Can I ask you all to stand up. We're going to do a little exercise to get us all warmed up for our session today. I want you to sit down if you have heard any of the following phrases this year:

“What good is a pension to me when I’m dead?”

That’s good. Now, the remainder of you stay standing. You may sit down if you’ve heard the following:

“I’ve no time to talk to you.”

“I’m too busy.”

“I’m not interested.”

I thought so. Every single one of us has had to deal with these phrases, which are, in fact, objections. As we can see from this little exercise, objections are a part of the financial advisor’s life, and indeed they are part of our everyday personal life too.

I’m sure that many of us are members of committees, or we chair meetings or manage staff. You, like me, will also quickly realize that the ability to effectively handle everyday objections is indeed an important tool in:

• Getting our point across
• Being an influencer
• Being a leader
• Achieving higher and better results both at work and in your personal life

Can I have a show of hands, please: How many of us in this room feel that if we could understand why people object, and then handle those objections more effectively, we would become more successful?

Excellent. Now, again, a show of hands: How many of us in this room would love to increase our percentage of full fact-finding meetings from our phone calls or initial meeting? And finally, how many of us would love to increase our sales year on year?

Well, thank you, everyone. My agenda for the next 40 minutes or so has just been set! I’m going to share with you ideas that will increase your appointments, increase your conversion of prospects to clients, and increase your sales figures.

In the sales process I believe there are essentially three parts. Let's call them “cogs in a watch.” Not one cog will move without the other.

Cog 1 is the appointment making or telephone call or approach letter. Cog 2 is the fact-find and recommendations cog. Cog 3 is, of course, the sale itself and our fee or commission that comes from the work we do.

What I would like to do today is share with you three ideas that help me at each stage to improve my performance levels and achieve higher standards.

The main part of my Focus Session to you today centers on the whole area of objections. These objections primarily occur at Cog 1 and Cog 3. The objection-handling method that I will share with you this morning will increase our skills in both of these cogs but especially for Cog 1.

Objections: Why do we get them from our prospects and clients, and how can we deal with them in a professional and efficient manner?

For Cog 2, I want to share with you an idea I’ve developed since MDRT Atlanta last year. This idea allows us to penetrate into a higher caliber of client. You all know the ones. They have the protective secretarial wall around them. This idea also makes our fact-finding meeting a much more open and committed meeting in which the client knows exactly what's expected in the meeting and information is shared willingly.

**Anthony Matthews Jones**

Jones is a four-year MDRT member with one Top of the Table and three Court of the Table qualifications. A trained singer and actor, Jones’ infectious enthusiasm and unique style make his presentations memorable. Now in his 14th year in the life insurance business, Jones shares a proven method of handling objections that has helped advisors increase appointments, close more sales, and push their production and confidence to new heights.

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Order a copy of the presentation on www.mdrtpowercenter.org:  MP3: MP1271  CD: C1271
Third, for Cog 3, I will share with you my “message from the future,” which has converted more protection and pension recommendations to sales than any other sales idea I have tried! So let’s begin with the first cog and those objections.

During my time with you today we are going to understand exactly why people use objections, how the objections make us feel, and finally, how to handle those objections firmly, decisively, and, most importantly, without creating a new objection!

Why do we get objections? Objections come to us in many forms:

- “I have no time to talk.”
- “I am not interested.”
- “I already have an advisor.”
- “What are you going to try and sell me today?”
- “I don’t need life cover or a pension.”
- “I’m not sure.”
- “I’ll have to think about it.”
- “I’ll be dead by the time I’m 65.”
- “I’m much better off in a deposit account.”
- “I’m not meeting you; it’s raining.” (Yes, that’s a genuine one I’ve had!)

Before we can effectively handle objections, we need to understand why we are hearing them in the first place. Objections are thrown at us for several simple reasons:

- It’s an excuse to get rid of us easily.
- It’s because of fear.
- It’s a need for us to explain further.
- It’s a genuine concern that needs addressing.

If we can understand which objections fall into which category, then it is much easier for us to handle the objection efficiently and effectively, without, of course, leading to a further, different objection.

So, what are the excuses? “I have no time, I’m too busy” or “I’m not interested” are what I would term “excuse objections.” The client has probably had many phone calls like ours before and has successfully avoided meeting financial advisors by using these objections. That is until now!

“What are you going to sell me today?” “I don’t need life cover or a pension.” “I’m not sure.” Well, these are fear objections. The prospects do not comprehend what we can do to help them, and they are fearful of taking the next step and attending a fact-finding meeting with us.

