

New Jersey Producer Inspires Chinese and American Agents

No Matter Your Age, You Are Never Too Old For Training

By Alan Shulman

There's a lot more to China than the Olympics and a really big wall. There are also almost a billion and a half people, and that translates into a massive emerging insurance market. But as the cliché goes, nothing happens until something is sold. And who better to learn sales skills from than the pros in the good old U.S. of A?

Perhaps that's what The Chubb Group was thinking when it provided the AIMS Society's (www.aimsociety.com) insurance sales and marketing curriculum to its agents in Shanghai. The coursework was translated into Mandarin for the producers and taught by local instructors. Completers earned the society's CPIA designation.

To reinforce and review the lessons, motivate and mentor producers, plus officiate at the award ceremony, Chubb brought over Martin A. Lebson, vice president of The

with his story of building an agency from scratch and enjoying a long, profitable and respected career in insurance; a very American tale in a still Communist country. Lebson's lessons and enthusiasm resulted in his being invited back again the following year — a powerful compliment to him and to our industry, as well.

Value of Producer Sales Training

Now, if producer sales training is so valued half a world away, it should also be here in the states. Yet, many seasoned agents shy away from it, relying instead on their mandatory CE classes to keep them sharp. But there is no substitute for honing one's marketing and selling skills on a regular basis.

Conferences, dedicated sales publications such as my own "Agency Ideas" newsletter, and producer schools remind everyone of the basics while providing fresh ideas and tools. Agents can use that information to break out of their comfort zones and to explore new markets, regardless of age.

Sales education should never be restricted to industry neophytes. No one who sells for a living knows enough or is too old to learn. Lebson for example, who is in his 70s, maintains an active book, keeps up on his insurance reading, plus regularly attends and speaks at industry meetings.

Upon Lebson's return from his second trip to China (for producer training for Chubb), he was inspired to do more business internationally. He talked the concept over with his partners who agreed to the idea, so they formally opened U.S.-based Capacity Worldwide Consulting Group LLC, with a focus on protecting foreign businesses with a U.S. expo-

sure. He is aggressive in developing his own international leads and gaining referrals from carriers. Can agents half his age make the same claim?

Lebson's continuous exposure to sales training has instilled that drive in him. Follow his leadership by taking advantage of the classes offered by your carriers, agent's associations and by professional societies. Re-learn what you have forgotten, constantly develop fresh skills and gain another level of confidence. Attack the opportunities that present themselves in this soft market and down economy.

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Don't Cut Back

Don't use external conditions as an excuse to cut back on everything. Continue or expand your new prospecting and referral-generation efforts. People and businesses still need insurance, and they always will. If you stop selling yourself, shoppers won't think of you when it's time for them to buy.

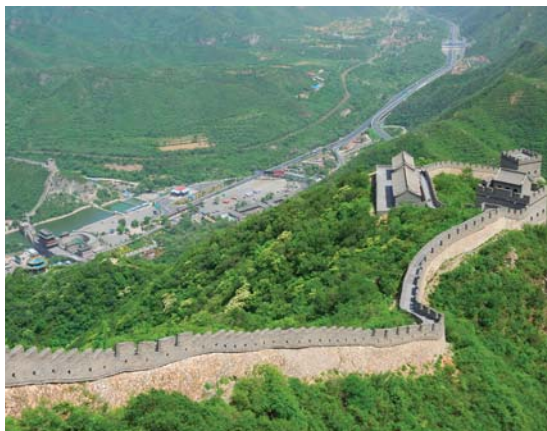
In his 50-plus years in the business, Lebson has seen many economic cycles. Yet, he still encourages his fellow producers to persist and to sell, regardless of the prevailing market conditions. Certainly adjustments are needed, but his guiding direction is always the same: forward. Sitting on one's renewals is never the way to go, because someone is always after your accounts, no matter how long you've been in the business. ■



Shulman



Marty Lebson, vice president of The Capacity Group



Capacity Group in Mahwah, N.J., an *Insurance Journal* Top 100 Agency.

Lebson is a former president and current director of the AIMS Society, making him very familiar with what was presented in class. He's also an active producer with more than 50 years of industry experience — a real plus in Asia, where people are taught to honor their elders. Lebson inspired the producers

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