

Selling To Minority Women

By Bob Blake

Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Company • Los Angeles

Single, minority women probably are the most underserved market in life insurance. Most producers are seeking a husband and wife who will sit down together and discuss their insurance options. Yet, minority women — especially single mothers — may be even more interested in purchasing insurance. They are concerned about their children's welfare, and are eager to make provisions for their education, care, and security.

What's more, minority women tend to be loyal customers. When I began selling insurance 10 years ago, I sold an African-American woman who was right out of nursing school a \$500,000 life insurance policy. She's kept that policy to this day, even though she since has married and her situation has changed.

**"... minority women
tend to be loyal
customers."**

in general is to be a good listener. Take a step back from selling. Women customers have serious concerns that must be addressed. The producer must listen, and then let them know that he or she cares. I constantly remind our producers, "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

The producer also can increase his opportunities by doing his homework. I've learned that although white women are more likely to develop breast cancer, African-American women are more likely to die from it, because of lifestyle, education, and other factors. As a result, African-American women are interested in cancer products, especially those with wellness benefits. Wellness benefits encourage women to get yearly mammograms that can lead to early detection, which can save lives.

In our office, which serves the public sector in Los Angeles, we sell to not only a tremendous number of minorities, but also a diverse population of minority groups. We take the time to consider the things that are important to each minority group.

For example, hypertension is a big problem in the Hispanic community. We work with this fact to help our customers find the right insurance solution. We've done a tremendous job of informing them, not scaring them, and it's paid off



Bob Blake manages Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Company's public sector office in Los Angeles, California. Mr. Blake is a 10-year veteran of the company.

**No One Cares How Much You Know
Until They Know How Much You Care**

The key to success in selling to women

**Arm Yourself With Facts
Specific to That Population**

It's important to be armed with facts.

**I/R Code: 6000.01 Prospecting —
Markets**

in increased sales and satisfied customers.

The Best Way to Sell to Minorities Is to Be One — Or Recruit One

Ten years ago I learned that African-Americans spend about \$400 billion each year. I realized then and there that I'd never need to do anything else but sell to that market. The best way — and the only way I know — to sell to any minority market is to be a member of that minority. If the producer is not, he should hire people who are and give them the training and support they need to succeed.

My firm recruits heavily from our market. We serve African-American, Hispanic-American, Chinese-American, Filipino-American and white clients. The agency is multi-ethnic, with producers of African, Chinese, Filipino, Mexican, and even Swedish descent. No one understands a people or a culture better than members of that community.

For example, a while back I was giving a presentation to an office that was about 90% Chinese-American. I could tell they weren't interested in me and

were waiting for me to finish so they could get back to work. They weren't comfortable talking to me. It was clear we weren't going to write any business.

I had two new Chinese-American producers along with me, however. While I was speaking, one of them turned and spoke in Cantonese to the supervisor. The whole atmosphere of the room shifted. The room suddenly warmed up.

The other new producer also began to speak in Cantonese, but less fluently so the people had trouble understanding him.

The first producer joked, "Don't mind him. He's speaking peasant."

The whole room started laughing. Suddenly, everyone was on board with us.

We've found these kinds of situations in many places. For example, in Los Angeles public hospitals many nurses are Filipino. So our Filipino representatives do well here in the health care market. Why send anyone else? It really works.

Be Aware of Cultural Differences And Sensitivities

It's important that the producer understand the culture of the women to whom he is selling. We live in a time

of political correctness, a time when people are afraid even to joke anymore. The producer must be careful of what he says. There are things I can say to African-American women that would be misconstrued or unappreciated coming from a person from another culture.

While members of what appears to be the same minority group may have language in common, they may differ in many other ways. My producers understand that it's important to learn a minority woman's country of origin first. A Hispanic woman may be from Peru or Honduras or from one of many other Latin countries. The producer shouldn't assume that she's from Mexico, even if that is the prevailing Hispanic culture in his community.

Another thing about which to be sensitive is not assuming that all black Americans are African-Americans. Recent immigrants from Haiti, Jamaica, or other Caribbean islands sometimes are surprised to be called African-Americans when they consider themselves to be Caribbean-Americans.

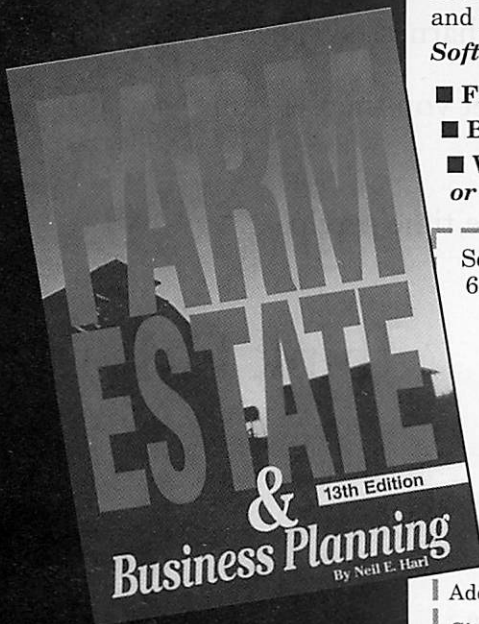
Build Trust to Build Business

The producer must earn his prospect's

Farm Estate & Business Planning

by Neil E. Harl

13TH EDITION



For Farmers, Accountants, Lawyers, Insurance Agents, Ag Lenders, Farm Managers

State law dictates disposal of property if you don't develop your own estate plan. Organization of the family farm business and planning the estate are closely entwined. This book tells you all you need to know.