“I’ll have to think about it” is a classic objection in which we have not explained ourselves to the level required. The prospect is essentially saying to us, “Please explain a little more about what you do for me and it will be enough for me to say yes!” We just need to recognize this and deal with it.

“I already have an advisor.” “I’ll be dead by the time I’m 65.” “I’m much better off in a deposit account.” These are examples of genuine concerns. They are issues that the prospect or client has that will remain a barrier to proceeding further unless they are addressed.

I know that there are many more objections that we have all heard, but they all fit into the classifications I’ve highlighted in the slide above. As I hear a new objection, it is important to classify it into one of the four mentioned. By doing this, we will have a much better understanding of what we have to say in order to deal with the objection efficiently.

Now then, we know that an objection has been raised, and we know which type of objection it is, so how do we go about handling it?

I want to show you a method that I have been using and developing for 10 years. It has now become a part of my personal and working life, and I don’t even think about it anymore. It’s just there and it works! I call it “F.A.C.E. objection-handling method,” and I want to show you today how you can use it too. “F.A.C.E.” stands for the following:

- F: Foundation
- A: Agree
- C: Congratulate
- E: Empathize

We can handle any objection that comes our way by incorporating F.A.C.E. So let me explain.

We are in Cog 1—making appointments. Let’s say we are on the telephone to a prospect we would like to meet. We will start by introducing ourselves, what we do, and how we can help them, and we will throw in an incentive, or what I call a carrot, to get the prospect to bite at the appointment. We will then suggest a time and a place to meet and await the response.

We all have our own ways of doing this, but we all know these phrases in our long-term memory and can access them comfortably at any time, anywhere.

I call this phrase “the foundation.” This platforming of what we do is the foundation of objection handling: what we do, how we can help them, and we will throw in an incentive, or what I call a carrot, to get the prospect to bite at the appointment. We will then suggest a time and a place to meet and await the response.

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I call this phrase “the foundation.” This platforming of what we do is the foundation of objection handling: what we do, how we can help, whether we give an incentive or a carrot to meet up, and then asking for an actual appointment.

So once we have our foundation, handling objections becomes a very simple process. I want to share with you now how objections can be handled effectively in 10 seconds. Yes, 10 seconds is all it takes to effectively handle the objection itself.
The actual objection can always be handled by the following:

- Understand immediately what type of objection we are hearing. Is it an excuse? Is it fear? Is it a need for us to explain further or, indeed, a genuine concern?
- Use A, B, or C in our own words.
- Use our Foundation paragraph to close off the objection and achieve our initial objective.

Let me explain. When an objection is raised, we must either A, agree with the objection; C, congratulate on the objection; or E, empathize with the objection; and sometimes use a combination. We then always follow up with our foundation paragraph. The key is to use the correct response to the correct objection. Be careful to choose the correct response to the correct objection:

"I'm going to be dead by the age of 65." “Congratulations! I'm delighted to hear it.” I don’t think that would work!

Or even worse, we can’t agree with them if they’re “not interested.” For example, replying, “No, I’m not interested either, Mr. Prospect,” is not going to work!

So let’s work on some examples so that you can see F.A.C.E. at work. The most common excuse response is the classic objection “I'm not interested.” So by using F.A.C.E., which response do you think we should use: agree, congratulate, or empathize? We empathize:

John, I totally understand what you are saying to me. Indeed, many of my long-term clients originally told me they were not interested, but once they met me, their opinion quickly changed as they saw how I could really add value to them.

That is the actual objection handled in under 10 seconds as I promised. Now, if we follow the process, we link up our foundation paragraph in order to finish the response:

John, I totally understand what you are saying to me. Indeed, many of my long-term clients originally told me they were not interested, but once they met me, their opinion quickly changed as they saw how I could really add value to them.

Notice that “How does that suit you?” is an open question. They cannot respond with a singular yes or no, so even if 10:00 a.m. on Thursday is not suitable, it then allows us to ask, “Well, when is it suitable?”

Let’s take another example: “I'm too busy to see you; I have no time.” A, agree, C, congratulate, or E, empathize?

With this objection, I always congratulate. It is the last response the prospect is expecting, and it allows me to use time as a reason to see me and not as an objection. Example answer:

John, it’s fantastic that you are so busy [congratulate] and great to know that you’re business is so successful. That is the exact reason I am calling you. I guarantee you, John, that an hour spent with me will be an hour very well spent. As I said, what I want to do is [foundation] talk to you about your business—maybe look at ways of saving you money, build for your future, and maybe even save you on your next tax bill. I’m in your area next Friday at 3:00 p.m. How does that suit you?

