he believes in what he does, enjoys what he does and takes both his successes — and failures — personally.

Joe also credits his team, his family and his mentors, including Mike Amine, Managing Partner of New England Financial-Detroit (see

sidebar on page 12), with helping him get to where he is today.

And then there’s his uncanny ability to get referrals from his clients, and the strategic alliance he’s made with a local property and casualty firm, which has supplied him with numerous prospects. Both have undoubtedly contributed to his success.

STARTING OUT IN THE BUSINESS

Joe got started in the business with another insurance company. He saw what other producers had accomplished and felt that he could do as well as them — and better.

He saw unlimited career potential and the potential for unlimited success in this profession. “I’ve always been very driven, very competitive and very motivated,” said Joe. “That’s just my nature.” He acknowledged that he didn’t appreciate the significance of what he was doing until later in his career.

When he started out, Joe was able to work with — and learn from — more experienced producers. He obtained their help by asking for it, and also by proving himself by virtue of his work ethic.

“They saw that I was committed and worked hard, making 50 calls before lunch and 50 calls after,” recalled Joe. “I would ask for the opportunity to work with them and prove that I’m someone who could help.

“I would set up meetings for them and then they would run the meetings with me. That’s how I was able to start off.”

Probably the biggest challenge Joe faced early in his career was his youth. “I was only 22 when I started out, so most of my potential clients were considerably older than me. Even now, at age 33, they still are,” he noted.

But he was persistent, and used his youth as a positive instead of

allowing it to become an objection. “I stressed that it would be an advantage for clients to be able to keep the same advisor throughout their lives, including their retirement years,” he said. “I told them my goal was to have a long-term relationship with them — to be there for their lifetime and, hopefully, for their children and other family members as well.”

Joe recently spoke with *Significance*

“ I TOLD THEM MY GOAL WAS TO HAVE A **LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP** WITH THEM — TO BE THERE FOR THEIR LIFETIME... ”

[LIFE INSURANCE APPLICATIONS AND ANNUITY CONTRACTS: A GOOD SOURCE OF REFERRALS]

According to Joe Betcher, a client completing a life insurance or annuity application presents a great opportunity for getting referrals.

“The completed application will include a beneficiary’s name and address, so I’ll ask the client if it’s OK for me to contact the beneficiary and will the client recommend me,” said Joe. “This is usually a very easy transition to make. If the client is truly happy with the job you’re doing, there’s no reason he won’t refer you to the people he cares about the most.”

about his career, and offered advice that may be useful to other producers.

SIGNIFICANCE: WAS THERE A TURNING POINT THAT MADE YOU REALIZE THAT THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO FOR YOUR CAREER?

JOE: I became 100 percent committed when I saw the impact of my work. I delivered a life insurance claim check with my sales manager to a client after the man lost his wife.

I can tell you, if we didn’t deliver that check, he and his young children wouldn’t be in their home today. It was a really emotional moment, and it changed my outlook on how important and meaningful what we do is.

Another turning point came shortly after that. I went on a sales call with my sales manager. We didn’t do any business with the prospect that day. But after the appointment, my manager told me that I was the best interviewer he’d ever seen. It meant a lot to me coming from him. (The prospect eventually did become a client.)

Those two events really made me committed to this career and motivated me to work even harder.

S: HOW DO YOU PROSPECT FOR BUSINESS?

JOE: When I started out, I didn’t have much of a natural market because I was pretty young. I did a lot of cold calling. I would call prospects on the phone and knock on doors. Phone calls were good, but I had a higher success rate when I actually visited people.

I would introduce myself, say I was in the area, explain what I do and start asking them some questions. Or I would ask if we could set up a convenient time to meet later on.

Now, my clients do the prospecting for me. It used to be by word-of-mouth. But now I ask for — and get— referrals from my clients. That’s where the overwhelming majority of my business comes from.

I’m pretty assertive in asking for the referral. Basically, I’ll ask clients, “Are you happy with the job I’ve done?” and

“Has anyone ever done a better job for you than me?”

If clients are happy with you and your services, there’s no reason why they won’t endorse you and refer you to the people they care about the most. On the other hand, if they hesitate, it gives you the opportunity to have a discussion on where you’ve been falling short and what you need to do to better serve them.

