

## How to Drive Agent Production

I'm regularly asked by clients how to increase agent production. After all, only two things matter in this business - making a difference in the lives of others and increasing production. My suggestions are effective and proven, but nevertheless, are often not what managers and company executives expect. My philosophy is simple, but it's not usually what people want to hear.

Managers and company executives often want to discover the magic words or special promotion that will universally cause their team of agents to begin writing more business. At the very least, they want that elusive solution that will spur stagnant agents to take action and write business. So what is the secret formula, special promotion or magic phrase? You already know the answer to this... There are no special words or promotions that will cause weak performers to become strong. Which brings me to my philosophy regarding influencing agent production.

*If someone lacks the desire to grow, nothing you can say (short of threatening termination), will influence their production. Work with the agents who want to be worked with and leave the others alone (or let them go).*

The best ways to improve your team's production is to 1) identify the agents who want to grow and help them reach their goals, and 2) improve and increase your recruiting results. Now, you might say that each of the statements are pretty obvious, but for years I've worked with intelligent, hardworking managers who strive endlessly to improve the production of each (read that as every one) of their agents. And as a consequence, they are frustrated, stressed and over-worked. Their time management and productivity suffers and their team's production isn't all that good. In addition, due in part to the scarcity of time and energy, these managers recruit at a slow pace. The consequence of working with agents who are complacent, along with not doing enough with the agents who want to grow and not recruiting at an adequate pace, is that the manager becomes a weak manager - and that is unfortunate and unnecessary.

Let me explain why my philosophy works so well. If you regularly prod, nudge and nag agents who are complacent, you waste their time and yours, you expend needless and fruitless energy, you negatively affect your attitude and theirs, and you take time away from efforts that can truly make a difference - recruiting and working with ambitious agents. By accepting that an agent is happily complacent, you can still remain supportive of him or her, and yet devote the majority of your time, energy and emotion to those agents who want your help and to recruiting new ambitious agents.

How do you differentiate between someone who is stagnant and complacent, and someone who is stagnant and struggling? It's not very difficult to determine, but it's not always obvious. Just because an agent's business is stagnant or shrinking doesn't necessarily mean that they're happy about it. However, there is an approach which works beautifully on many levels. The managers who have implemented this approach report an incredible response from their agents. This approach that I'm about to share with you is not one to get agents to produce more. Instead it's intended to reveal who has ambition and who is complacent. In addition, it leads to extremely productive discussions which in turn lead to new, higher levels of performance for both the agent and the manager. Here it is. Simply ask your agents this (one-on-one and privately):

“Are you happy with where your business is?”

Please don't dismiss this question because it's so simple. The impact of this question is dramatic and the implications are far-reaching. You see, most agents have never been asked that by their manager(s). To many agents, it appears that their manager and their company only care about production and aren't interested in whether the agent is happy in their

business and their life. Additionally, some agents have never stopped to reflect on the answer to that question. Asking them about whether they're happy with where their business is causes them to focus on the many positives of this business and identifies areas which **they** want to improve (as opposed to areas where **you'd** like them to improve). And finally, many, many agents know what they want but are frustrated by their inability to achieve their goals. This is further compounded by the frustration of having no one to talk to about these challenges. My clients have reported incredible experiences when asking this question. Agents have poured their heart out to them and talked for over half an hour. This question has caused some agents to break down and cry. It inspires agents to dream again and imagine what is possible. It has nothing to do with goal-setting or quotas. It has to do with dreams and with self-motivation. It enables a re-connection between agent and manager. And best of all, when the ensuing conversation is handled properly, it sets up a dynamic which leads to higher productivity, lower stress and ultimately greater production for your team. Not necessarily from each agent, but from your team overall.

Understand that not every agent will be dissatisfied with their present business. There definitely will be agents who are happy with their business. They are happy with their income and have the free time they want. Be grateful for these agents, because they have reached their goals, they provide a nice steady stream of income to you, and they demand relatively little of your time. Unless they are a drag on your team, your job is to congratulate them on being at that level of success, offer to do whatever you can to help them stay where they are, and then LEAVE THEM ALONE. As for agents who are unhappy but argue for all their perceived limitations, I always like to state the obvious. To those people I simply state, "You can't be happy here...", which of course, leads to another kind of discussion.

Which brings us to the agents who are not happy with where their business is and want to grow. This is where your real opportunity lies. This is where you can make a real difference not only to your overall production, but in the lives of these agents. This is where you have the opportunity to shine as a leader and help people realize their dreams. This is where you have the opportunity to develop people beyond their present state. There is an art to coaching agents. It's not about offering solutions. It's not about setting goals. It's about developing others and drawing the best out of them. But that's a discussion for another time...

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