ORDER TODAY. WE GUARANTEE SATISFACTION OR YOUR MONEY BACK!

Dr. Neil E. Harl is Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor in Agriculture and professor of economics at Iowa State University.

Soft cover; 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches, 448 pages. Published June, 1996.

- **FREE** shipping and handling when check attached to order.
- **BUY AT OUR RISK** - Return in 10 days for full refund if not satisfied.
- **WRITE** or **CALL** for quantity prices on five or more copies. **314-421-5445** or fax **314-421-1070**.

Send to **Life Insurance Selling**, 330 North Fourth Street, St. Louis, MO 63102.

___ copies of **FARM ESTATE & BUSINESS PLANNING**, \$28.45 each.

My check is enclosed for \$ ____.

Charge \$28.45 + \$3.00 shipping/handling to my:

M/C Visa Exp. Date _____ Card # _____
month/date

Name - Print or Type _____

Area Code/Phone Number _____

Company _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

PLEASE PRINT

Aura Financial Services

Member NASD and SIPC

Hiring 25 Registered Reps

Series 6 or 7 and 63 required

We Pay Transfer Fees

80% Payout

1199A Government Allotment

Business Accepted

We Service MSA Accounts

Superior Back Office Support

Excellent Assortment of Products

Including

Mutual Funds

Variable Annuities

Long Term Care Products

Call Larry Zigli, Vice President

1-888-590-2872 or

Fax Resume 1-205-822-2823

600 Beacon Parkway Suite 950

Birmingham, Alabama 35209

For information circle no. 23

Now Serving You 24•7



When you hunger for info on

Section 125 Cafeteria Plans

we're right at your fingertips

and open all night.

Log on, check us out.

www.125plan.com



© 2001 MHM Business Services, Inc.

For information circle no. 96

trust before he can do business, no matter what the person's background. Sometimes it becomes even more complicated when the producer is selling to a minority woman. The insurance business in Mexico and some Latin American countries has a history of fraud, so a Hispanic woman initially may be wary of discussing her insurance needs and may take longer to make a decision. Making her feel comfortable about her choices builds trust between the producer and the client before the sale is made. In the long term, the producer will have a more loyal client who more likely will purchase a broader menu of coverage over a longer period.

Yet another reason for the producer to listen carefully to minority women prospects and clients is to find out the depth of their insurance experience and understanding. Sometimes we have to do a lot of education because many minority women who are new to the U.S. may not be used to the decisions and choices they have when it comes to insurance or health care benefits.

Show You Care by Getting Involved

We're in the public sector, so it's important that we support community organizations and events. The City of Los Angeles' Association of Black Personnel knows that they can count on me for sponsorship. And when my reps call on them, they are received cordially.

I believe that we have to be committed to the communities we serve, that we have a responsibility to give back to them. I'm particularly committed to a mentoring program for inner city schools that requires me to spend a lot of time speaking to students. I try to show them a positive, successful role model and work to inspire and show them that there are so many ways they can succeed.

It really shouldn't be so difficult for minority organizations to find corporate sponsors, but for some, it is. And that difficulty can come back to haunt the uncharitable. Women, especially women of color, tend to be sensitive about whether people are there for them. They have long memories. So we make sure that we never forget about them. I'm not always able to give what I'd like, but I always make sure that we give something.

The statistics reinforce our experience. Four in five black Americans are more likely to buy products and services from

companies that have a history of supporting black communities.

There's no shortage of ways the producer can get involved, from professional associations to schools to churches. And not only will the producer find that getting involved helps his business and his community, but he also will find it immensely satisfying. I love what I do, and I've met some great people.

Understand Family Ties

The producer knows how important his own family is. He should think of the role his family would play if he lived in a culture that felt foreign to him. In many minority households, the family provides the compass to life in general. In Hispanic families, for example, the extended family — including grandparents and even godparents — is the main support and financial model in the event of an injury, loss of work or even death. In this case, the producer may want to consider explaining in detail the benefits of disability and life insurance coverage. Children are especially important in Hispanic families, which opens the opportunity to explain coverage and benefits for children that may not be covered by major medical plans.

A woman's role in the Hispanic culture often is family-centered and influenced by patriarchal traditions. A Hispanic woman may not be comfortable making a decision about insurance without talking it over with her husband, father, or other family member.

But in the Asian-American culture, women take on a great deal of domestic responsibility, even when they work full time. For many Asian-American women, managing the household also means managing the family finances.

African-American women also tend to be the major decision-makers for household purchases. They're more likely than all women to be the heads-of-household, making all purchase decisions for their families. So asking the right questions is crucial in helping the producer customize his selling technique.

Make a Difference

My job is the most awesome thing that ever could happen to me. I help people. I've had people call me and say, "I would have lost my house if it hadn't been for you!" I'm proud of what I do and appreciate the opportunity it's been for me and for all the people I've been able to help.



www.lifeinsuranceselling.com