Clients who don’t give you a referral probably feel that you haven’t done right by them. If you have that attitude, you’re going to get a lot more referrals.

I’m fine-tuning my referral process now by mailing letters asking for referrals and asking what, if anything, we need to do better.

S: DO YOU RELY ON ANY OTHER PROSPECTING METHODS TO FIND NEW CLIENTS?

JOE: Yes, I enjoy a strategic alliance with a local property and casualty firm. I’m fortunate to have grown up knowing the family who owns it. When I started out in the business, I asked them to set up introductions

to some of their clients.

It’s worked out well because the people the firm has referred to me have been very satisfied. I know this because I made sure to have them call their clients after my meetings to make sure the clients were happy with me and what I had to offer.

This alliance has also helped solidify the relationship between the property and casualty firm and the people they’ve recommended to me. I’ve made their clients happy and that, in turn, makes them look good.

I take the firm’s office staff out to lunch once a month and we’ll talk about business and the products I’m offering. They’re even putting some of this information into their client newsletter.



Joe Betcher uses leads generated by referrals and a strategic alliance to help boost his business and qualify for Chairman’s Council.

S: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE WHO IS STARTING THE SEARCH FOR A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE FROM SQUARE ONE?

JOE: If you don’t have the benefit of having a connection with a potential strategic alliance partner, I would go about it the same way as I would prospecting for clients. For example, call or visit local property and casualty agencies and introduce yourself, your staff and your services.

Explain that you’re looking to meet business people to work with and that you’d like to have the opportunity to meet some

“ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE JOB I’VE DONE?
HAS ANYONE EVER DONE A BETTER JOB
FOR YOU THAN ME?”

of their top producing agents. Most good salespeople are interested in meeting others who might be able to help them and their business.

The approach should be that you want to talk to them about your business and learn more about what they're doing. And, of course, you need to be able to explain how the relationship could benefit them. If you meet with enough people, you'll find the right partners to work with.

And regardless of whether or not you have a prior relationship with a strategic alliance partner, you still have to prove yourself to the people they refer to you.

S: WHAT'S NEXT IN YOUR CAREER?

JOE: I want to continue making Chairman's Council* for the rest of my career. I believe I'll be able to do this — and take my career to the next level — because I'm working smarter and more efficiently, not just harder.

For example, I've hired a fully licensed assistant who handles a lot of work for me so I can devote more of my time to dealing with my clients and prospects. And I'm building a better infrastructure for my team by getting the right people and systems in place. I love what I do. Like anything else, it has its ups and downs. But at the end of the day, I wouldn't want to do anything else.

[JOE'S SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW ENGLAND FINANCIAL-DETROIT]

Joe Betcher's detached office is part of New England Financial-Detroit, headed by Managing Partner Mike Amine. The firm was named New England Financial's Firm of the Year for 2008, due, in no small measure, to Mike's efforts to help Joe and other producers in the firm succeed.

According to Joe, even though he operates out of a detached office, he gets a lot of support. In fact, the relationship he has with Mike is more of a partnership.

When Joe first joined New England Financial, Mike was his sales manager and quickly assumed the role of Joe's mentor, a relationship that continues today. Joe credits Mike with helping him take his business to "the next level."

Joe says that Mike:

- Helped him focus on his "billable hours" and become more organized and efficient.
- Subscribes to the "do more, get more" philosophy. So, as a top producer, Joe receives good leads, including Delivering the Promise, MetLife Advice, ERWEC (Expanding Relationships with Existing Clients) and hot leads.
- Encouraged him to hire a personal assistant and to build a team, which has allowed him to spend more time with clients and prospects.

To this day, Mike and Joe have lunch together every other week. During these meetings they discuss, among other topics, Joe's book of business, underwriting pipeline, leads and marketing activities. They also discuss how Joe is doing as mentor to his own protégées.

According to Joe, it's been a great formula for success.

We're in a different business. We're not just stockbrokers or investment managers. We protect people. This career has provided a great life for me and my family, and I've been able to help untold numbers of people.

Be sure to watch for more top producer interviews in upcoming issues of Significance.

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* Starting in 2009, top producers will qualify for President's Elite. The first President's Elite conference will take place in 2010, but qualification for the event will be based on 2009 production.