

Your Face is Better than Facebook

Social media tools like Facebook and Twitter can be powerful allies in the sales person's arsenal. The trouble here is context. Many over- or under-emphasize the importance and usefulness of social media in sales today. Not using them is worse than using them badly, some say, while others argue that using them is just a waste of time that should be spent doing other things.

The reality is somewhere in between that. Facebook has shown itself to be a useful tool for keeping contacts alive and pushing information to already-interested or active customers and clients. It is not such a great way to recruit new ones, however, despite all the hype. Twitter is basically the same, though generally more accessible due to its easier use via mobile devices. Every sales person should have both accounts and keep them active.

But how active?

The other problem is time. These tools can really use up a lot of a person's time and for anyone in business, especially sales, time is money. So the payoff must be balanced with the effort spent for the gain. Facebook is not a replacement for face-to-face meetings and interaction. In nearly all industries, especially more personal ones like insurance, that personal, face-to-face connection is always going to be the top way to sell. Digital revolution or not.

So insurance sales persons should be versed in utilizing Facebook and Twitter as tools to enhance the personal, one-on-one connection, not as substitutes for it. Yes, they can decrease the amount of time or number of times you'll need to see the client in person, but they won't replace it. The important thing here is to use these tools as if the interaction were actually taking place in person.

Respond personally, with a name if you can, and answer questions or queries quickly and with more than just a link or a "yes" or "no." The sales person should visualize the person in front of them asking the question, rather than just staring at their iPad or their computer screen and seeing anonymously typed messages. Respond as if you were talking to the person right there. This bleeds through the connection and shows the person you're interacting on a personal level. Even virtually, online, people respond to that.

Social media should be a tool to get or maintain live connections, so treating it as another face-to-face (but not the only F2F) connection will enhance those personal interactions. This leads to better retention, better sales, and more confidence on the part of the client. In insurance, those things are all good things and are what drive

repeat sales and continued value.

Finally, sales people should understand what kind of commitment their Facebook and Twitter accounts are going to require and realize that this means something is likely to be sacrificed. Most

of the time, though, that sacrifice can be in the travel and personal one-on-one time spent. Many customers will ask questions or submit queries via instant or direct messages (or email) rather than make a phone call. In terms of time, that's a good thing.

Training and understanding how social media can benefit insurance sales forces is very important and should be a top priority for every agent or broker's office.