Another example: “I don’t know you. I'm not going to divulge anything confidential.” With this objection I actually agree with the prospect. They are stating irrefutable facts, so I can do nothing but agree. Example answer:

John, I absolutely agree with you. We don’t know each other well at all yet. This is why I want to meet up with you so that we can begin trusting one another. Many of my long-term clients initially felt exactly the same as you do, and now we meet up twice a year. As I mentioned to you, what I want to do is [foundation] talk to you about your business, maybe look at ways of saving you money, build for your future, and maybe even save you on your next tax bill. I’m in your area next Friday at 3:00 p.m. How does that suit you?

Okay. Let’s have a couple of objections from the floor, and let’s work it out together how we handle it. As we can see from that little five-minute exercise, objections can be handled efficiently and without raising a further objection. It will help us achieve more appointments, become more confident and also increase our productivity.
So to recap: We must all have a foundation paragraph. This paragraph explains who we are, what we do, and how we can help the prospect. It must also include a carrot/incentive to meet, and we must propose a time to meet.

Once we have this foundation paragraph, we can then handle any objection that comes our way by either A, agreeing, C, congratulating, or E, empathizing with the client, and then moving quickly on to our foundation paragraph.

This method allows us to handle any objection without creating a new one. Yes, indeed a client might come out with a new objection at this stage, and we would have to start the process again.

Using this method has dramatically increased the number of appointments made and seen in relation to the amount of phone calls made, a very valuable method in anyone’s skill set.

Now then, let’s move on to point 2 on my agenda for us today: our second cog—the fact-find and recommendation stage.

One of the hardest things to do with a higher caliber of clients—the ones we really want to meet—is to move on from our initial meeting to full fact-finding stage. Often, we get to meet them, but we might lose a few before they commit to a full fact find and we cement the relationship. We know in our hearts that if they agreed to meet us only for a fact find and allowed us to give them a full list of recommendations, our skill will do the rest—but it’s getting to that stage.

I want to share with you to my “referral from within.” This idea came from thinking to myself, “How can I raise the profile of my company, while also telling clients that they are indeed meeting a successful, trusted, and ethical advisor and they really should meet me?” The answer was a welcome pack. I realize that many successful firms and individuals already use this concept, but until last year I presumed that only the big firms really needed these packs. Here’s my pack, with AMJ Financial’s logo on the front. It looks smart, doesn’t it? [visual]

After attending a Focus Session last year in Atlanta, I was astounded to see, in point form, the range of services we actually provide our clients on a daily basis. Most of these services are taken for granted, and we do not highlight them enough with our clients. Our clients really need to know what we provide as a service. After coming home, I looked at various financial advisor websites and resumes that most of us have, and a thought struck me: Unless people become clients or are researching us in some way, they will never have a reason to see our website, our history, our successes, or even our existing client tributes and referrals. So instead of hoping people visit my site, I decided that from now on, each person I see for an initial meeting receives a welcome pack that gives him or her all the initial information that I want people to know.

I no longer have to think, “If I could only make all these prospects go online and see these websites, and of course, in particular, my own, so that they would see how good the work that we do really is.” So I bring the best of the website to them in the form of an advisor introductory welcome pack, together with some information on the relevant topics of the time. It’s so easy. I call my welcome pack the “referral from within.”

The “referral from within” works on the psychology that it is very difficult to tell prospective clients how good, successful, qualified, or indeed trustworthy we are, as it could be deemed to be boastful, which is something we must avoid. I explain to prospects that all I want to do today is give them my pack, explain a little of what is inside it, and let them read and digest it at their own leisure. I then inform prospects that either I or my PA will call them in five working days and offer them the opportunity to meet me again for a full fact-finding meeting. They can of course say no, and that will be the end of our association . . . for now!

The pack also works when you have the formidable secretary who blocks all contact to a future prospect. By sending the secretary a welcome pack, you suddenly increase your chances of speaking to prospects and finally meeting them. It just works!

So, what’s inside my pack, and how does it work?

The key point is that when prospects or indeed clients read my pack, they see that it is always in the third person. For example: “Anthony has been an advisor for 14 years” and not “I have been an advisor for 14 years.” Why do I do this? Well, very simply because when prospects read something in the third person, it’s as if it were written by somebody else and thus subconsciously it becomes a recommendation or referral to them. It really is my referral from within my own company! It cannot be taken as boasting or self-praise.

So the first part of my pack is my biography. Next is our company history, successes, awards, and memberships of MDRT, and also actual client recommendations and testimonials of our service. It provides the reader with confidence that we are a company that is both successful and trusted.

