

Thriving While Surviving

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December 4, 2011. The day my life changed forever! I went to see my specialist for what I thought was a routine check. Following his suspicions, I was run through a number of tests, and stage 2 rectal cancer was confirmed on December 16, 2011.

Over the holidays, my doctor told me to write off 2012 and concentrate on the treatments and getting better.

After my diagnosis, my wife, Pam, set up a website to keep friends and family informed about my health at caringbridge.org. She updated the site every few weeks, and it allowed a place for friends and family to post messages on the guestbook. Over the year, we had more than 12,000 hits to the website and more than 1,000 messages on the guestbook. Our house was also a revolving door of visitors, cakes, cookies, more than 300 get-well cards, emails, and meals, but in light of all the best wishes, my favorite letter arrived in February from Great-West Life—no get-wells, no fanfare, just a check (a nice big check) for critical illness insurance. That check was enough to allow me to heal. It paid for my staff's salaries for a year and outstanding bills and loans, and it carried the mortgage on a new building that I had bought only a year earlier. The critical illness check allowed me to heal, it took pressure off my staff wondering how or if they would be paid, and carried me through a year that could have been a disaster financially.

I became aware of the critical illness product in 1985 when Dr. Marius Bernard spoke in Winnipeg and the need for money after living through cancer, stroke, or a heart attack. I bought a policy at that time because I believed in the product, never thinking I would access it. It seems, though, that over the years more and more clients and friends were having cancer, strokes, and heart attacks and didn't have any financial help to get them through the healing process.

As positive people, we know the importance of a product like critical illness but never believe it will be us. There is no doubt that this can be a difficult product to sell because no one thinks that she or he will hear the diagnosis.

Just the other day, I was told that every three minutes someone in Canada is told that she or he has cancer.

- 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women are predicted to develop heart disease in their lifetime.
- 1 in 2.3 men and 1 in 2.6 women living in Canada will develop cancer in their lifetime.

- 70,000 Canadians suffer heart attacks every year.
- 80 percent of hospitalized heart attack patients survive; the percentage is higher for those with their first heart attack and lower for those with recurrent heart attacks.
- 80 percent of stroke patients survive the initial event.
- 40,000 to 50,000 Canadians suffer a stroke each year.
- 1 in 9 women is expected to develop breast cancer during her lifetime.
- 1 in 12 men and 1 in 16 women are expected to develop lung cancer during their lifetime.

I never ever thought I would be one of those statistics. I don't drink much, eat relatively healthy (few hotdogs and chocolate bars), and had never missed a day of work in my life!

Cancer changed my life, changed my outlook on life, and solidified my commitment to the critical illness product.

A critical illness check gave me the opportunity to heal and literally helped keep my business intact and thrive.

The year 2012 ended up being one of the best years I have ever had in the insurance business, and I have been doing this for 43 years. My office processed more than 400 new transactions, with 140 new life, critical illness, and disability sales, and brought in more than 11 million in new investments money.

How did this happen?

I once wrote out a mission statement saying that I wanted Sigurdson Financial Group to be bigger than George Sigurdson, and that is what happened this year. My clients and staff came to the plate and continued on with business as usual.

This does not happen overnight. Forty-three years of planting the seeds, doing business the right way, and instilling confidence in my clients produced these results.

I would like to spend the next 45 minutes sharing my business philosophies, practice, and the importance of critical illness that allowed my business to thrive while I took most of the year off to recover.

I learned long ago from my mentor John Savage “to serve the masses and eat with the classes; service only the classes and you might go broke.” My client base is huge, and everyone tells me I should deal only with high-net-worth clients, but my favorite clients are the average Joes and Mom and Pop shops. It is the masses that understand and are willing to still support and deal with you when you are ill that I respect.

I would like to discuss how we have built our business over 43 years to produce consistent activity and results. I learned early in my career that riding a roller coaster can be fun for a while, but it is much easier riding a train. What I mean by this, of course, is consistent daily activity and results.

