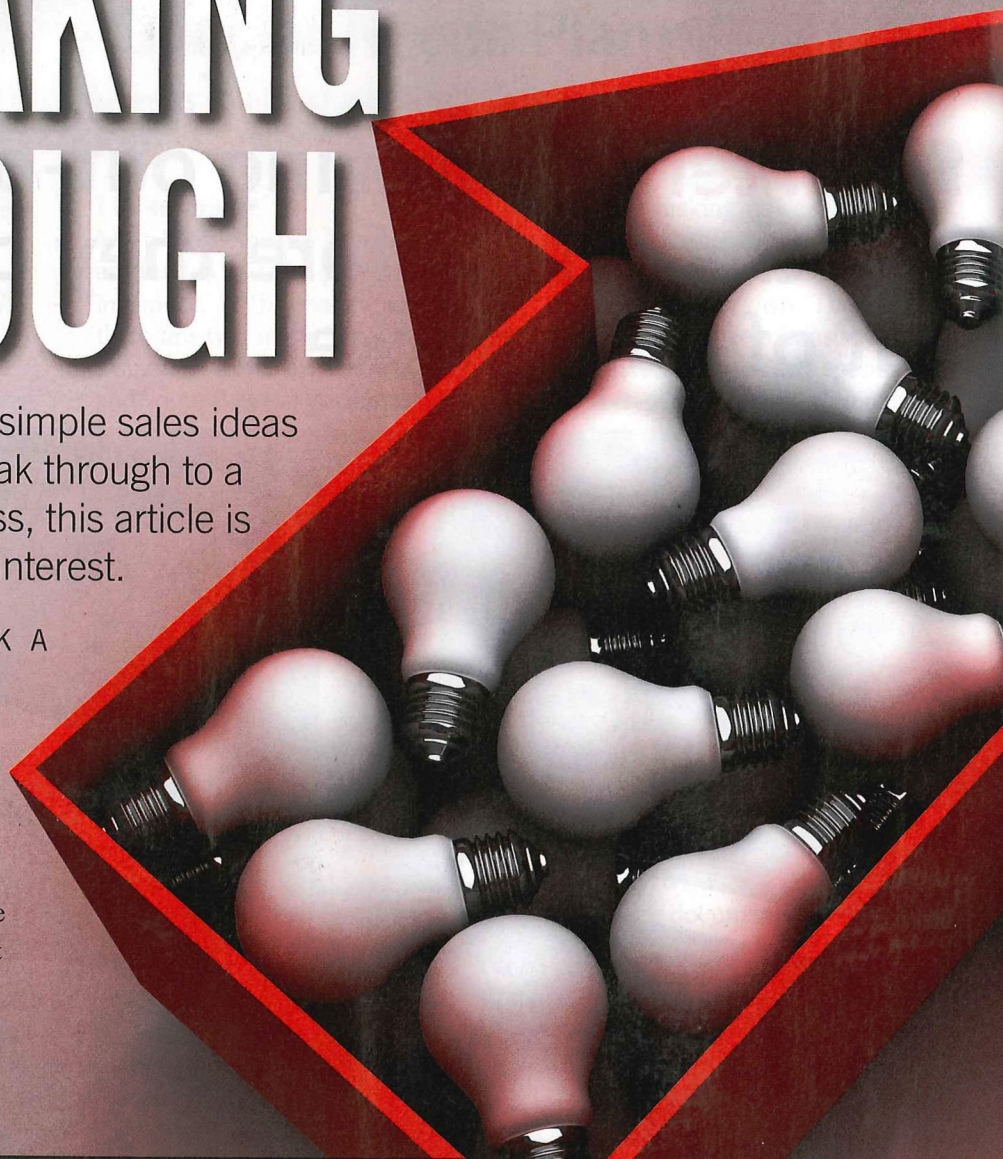


# BREAKING THROUGH

If you are looking for simple sales ideas that will help you break through to a higher level of success, this article is sure to capture your interest.

