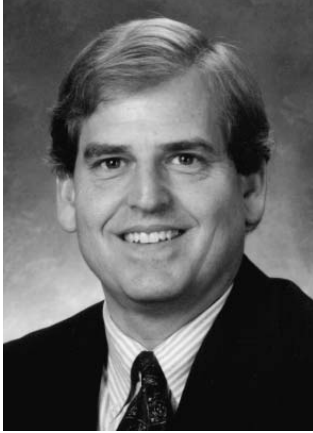


Sell the Process, Not the Product



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"I started selling more life insurance, once I stopped selling life insurance!"

I began my career in the financial services industry on the life insurance side. I was the 4th generation of life insurance men. I was proud of my heritage and I actually sold my first life insurance policy before I graduated from high school. I loved selling this product and during my college days determined that I too would be a life insurance salesman.

I went on to Georgia State University to obtain a Masters in Insurance and upon

graduation, I returned to New York to begin my career in sales. In those days the products were limited and the level of sophistication was moderate at best.

After only a couple of years, my father led the charge into "needs selling," primarily using Tom Wolff's Capital Needs Analysis. Our agency was successful in making the transition. But it wasn't long before I realized that something was missing.

Our early days into "financial planning" was done on a "gratis" basis. We provided "programmed" planning in order to sell our products. But in 1980, I was introduced to a pioneer in the financial planning industry, Ed Cox of Salt Lake City. He began a crusade that changed my career forever. He told me to "sell the process." And by the way, charge for it! Would my policyholders really be willing to pay for our planning services?

In 1981, we created a financial planning company; Structured Capital Designs, Inc. (SCD), to actually do fee based planning. This corporation was strictly fee based.

SCD did not sell products, it sold a process. It sold a process that would systematically review the key elements of financial planning; Debt and Cash Flow

Management, Risk Management, Education Planning, Tax Planning, Investment Planning, Retirement Planning and Estate Planning. I remember the first time I told one of my policyholders that we charged a fee for our services. The bone got caught in my throat. But I swallowed hard and with each passing interview the request for payment became easier. What I found out appears in the sidebar box.

This past year, I began my 37th year, selling life insurance. And I am proud of the job I do. But I must say that the past 25 years as a "planner" salesman have made my career more interesting, and more lucrative.

Now I have entered another stage of my career as a "Certified 3 Dimensional Wealth Practitioner" (C3DWP). This approach to "total" wealth management has taken the planning process I deliver to my clients to the penultimate.

Here's my advice to those of you beginning your career. Seek out an organization with whom to affiliate that utilizes fee based planning as its methodology for delivering solutions to client's problems.

Grab hold of a software vender that provides a totally integrated system for analyzing client data. Charge for your services.

To be a professional, make a commitment to obtain your professional designations, but don't stop there.

"The best way to predict the future is to create it." There will always be a need for the life insurance product. But your career will never reach its maximum potential by simply selling the product. Create a process of needs selling that works for you and your career will take on greater significance and fulfillment. Remember, it's up to you. ☐

Monroe "Roey" M. Diefendorf, Jr., CLU, ChFC, CFP®, C3DWP®, RFC® was a speaker at the Forum and will be on the cruise. He can be reached at: Diefendorf Capital Planning Associates, 152 Forest Ave., Locust Valley, NY 11560.

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- 1. I started selling more life insurance once I stopped selling life insurance. My production doubled over night.**
- 2. My client's perception of me radically changed. I was no longer the insurance salesman but rather a real financial planner.**
- 3. Our planning fees created added cash flow to improve our services to our clients.**
- 4. Policyholders became clients. In addition to increasing my life insurance sales, my securities sales were boosted.**
- 5. The planning software must be report driven, not text driven. Again I leaned on Ed Cox and his Financial Planning Systems (FPS) software to give us the analytic tools to make recommendations. No fluff. No superfluous verbiage. Just the facts. This did require a greater degree of understanding and a need to increase my knowledge base beyond my life insurance degree.**
- 6. There are no tricks to the trade and education is not optional. Professional designations are mandatory. Licenses are not enough to be called a financial planner.**
- 7. Boredom rarely sets in when you sell the process vs. a product. Rather than giving the same old sales pitch, which ends up sounding like a broken record, you let your clients "play their record" which is new with each client.**