



JEFFREY D. MOOERS,

is president of H.D. Mooers and Company, a brokerage general agency in Lafayette, CA. He is a third-generation BGA and has been with the company for 25 years this fall.

H.D. Mooers and Company has been in business for more than 75 years. The agency is an impaired risk specialist and is one of the most respected names in the brokerage industry.

Mooers currently serves on the board of directors and the editorial advisory panel at NAILBA. He won NAILBA's "Chairman's Award" in 2012. He is the past president of NAIFA Mount Diablo, the only NAIFA local in California to win the AAA Gold Award in 2013.

Mooers can be reached at H.D. Mooers and Company by telephone at 925-283-7310. Email: jeffm@hdmooers.com.

The Second Sale

No matter the method of choice, a complete picture of the risk will have your cases approved much faster and with improved results

I became "enlightened" at the gym the other day. Not, alas, by my wog (walk+jog=wog) on the treadmill, but from a conversation I happened to have with a broker. He expressed his concern with future sales. His customer base was aging. The internet had become a formidable adversary. He wondered aloud how all the changes in healthy living might affect his bottom line.

He didn't sell life insurance.

He sold lollipops.

It dawned on us both that if we didn't learn how to work with technology, we need only to look in the locker room mirror to find the real sucker.

The "drop ticket" process is happening, whether you like it or not. The reason is the same as it always is: money. Carriers might dress it up as consumer-friendly, but the fact is it is profitable. And for young, healthy clients who are buying relatively small term plans, it's a perfectly viable alternative.

Still, there is art to this game. Regardless of the method—drop ticket or traditional—your job will always be to sell the concept of life insurance. But there is a second sale involved: you, along with your brokerage general agent (BGA), must also sell the risk to the carrier. To do this effectively, it's critical to know the landscape. One must think like an underwriter.

Technology has turned underwriting upside down. It used to be that the agent's job was to act as the eyes and ears for an underwriter. E-applications have changed all that—many "applications" are submitted without the agent ever even meeting the cli-

ent. How then does an underwriter uncover the information they need?

Here is a list of some of the tools underwriters use. As you read this, think of your clients and what might show up on a search. Then address it up front.

- Public Records: criminal history, bankruptcy, liens, judgments.
 - Script Check: an online database with prescription medications.
 - Google: used to check/verify information on both individuals and companies.
 - Social Media: so take down the facebook photo of you with that cigarette.
 - Manta: used to estimate business revenue.
 - Esearch (EMSI) or Lexus Nexus: credit history, property owned, delinquent accounts, electronic Inspection Reports.
 - Terrorist Activity: via the Patriot Act.
 - Social Security: to match up the number.
 - MIB: for insurance activity.
 - MVR: motor vehicle report.
 - APS: Attending Physician's Statement
- And you wonder why it takes so long...
And you wonder how anybody gets approved...

Even with all these vast electronic tools, there remains, at a core level, an art to the science of underwriting. Contrary to what you might believe, underwriters are actually human beings. Some even have lives, and families, and good days and bad days. Researchers have visited home offices and have found evidence of life.

How best, then, to "sell" your risk to these actual people?

Agents and brokers have a golden oppor-

tunity to position their clients in the most positive light, yet many ignore the chance. It's critical to *tell the story*.

Probably the best way to do this is with a cover letter. While not always necessary, a cover letter can paint a realistic and positive picture of your risk. Chances are your client has a desire to obtain coverage, and no specific plans of dying anytime soon. So share that. Explain how the sale makes sense, how it came about, where it stands, etc. Where appropriate, why not personalize the application with a photograph? Giving a face to the name makes the whole thing real.

Most important, make sure you are working with a BGA who will go to bat for you. Make sure they know the whole story and will advocate for you and your client.

I spoke with one chief underwriter who told me:

"There's always something that I don't know. Many decisions are a 'leap of faith' as opposed to an agent who 'just needs a case.' So the BGA relationship is absolutely critical. It's a relationship based on respect and trust. BGAs can get me to do things that the agent can't get me to do. I may not know exactly what's going on, but I feel better about it."

Not long ago, one of my best agents informed me that he and his staff were having a pizza party for their clients in a larger firm, in an effort to push some individual life policies through for the owners.

I asked the agent if he remembered to order olives on the pizza. I had seen the application, and out of curiosity (admittedly

due to a very high income), I had googled the President. Turns out the firm was the olive supplier for many food companies, including some major pizza chains.

"No," the agent told me. "There were no olives on the pizza. They even commented on the lack thereof. How did you know they were olive people?"

I told him it was pretty easy to discover. He felt, if you will, like the pits.

The key is to anticipate what an underwriter will be looking for, and introduce your client proactively. Bring what you can to the table. Work with a BGA whom you trust.

And continue to do what you were born to do: *Sell*. 🌐