BY AYO MSEKA

**F**or this year's line-up of great sales ideas, we've gone to some of the best minds in the business. From great opening lines to clever twists on old ideas, there is something here that may just help spark your next sale.



**Ed Auble, CLU, ChFC, MSFS, FLMI, LUTCF, CASL, Auble Financial**

**Ask your prospect about his sources of cash.** In working with a prospect, I simply ask him if he has protected his income. He will usually ask what I mean. I then ask him what his source of cash will be if he is unable to work because of an accident or an illness. After listening to his response, I review his possible sources of cash—Social Security disability income, family, investments, loans, spouse's income and sale of assets. This usually leads him to ask me for a quotation.

**Ask the pound of cork question.** In closing a sale, I might ask the prospect how much she would pay me for a pound of cork. This question usually elicits a chuckle from her until she hears my second question: What would you pay me for a pound of cork if you were 200 miles at sea and the ship went down? At that point, she quickly understands the reason for the question.

**Offer the prospect two "yes" options.** During dinner when my son was six years old, he steadfastly resisted eating the chili that was placed before him. Repeated requests that he do so were to no avail. Trying to get him to accept his fork was of no use either. In a rare moment of brilliance, I asked him if he would rather use his fork or his spoon. He selected one and proceeded to finish his meal. The moral of the story: Always give your prospects two "yes" options rather than "yes" or "no" options. That's the "chili" close!



**Steve Brady, second vice president, individual disability insurance sales and marketing, Standard Insurance Company**

**Offer a guarantee issue policy to highly paid employees of your business clients.** For most people, group long-term disability (LTD) insurance provides adequate income replacement to get them through when they are unable to work due to an illness or injury. But for highly paid employees in particular, counting solely on group LTD insurance has its drawbacks for two reasons:

- **Coverage caps.** Because group LTD policies typically cap monthly benefits somewhere between \$5,000 and \$15,000, someone earning a high income takes a significant reduction in monthly income when he goes on LTD leave.
- **Taxable benefits.** If the employer pays for the LTD plan, any benefits the employee receives will be taxable as income. So high-income earners take a double hit by capping out at the monthly maximum, and then those already reduced earnings get taxed.

To address this gap with your clients, offer individual disability income insurance written on a guarantee issue (GI) basis. This provides individuals with personal income protection on top of their group coverage to fill that income gap. The underwriting is simpler than individual DI, and unlike group coverage, is owned by the individual. This means that she can take it with her from one employer to the next.

With a GI policy, highly paid employees get the additional protection they need, and business owners can maximize their benefit offerings to retain and attract top talent.

**David E. Appel, CLU, ChFC, Goldwasser-Appel Insurance Advisors, LLC**

**Use email to turn your personal relationships into professional ones.** Do you ever wonder how you can start turning your personal relationships into professional ones? Do you know many people through your charitable involvement, community activities, or spiritual endeavors? The key then becomes transitioning these potential prospects from knowing you on a “personal basis” to knowing you and what you do for a living on a “professional basis”.

When I want to make such a transition, I have found it useful to initially use email rather than calling these prospects. With email, you are not necessarily catching them at a bad time, it’s non-invasive, and the recipients can respond to you on their time.

Here is a sample email message I use to target specific individuals—remember that it’s not for everyone:

*“Dear Bill, it was great getting to know you on a personal basis over this past baseball season with our sons. I would love the opportunity to sit down with you on a professional basis and show you what I do for a living. I would like to show you how I have helped other clients in positions that are similar to yours.”*

This message can be tweaked, depending on the prospect you are sending it to. The key is the language changing from personal to professional.

I have had tremendous success with this approach, and I have heard great feedback as well from other advisors. The bottom line is that your practice can reach new heights when you start getting the people who already admire you as clients by asking them to sit down with you on a professional basis.



**Thomas Klett, American General Benefit Solutions, vice president of Disability Business Development for American General Benefits Solutions, a business unit of American General Life Companies**

**Use the following approaches to improve your DI sales.** Employers are struggling to address changes to their employee benefits as the full impact of the Affordable Care Act takes effect. Their decisions regarding health-care benefits may also affect their commitment to providing other employer-sponsored benefits, such as disability, vision and dental insurance.

