

Employees rule



Last month, we talked about the importance of differentiating your offerings through the associated services you provide, rather than simply through the products you offer. This is the first key concept for brokers who want to become formidable voluntary competitors. With the right package of products and services, the broker then must consider the selling process itself.

Voluntary programs offer important advantages to employers and we all incorporate these into our employer presentations. But employers are also motivated by whether their employees are interested in voluntary options. As a matter of fact, this factor has consistently rated as the most important factor in deciding to offer the program.

Your ability to speak to this primary factor is a key to your success with voluntary. You need to understand how employees view your offerings, why they buy, and what their expectations are for the sales and service experiences.

As we explained in an earlier column, with employer-paid benefits, the sale is made at the employer level. Enrollment is an implementation step. But with voluntary coverages, the sale isn't made until the employee says "yes," making enrollment the key to the program's success. Brokers need to focus on this employee sale with all the effort they put into the employer-level sale.

of their presentation, and choreograph their ongoing communications and annual reviews. All of these elements are just as relevant for the true buyer of voluntary coverages—the employee.

This is the second key concept for voluntary success: Focus on the sale to your employee-buyer.

In order to be a leading voluntary producer, a broker needs to master a new body of knowledge in this environment.

- Why does the employee buy?
- How should we sell?
- How should we communicate?
- How should we educate?
- What advice should we be offering?
- What will our relationship be after the sale?

This knowledge is then applied to the materials we use, the content of our group and individual meetings, the enrollment process, follow-up, re-enrollment, and ongoing communications. And explaining and demonstrating these understandings and capabilities is a key part of the employer sale.

For many employers, a successful program is one in which there is little "noise" or negative feedback from employees. It follows that satisfying employees is a key to success. Brokers need to think through this important relationship and institute programs to keep both employers and employees happy and coming back for more.

IMPORTANCE FACTORS IN DECIDING TO OFFER VOLUNTARY PRODUCTS			
(Scale: 1 to 5, with 5 being "Extremely Important")			
	PERCENT RATING AS 4 OR 5		
FACTOR	2002	2006	2009
Employee interest in the product(s)	83%	79%	79%
Cost savings to the company	73%	77%	70%
To aid in recruiting and retaining employees	76%	75%	59%
Ease of administration	76%	71%	71%
Our broker recommended voluntary	20%	26%	31%

Source: Worksite MarketVision™ – The Employer Viewpoint Revisited, 2010 Eastbridge Consulting Group

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