Whether I am talking to a client worth millions of dollars or a prospect whom I am trying to get established on a financial plan, I basically use the same approach, which is as follows:

Offense

- Stuff Account
- Tax-Free Savings (in the US, it's Roth Account)
- Retirement Savings Plans/US—IRA/401(k)s
- Cash Value Life Insurance

Defense

- Term Insurance (20 Years)
- Critical Illness Insurance
- Disability Insurance/Income Replacement Insurance
- Long-Term Care

On the “Offense” there is the stuff account. With this I am trying to teach young people how to build a system of regular savings to give them confidence. In this bucket I am basically training them to learn how to save regularly and later will convert part of those savings into permanent life insurance, but I have to teach them that they can actually do it.

My clients consist of those who deposit a minimum \$25 a month to some, such as professional athletes, who are depositing \$40,000 to \$50,000 a month. The average client falls somewhere in between these.

The message I teach young people is that “those with money make the rules; those with no money follow the rules.” It’s not right, but it is reality! Saving money in general gives people confidence in all aspects of their life.

In Canada, Canadian citizens are allowed to save \$5,000 a year to our investment accounts, and all this money grows tax sheltered over the years. Each of your countries, I am sure, has its own similar products.

In the Retirement Savings in Canada we are allowed to deposit approximately \$20,000 a year where the money grows on a tax-sheltered basis but becomes taxable when drawn as income, usually at retirement.

The granddaddy of all is permanent life insurance, which is the best kept secret in our financial world. It is a tax-sheltered accumulation vehicle that has many features, such as collateral value for bank loans, disability waiver (self-completing in case of a disability), and a steady portfolio growth that requires no babysitting.

On the “Defense” we load our clients with enough term insurance that should they die prematurely, their businesses will survive, and on a personal insurance basis, the families will have enough income to live their lives.

As late MDRT member David Culper said, “No debt should ever outlive the person who created it.”

Having proper insurance allows people to spend their money while they are alive, and when they die, tax-free money walks in.

Now let’s focus on sales concepts that we use.

Business Owners

Mr. or Ms. Businessperson, you will leave the business in one of three ways:

1. You will be carried out.
2. You will be pushed out.
3. You will leave of your own accord.

It is important to build a program to ensure your freedom.

In doing so, we discussed the concept of their owning permanent life insurance as a valuable financial tool to ensure this freedom. The concept I use is “Put Me on Your Payroll.”

PUT ME ON YOUR PAYROLL!

An annual premium of \$20,000 boils down to \$10 per hour. Why not put me on your payroll for \$10 per hour?

When you walk out, I’ll walk in with \$1,000,000 in cash, exactly when it’s needed most. Ten years downstream, if you want to call the deal off, I will give you back all your money plus interest. You can’t lose.

Why not put me on your payroll?

Annual Premium	Premium per Hour*	Premium per Day
\$1,000	\$.50	\$4
2,000	1.00	8
5,000	2.50	20

10,000	5.00	40
20,000	10.00	80
50,000	25.00	200
200,000	100.00	800
500,000	250.00	2,000

*Based on 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year, 2,000 hours per year.

Your job is to become wealthy . . . my job is to make sure you are never poor.

Your employees will count on you to take care of them!

Protect the most valuable asset—you.

We have house insurance, building insurance, car insurance. How about insuring your ability to earn an income?

Make sure, Mr. or Ms. Businessperson, that you have buy-sell or key man insurance and that you have left instructions of what to do so that there is a clear understanding for the one who will sit in your chair.

It is about having the freedom of choice.

The following inspirational message was written by H. A. McNeely, executive vice president of Tampa Savings & Loan Association, Tampa, Florida:

Walking Tall

Your savings, believe it or not, affect the way you stand, the way you walk, the tone of your voice. In short, your physical well-being and self-confidence.

A man without savings is always running. He must. He must take the first job offered, or nearly so. He sits nervously on life's chairs because any small emergency throws him into the hands of others.

Without savings, a man must be too grateful. Gratitude is a fine thing in its place. But a constant state of gratitude is a horrible place in which to live.