There has already been significant retrenchment in defined-benefit retirement plans and retiree medical benefits. And we are in the midst of a generational change as Boomers begin to exit the workforce in large numbers, and employers grapple with engaging the next generation of workers. This all comes at a time when the group DI industry continues to witness flat-to-negative growth rates.

However, there may be opportunities to improve sales of group DI offerings through these two suggestions:

1. *Place a greater focus on the continuum of service and care your business client provides.* DI insurance has historically been marketed with an emphasis on plan design and features, such as benefit maximums and elimination periods. Although the plan design represents the foundation of a program, the services and support that engage employees in their recovery make a plan come to life for employers and employees. When an employee is absent from work for an extended period, an employer is often most concerned that the employee is given financial, clinical and vocational support and assistance to return to a productive life, if possible.

By focusing more on carrier services that can speed that recovery and return to work than on the design of a plan, you, as a broker, can demonstrate greater value to the employer. These services not only represent one of the most cost-effective tools in the program, they can also be managed to provide a positive employee experience.

The value proposition here moves beyond traditional claim administration and more to the realm of a comprehensive service model that recognizes employees' unique circumstances, offers services and support to encourage them to take the initiative to get back in the swing of things, and serves as a resource to the employee throughout the entire process.

2. *Place disability in the context of the federal deficit and changes to Social Security and the impact impending changes may have on consumers.* Recently, the airwaves have been filled with competing viewpoints of how to address the federal deficit. Many proposals focus on how Social Security benefits (both retirement and disability) will be funded and administered, such as raising the full retirement age of workers.

This debate may represent a significant opportunity to make the case for a private disability alternative. Whether the audience includes current purchasers of group or individual coverage or a potential first-time buyer, awareness that Social Security benefits—particularly disability benefits—may not be there to fill a need represents a major marketing opportunity.

This is also a great time to extend the message about the importance of a personal income-protection option to the vast number of people who lack any coverage. If the case can be made that Social Security may not be available in the form people anticipate it to be, then a case can be made that everyone should consider private coverage options to protect against an extended absence from work.

To help make this case, change the product messaging from the traditional messaging of the likelihood of someone becoming disabled to emphasizing the idea that the prospect needs to protect those around him from a potentially devastating financial disaster.

This message will also connect with employees struggling to manage health-care costs due to the rise in high-deductible, health-care plans. It is somewhat of a return to an industry message of years ago, but the concept of income protection may resonate in these uncertain financial times, especially when compounded by continuing concerns about the viability of Social Security.

**Bill Cates, CSP, CPAE,  
[www.ReferralCoach.com](http://www.ReferralCoach.com)  
Don't avoid client objections.**

Whether you're asking for referrals or calling to set an appointment, if you seem to be getting the same objection, hit it head on. Rather than avoiding it or hope it does not come up, bring it up yourself.

Long ago when I sold printing, I used to have fun cold-calling buyers by saying: Hi, this is Bill Cates with Thunder Hill Printing. My guess is you get a lot of calls from people trying to sell you printing. The rest of the conversation would go something like this:

**Prospect:** You got that right!

**Cates:** Am I the first or the 10th person to call you today?

**Prospect:** Well, you're the first today.

**Cates:** I'm curious. What do you tell the others?

By having fun and hitting my most common objection, I let my prospects warm up to my call and earn a few minutes of their time to distinguish myself and spark their interest.

If the person you ask for a referral tells you he would like to talk to a potential referral first, tell him: "I was hoping we could brainstorm to identify folks you think should know about the important work I do. Be assured that I would want you to contact them first. I know they would prefer to hear from you before they hear from me."



