

Sow Your Seeds Thoughtfully Today

Produce an Orchard Tomorrow

The popular image of Johnny Appleseed is that of a gangly, rough-hewn, itinerant pioneer planter who traveled the countryside randomly spreading apple seeds everywhere he went. That, in reality, is part of American Folklore. In fact, John Chapman was born in 1774 and was apprenticed as an orchardist by his father. Rather than riding roughshod across America dispersing apple seeds, he carefully used his seeds to plant nurseries and built fences around them to protect them from livestock. His trees were then sold on credit or used for barter. Through this careful approach John Chapman or Johnny Appleseed, introduced his apple trees to large parts of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

When building a successful credit life insurance operation in your bank there are some lessons that can be learned from Johnny's commitment and planning. The most important lesson is to not just randomly throw seeds on the ground and expect that the result will be a beautiful apple orchard. The following steps, if heeded, will help ensure that the seeds you sow today will turn into something that nourishes your bank and your customers for years to come.

Product and Sales Training

Before offering any product your loan officers need to understand what they are selling and how the product can benefit your bank and your customers.

Then they have to gain the confidence to effectively offer these valuable insurance products in a consultative approach. ICBA Reinsurance offers over 20 training modules on various topics that can be offered either in your bank or via the Web and at your convenience. Best of all, the sales skills your employees learn here can be applied every day across all bank product lines.

Setting Goals

Once you have trained your employees on the products, you need to set bank goals and individual goals for each loan officer and branch. Set a goal for the bank first on the overall loan penetration you would like to see and then the penetration level for your individual loan officers and for each branch. When you have set these goals you can then determine commission income goals for the bank based on the number of closed loans, the average loan size and the aggregate penetration. Setting goals keeps everyone moving in the same direction. If you need help determining realistic goals for your bank, call ICBA Reinsurance or your agent.

Tracking Penetration

Like a strategic plan, setting goals are only good if you regularly track your progress. As part of your weekly or monthly meetings with your loan officers pass around a spread sheet showing how each loan officer has done. Track the number of



loans closed, the amount of the loans and how many loans included credit life and disability insurance. No one ever wants to consistently be at the bottom of the spread sheet. Use peer pressure to track penetration and motivate your employees.

Incentives

Everyone likes recognition and providing incentives is a tangible form of recognition. From simply including the names of the top sellers in your bank newsletter to providing gift certificates, or sharing commissions (if allowed in your state) all these forms of incentives will contribute to building a successful credit life operation and sales culture in your bank. ICBA Reinsurance runs two contests a year for loan officers at participating banks. For each certificate submitted the loan officer will earn an entry in a monthly prize drawing. ■

ON THE WEB: www.icbareinsurance.com

CALL US: (888) 790-6625

By Stephen A. Ello, president and CEO, ICBA Reinsurance