The second page is a very clever psychological subconscious fact find. I ask the client a few simple investment questions. The questions are easy if you receive regular financial advice; however, I know that, in most cases, the answers are not going to be known. I ask clients to read these...
to themselves after I have gone and to be honest with their answers. All I tell clients is that if they know the answer to seven or more questions, then they indeed should be very happy with their current advice and my services will not be required. Again, it’s a clever psychological statement that has great effect.

On the third page is the list of services that we provide to all clients. I have adapted the list I saw at a Focus Session last year to suit my business. It allows clients to see all the different services we provide on their behalf when they become clients (not if).

The next part of my pack is a risk profiling section. I know that in Ireland, many older clients who have received investment advice many years in the past have not undergone a proper risk profiling questionnaire. Indeed, as you all know, with age our risk profile may well change. So again, I ask my prospects to fill in the answers on their own time, and should they wish to meet me again, I will let them know what their answers mean.

The final part of my pack is a detailed breakdown of a current issue regarding personal finance—something that is current in Ireland in my case or your own countries. For example, in February 2011, a new finance bill was passed in Ireland that had huge implications for self-employed pension holders. I included a guide to these changes in my pack. Many clients received this from me, and the fact that it was the first time they had heard of these changes was not a good reflection on their current advisory team, and it was an immediate source of conversation in the pension investments area.

Currently, for every 10 prospect clients I meet, and then spend 10 minutes introducing my pack to, eight agree to a full disclosing fact find on all their current plans and plans for the future. Indeed, it is a valuable pack to have.

I ordered my packs from a worldwide global printer, and I think it cost me around $500 to receive 350 packs. In each pack I have six printed A4 sheets of paper. So I reckon that each pack costs me around $2. Would you pay $2 per prospect to increase your chances of welcoming them as long-term clients? What an investment! I am sure that as my business develops, and as I aim to reach further heights, my company welcome pack will also have to evolve.

Why does it work? Well, in today’s environment it is professional, informative, market leading, and thought provoking as well as being totally different from my competitors. People want quality, honesty, and integrity. They want to see what they get for their money. The welcome pack goes a long way to building those very important bridges to turn prospects into clients and then into long-term advocates of us and our businesses. And do you know what? Prospects just love being given something for free at the end of a 10-minute conversation. It puts them in a great mood and has just increased our chances of welcoming them as clients by 50 percent.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want to present you with a very simple idea that I use in Cog 3 of the sales process. This little idea has converted more protection and retirement recommendations into actual sales than any other.

When we are talking about events that might happen early, for example an early death or a serious illness, clients sometimes find it hard to talk about it or actually comprehend the impact on those around them because, hey, it won’t happen to them.

Also, when we talk about how they are going to live 30 years in the future when they retire, it seems so far away, they’ve loads of time to sort that one out, and, of course, they’ll buy a few extra houses or something. Not sure yet? Sound familiar? We’re back to those objections again, and they wish to dismiss it.

I want to share with you a very quick, easy, and thought-provoking response that I use when faced with clients who have a proposal in front of them recommended by us. It’s a valuable addition to my objection handling at this stage. I call this idea the “message from the future.” I try to give my client a snapshot into the future. I explain that what I wish to show him or her is the result of the decisions that we are about to take, and what will be discussed by those loved ones in the future because of it.

For a prospect or indeed a client who does not believe in life insurance:

Mr. Prospect, as of yesterday, you are no longer with us. You were knocked down by a car outside Starbucks, and, unfortunately, you did not pull through. I want to give you a miracle. I want you to listen to your family’s conversation in 2017, only five years down the road. It’s your wife, Mary, talking to your children: “John Jr., Mary, and Peter, I have something I have to tell you. Mummy has to sell our home, children. We are going to live with Granny for a while until I can find somewhere. Daddy forgot to have life insurance, and I’m afraid our savings is gone. John Jr., I’m so sorry, honey. You won’t be able to go to college next fall, but hopefully you can find a job to help support us all. I’m so sorry.”
I then do not say a word. This little story must be allowed to be digested.

However, the conversation could be totally different . . . and now it’s time for the other side to the story:

John Jr., Mary, and Peter, I have a surprise for you all. We are all going to Disney on our holidays before John Jr. goes to college this fall, and guess what? We’re bringing Granny with us too! Oh how I wish your Daddy were here to see the legacy he has left us and so that we could thank him for looking after us forever.