A man with savings can walk tall. He may appraise opportunities in a relaxed way, have time for judicious estimates and not be rushed by economic necessity.

A man with savings can afford to resign from his job, if his principles so dictate. And for this reason he'll never need to do so.

A man who can afford to quit is much more useful to his company, and therefore more promotable. He can afford to give his company the benefit of his most candid judgments.

A man always concerned about necessities, such as food and rent, can't afford to think in long-range career terms. He must dart to the most immediate opportunity for ready cash. Without savings, he will spend a life-time of darting, dodging.

A man with savings can afford the wonderful privilege of being generous in family or neighbourhood emergencies. He can take a level stare into the eyes of any man . . . friend, stranger or enemy. It shapes his personality and character.

The ability to save has nothing to do with the size of income. Many high-income people, who spend it all, are on a tread-mill darting through life like minnows.

The dean of American Bankers, J. P. Morgan, once advised a young broker: "Take waste out of your spending; you'll drive the haste out of your life."

Will Rogers put it this way: “I’d rather have the company of a janitor, living on what he earned last year, than an actor spending what he’ll earn next year.”

We are all going to leave this Earth. We are on this Earth approximately 960 months. Once you are 65 there are only 240 months to go until you are 85! Your children are at home 200 to 240 months—that’s it!

Money creates freedom of choice. We counsel our clients to become their own banker.

Individuals

Bernard Baruch said, “The failure or success of a long-range savings plan is not predicated on its rate of return, but the consistency of putting money away regularly and leaving it there.”

Money gives you confidence. Pay yourself first.

Put money away for the old man or old woman that you will be one day. Will you be the grandparent who comes to visit, or the one who comes to stay?

There are two kinds of people in the world. One earns interest and the other pays interest. The one who pays interest works for the one who earns interest!

General Thoughts

What I spent, is gone; what I kept, I lost; but what I gave away will be mine forever.

Ethel Percy Andrus

Those who love deeply never grow old—they may die of old age but they die young.

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero

Two of the most important attributes we can have are honesty and integrity. Honest is what we want people to think we are; integrity is what we have if we know that we would never be found out.

We go through three stages in developing our careers:

1. Caterpillar (crawling through blades of grass trying not to get squished)

2. Cocoon (having found a comfortable place; most agents languish here too long or forever because they are afraid of success)

3. Butterfly (what we all attain to be; many are not prepared for the vulnerability that accompanies this) (As a leader you are criticized by many.)

Be the best that you can be. You want to create the atmosphere in which people want to buy from you.

One of the greatest commodities we have is time. Ask a 30-year-old if she or he would be prepared to give up \$1,000,000 to be 20 again, and most are not interested. Ask an 80-year-old if she or he would be prepared to give up \$1,000,000 to be 70 again. The 80-year-old answers yes immediately.

The key in sales is to find the premium. Some places to look are as follows:

- Dine out one less time per month—save \$40.
- Buy one fewer CD per month—save \$20.
- Pack a lunch four times per month—save \$48.
- Buy one less case of beer per month—save \$45.
- Park farther from work—save \$30.

Over the course of a year, that is \$2,196; over ten years, that is \$21,960; over 20 years, that is \$43,920.

I try to get people to do what they know they should do, and I listen to every reason why they do not do what they should do.

Dr. Robert Schuller once said, “Think long. Think right. Think big!”

Clients will ask directly or indirectly:

- “Can I trust you?”
- “Are you committed to excellence?”
- “Do you care about me?”

We tell our clients that at 65:

- You are either alive or not.
- You will be disabled or not.
- You will have money or not.
- But you are still 65!

There are basically three kinds of wealth:

1. Personal wealth
2. Social wealth
3. Financial wealth

I have discovered in my business that I have the same struggles after 42 years. These are prospecting, booking appointments, and making the sale. It never ends. Booking 20 appointments a week for 43 years equals success. You have to stay motivated so that you can influence people to act. It takes hard work, caring, and perseverance.