**Anthony Trupiano, CEA, CFBS, founder, Trupiano & Associates;  
9-year MDRT member with four Court of the Table qualifications**

**Spend time with clients away from the office.** When working with clients to create a sound financial plan, remember that relationships are important. And what better way to build relationships than by spending time with them—away from the conference-room table? At Trupiano & Associates, all of our marketing is based on client events, so I'd like to share a few things we do for our top clients to show our appreciation:

1. We send homemade chicken soup and biscuits when they are not feeling well.
2. We send birthday cakes or cupcakes on their special day.
3. For referrals or big sales, we enroll clients in a three-month club membership for ice cream, cigars, wine, chocolate, cheese or other items of interest.
4. Once a year, we host an appreciation dinner for our top clients and their spouses. This year, we will roll out a red carpet and have our employees greet them by giving them a standing ovation.
5. For the top 5-10 clients, we host a half- or full-day adventure trip to have fun and say thanks. The half-day trip this year will work with U.S. Supercar Tour to drive exotic racecars with stops for breakfast and lunch.

Whether you adopt these ideas or develop your own, take time to show appreciation for your clients' trust and loyalty. Even small events build trust, generate referrals and create a more successful company. And don't forget to have a little fun!

**Ron Agypt, Aflac's senior vice president, Market Development and Broker Sales, U.S.**

**When selling voluntary insurance, focus on these five strategies.**

- 1) *Listen.* The art of listening is the most important part of the sales process. If you're speaking, you're not learning. If you're not learning, you can't help the client solve the problem. Ask questions that generate as much helpful information as possible about a prospect's unique situation and make each one feel that his voice is being heard. Great salespeople are great listeners.
- 2) *Uncover the need.* As advisors, brokers and agents, you play an important role in helping clients manage cost; identify gaps of coverage; and provide solutions that best fit their needs. So take a holistic approach in designing the benefit platform, along with strong education.
- 3) *Open their minds.* Employers are seeking benefits solutions that are cost-effective and hassle-free to help safeguard and retain a productive workforce. As an expert, you need to educate employers and employees about the benefits of all types of insurance, including voluntary insurance that addresses a variety of concerns and helps provide peace of mind.
- 4) *Provide a solution.* Avoid jargon and lots of numbers when providing your prospect with solution details. Keep it simple and highlight why smart solutions will address your prospect's needs. For example, voluntary insurance has become an excellent sales opportunity for brokers and agents, and a real solution for companies that are trying to balance rising costs and the need to ensure a protected, healthy workforce at no direct cost to their business.
- 5) *Execute and follow up.* The sales process should never end after a sale is closed. Follow up with your clients regularly to maintain a personal relationship and remind them of the value you provide as a knowledgeable resource. One closed sale can lead to expanded business over time with that prospect and many invaluable referrals to new prospects.



**Robert N. Garneau, CLU, ChFC, Massachusetts Mutual Life, 27-year MDRT member with six Court of the Table qualifications**

**Use detailed meeting notes and an agenda to help close cases at the next meeting.** Here's a way to automatically move into completing the paperwork at the start of an appointment. I have found over the years that using detailed notes and an agenda are the best way to help close a case.

At the end of every meeting, I promise my clients I will send them notes from our meeting as a follow-up. The notes always begin with the following paragraph:

*"It was great meeting with you. As promised, the following are my notes from our meeting. They are not meant to serve as minutes, but rather as a summary of the important discussion items. They serve two purposes: to remind each of us what was discussed and what each needs to do before our next meeting. If anything is incorrect, please let me know immediately so the notes can be corrected to accurately reflect our meeting."*

These notes are sent by email and/or regular mail, but always on my stationery. I also include action items for our next meeting. If a couple was at the meeting, I send notes to both of them individually to ensure they both read them.

By putting these thoughts in writing and making sure that clients agree that they are accurate, they have decided to move forward with it in the future. And typically, all they need is a reminder.

This leads us to the agenda for the follow-up meeting, which serves as that reminder. Each agenda, also written on my stationery, has several categories and bullet points from the last meeting, reminding clients of their concerns, solutions and the plan to implement them. Because the process has been collaborative, the sale is simplified and clients develop a trust that will last for years. □