Of course, these messages have a huge impact on our clients. It really does get the message across about the importance of our decisions today and how they might affect our families tomorrow.

Imagine this message from the future when your clients are declining your recommendation to put more into their retirement fund:

“Mr. Client, I’m going to allow you to see your 70th birthday celebrations”:

John, that was John Jr. on the phone. He has a ticket for the two of us to go on a cruise for a few weeks to celebrate your birthday. John, we can’t go, honey. Our account is empty, our pension fund ran out last month, and now we are totally dependent on the few hundred dollars we receive in benefits. This money is already spent, John, on just keeping us fed and warm. It’s at times like these that I really do wish we had put more into our pension when we had the chance.

Obviously, there is the happier version to this story too. I also have similar messages from the future regarding pension retirement planning, where John and Mary have to say no to joining their friends on the cruise to Jamaica because they can’t afford to pay their rent, never mind going on their holiday.

Compare that to John and Mary who go on two holidays each year, have a thriving social life, and enjoy every day to the full because they planned for this time in their life for more than 20 years in conjunction with their financial advisor. They realized that when they worked, they spent most of their income on a weekend. Of course, now that they’ve retired, every day is a weekend!

These messages are real, and they work because, again, they are stated in the first person and the characters involved are real and alive today.

Conclusion: Let’s bring all of this Focus Session together. There are generally three stages to turning prospects into clients.
1. Initial contact and appointment making
2. Fact find and recommendations
3. Sale
I have talked about three topics on my agenda today, each applicable to these three stages.

The F.A.C.E. objection-handling method can be used during all stages and also in all walks of life. It is my most valuable tool, and I refer to it without thinking. When faced with an objection, we must listen to it, not interrupt, and let the objection be stated in its entirety. Then we must decide whether to agree, congratulate, or empathize with the prospect. Once we have decided, we must address the objection quickly and to the point and follow it up immediately with our foundation statement. Answering objections is all about the three C’s: consistency, confidence, and clarity.

I have trained all my staff with it, and now my PA makes all my appointments for me and has an excellent conversion rate of calls to appointments.

The “referral from within” is an excellent tool to ensure that prospects want to proceed to the fact-finding stage and are open, honest, and transparent about what they have so far achieved and their dreams for the future. It allows us, then, to carry out our fact finding with all the facts and a prospect with a mind open to recommendations.

Create your own welcome pack that is unique to you. Use it to showcase, as I do, your talents, and allow the reader to be impressed by its contents. Remember, the whole purpose of the “referral from within” is to give confidence to prospects that a decision to meet for a full fact-finding meeting will be a very productive one and one that they can take with confidence.

The “message from the future” is an effective sales idea that allows us to help clients see how important both protection and retirement planning actually is. It helps clients see the impact of their decisions on themselves and their families in the future, which they may otherwise not see. Use the message from the future, because clients who have heard it have commented that it is the most emotional and thought-provoking message they have ever received from a financial advisor, and it will convert recommendations into sales!
I’ll conclude by telling you about two clients of mine, Michael and Orla. I met them in 2003, and during the fact-finding stage I found out that Michael had recovered from cancer in 1995 and was now fully fit. They had no protection in place for themselves or to protect the two little boys they had.

I was faced with many an objection throughout our meeting, mainly from Michael, who was insisting that as he had already had cancer, he was now clear and they didn't need protection, as they had come through it once and the chances of it happening again were practically nonexistent. I used my F.A.C.E. method several times that week in talks with both Michael and Orla. In the end they finally agreed, quite reluctantly, to take out a small €30,000 serious illness policy with €150,000 life cover. I was just glad they now had something in place.

I was very surprised to hear from Michael again only 12 weeks later. Orla had found a lump, and it had been diagnosed as breast cancer. She had absolutely no idea about this when we had met 12 weeks earlier. The life company honored the policy. Indeed, 18 months later, when Orla's cancer returned, they honored the policy again. This time sadly they paid the life benefit for Orla. The two boys now have a trust fund for their future education, and Orla is still contributing to their lives through her legacy of life insurance.

The reason I’m telling this story is because objections and challenges are part of our lives as financial advisors. It is our duty to improve our skills so that we can ensure that families like Michael and Orla and their two boys are protected from the events life throws at us. I genuinely know, given the time frames involved in this case, that the future education of those two boys, together with financial peace of mind for Michael, were a direct result of objection-handling skills I had learned.

What a marvelous profession we are involved in. Improving our own skills impacts us, our clients, their children, and their grandchildren. I hope what I have shared with you this morning will ensure that many more of our clients will benefit from the marvelous work that we do.