Ben Feldman once said, “If you call on someone once you are no longer a stranger.”

People buy, not necessarily because they believe, but because they believe that you believe!

It is also important to get involved in your community. I believe your best investment is spending time with and being interested in other people. It is beneficial on a personal level and helps your business to grow. Networking is important to success.

It is also important to your business to be involved in the industry, i.e., Advocis, MDRT, CALU, and NALU.

We will all wake up one day and realize that there is no ‘they.’ That the ‘they’ is ‘us.’

As much as the industry has changed in the past 40 years, our job has not changed at all.

In the 1950s Coke was a drink, discs were something Olympians threw, and surfing was a water sport.

Although technology has definitely changed one-on-one with our clients, making them do what they know they should do will never change. Insurance companies would love to get rid of all their agents and sell insurance on the Internet a lot cheaper, but they cannot. We make a difference in people's lives!

Henry Ford once said, "You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do." I have learned when making a decision to take money out of the equation and always make the right decision and do the right thing.

And so to be successful you need to do these three things:

1. SEE—See yourself successful.
2. START—When? Now!
3. SUSTAIN—You must sustain activity year in and year out, and this is where most agents fall down.

There are four philosophies that I have practiced that were taught to me by one of my mentors, Harry Rosenberg. Harry Rosenberg was with London Life for over 50 years. They are:

1. If the grass is greener on the other side the water bill is probably higher.
2. Never do anything that would make you have to cross the street to avoid someone in the future.
3. Don't worry about how much a man makes, you never know how much he spends.
4. Always tell the truth so you don't have to remember what you said.

Juvenile Insurance

Best kept secret in the insurance business is insuring kids. I call it immortality insurance. I talk to every client who has grandchildren and say, "Do you want your grandchildren and their children to remember you? If so, buy fewer toys and replace the additional toys with a life insurance policy." I bought whole life policies on my grandsons when they were born and put away \$5,000 per year for 20 years. When Jake is 50, he will have \$620,971 of coverage and \$1,855,026 of cash value, and when he is my age, he will have \$1,260,881 of paid-up insurance and \$2,338,603 of cash. Do you think there is a chance that he will remember Grandpa George?

This is a sample of a letter that we insert with all juvenile policies; we have had a few grandparents shed a tear when reading this:

Dear _____,

We are writing to you today to explain the purpose of the London Life policies, which is enclosed with our letter. We purchased it for you with the hope that you will keep it for as long as you live.

You will find that by now it has accumulated a significant amount of cash value, which is yours to use for whatever you wish. We suspect that you will want to call upon this cash value many times during your lifetime. At these times, we hope that you will remember that we started this plan for your benefit.

It is not necessary for you to pay any premiums in order to continue the coverage, nor must you cancel the policy in order to use the money. As a result you will be able to use it over and over through the years yet always have it to remember us by.

There is also a special provision on your policy, which you should be aware of, called a guaranteed insurance option. This option guarantees that you can purchase additional life insurance throughout the years without medical evidence.

This policy is a gift of love and affection from us and it may very well be the only thing that we do for you that you can keep for all your life. We would ask you to treasure it always.

With love,

Grandma and Grandpa

A cancer diagnosis knocked me down for eight months, but it didn't knock me out! I survived with the care of amazing medical professionals, the care and love of my wife, Pam, and of friends, and the support of my amazing staff. I am so fortunate that the business I built and the philosophies I have always lived by and shared with you today carried my business through what could have been a devastating year.

In summary, when I look back at the illness that I was given, it taught me to treasure all these valuable philosophies that I have developed over the years. It was these philosophies that have kept the loyalty of my clients but also gave me the strength to continue doing what I do best while treasuring the fact that my clients remain 100 percent loyal to us and allowed me to heal. We are the luckiest people in this world to have stumbled into this business (each of us has our own story) that we can take care of people, build friendships, and serve people to change their lives forever. Some people call this work; I call it fun.

So go out on the streets and have some fun!