

The Innovator's Edge

Insurance Sales in the 21st Century



Insurance 2.0

PINNEY
INSURANCE

The Innovator's Edge: Insurance 2.0

Insurance Sales in the 21st Century

Ryan Pinney

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I N S U R A N C E

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INTRODUCTION

At a past NAIFA Sales Summit, I spoke to a woman whose business was down. She sold health insurance, which at the time, was taking a big hit due to Obamacare. She knew she needed to sell other products, like life insurance, in order to stay profitable and competitive. I asked her why she hadn't branched out already, if she knew that was the key to continued success. "I'm too busy," she said.



*Ryan Pinney
President, Pinney
Insurance, Inc.*

But I thought there was a different answer. "You're not too busy," I told her. "You're afraid of success."

To help her see my point, I asked how many of her existing clients would buy life insurance, disability insurance, critical illness, or other products that pair well with health insurance. I gave her a few ballpark figures to choose from: 1 in 20? 1 in 10? 1 in 5? She answered, "1 in 5."

Next, I asked her how many clients we're talking about. She told me she had about 1,000 clients. That meant we were now talking about approximately 200 people she **knew** would buy more insurance if she offered it to them. Yet she had never tried to make that sale.

Why? What's going on here?

I started thinking of real-world examples I could give her where this kind of strategy works well. Best Buy instantly came to mind. If you've ever bought a new camera or computer at Best Buy, you know they offer (and make a great deal of money on) third-party warranties. But it's not their "sales people" who offer this—it's the cashier who asks if you want extra protection for your new phone, camera, or computer.

Best Buy has the art of offering warranties down to a science. The cashier gives you three options, none of which are, "I don't want to buy a warranty." This is the model more producers need to use. So why don't they?

They're afraid of success.

Why? Because as soon as you get that first client to say "Yes, tell me more," you have to know what happens next. You have to sell a new product, which requires specific knowledge you probably don't have yet. The truth is that many agents aren't willing to invest the time needed to acquire that knowledge. They're actually afraid to ask their clients about new and different products, in case they say yes.

So I pose the question to our industry at large: **Is your fear of success holding you back?**

The reason we don't go after the things we want is because it's hard. When it comes to growing your business, you have to be able to sell a new product, and there are lots of barriers to that. But don't be afraid of something just because it's hard. There are ways you can leverage people and companies who have the specific product knowledge you need.

Don't be afraid of something
just because it's hard.

Your first step is asking that client whether he wants life insurance, disability insurance, or critical illness insurance. Get that “yes” and you’ll find ways to make the rest of the process happen.

Your second step is finding a partner to support you as you expand. For example, you could partner with a BGA that knows the ins and outs of the product(s) you need to sell. Your client never has to know you aren’t the expert. If they ask a question you can’t answer yourself, all you have to say is, “I don’t know, but I’ll find the answer.” Ask your partner for help, get the training they offer, and turn your fear into success.

That’s what Best Buy did. They partnered with AIG to provide their Geek Squad Protection Plans. They didn’t re-invent the wheel by trying to build and manage their own in-house customer service contracts. They went out and found a turnkey solution provided by an industry leader, so they could get back to doing what they do best—sell electronics.

You don’t have to be afraid of success. If I can do it, so can you. In this eBook series, I’m going to share all of the tips and strategies I’ve used to bring my business into the 21st century.

In this book, you’ll get a very broad overview of my philosophy for insurance sales as we move forward. You’ll also find links scattered throughout the book to other helpful guides I’ve used in my business to help with things like social media strategy and standardizing workflow.

1

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

“TECHNOLOGY IS A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD. JUST AS SALES PEOPLE ARE MOVING INTO THE FUTURE, THE BUYERS ARE ALREADY AHEAD OF US.”

– Koka Sexton

There’s no question that our industry is in a state of flux. From the rise of internet direct marketers to the growing number of uninsured middle-market consumers, the threats and challenges we face are huge. The biggest problem of all is convincing our customers that we provide value. To do that, we have to take a hard look at our industry and ourselves—and define our value here first.

MORE COMPETITION, LESS DIFFERENTIATION

In 1970, my father began his career as an insurance agent with Prudential. He learned about the products, how to present them, and what to say if a client objected. The system was proven and worked for decades. All he needed was to find prospects willing to talk about protecting their families or businesses. As he says, “The only people who buy life insurance are people of character who love someone more than they love money.”

While I agree with his statement, a lot has changed.

Today, competition for producers and agencies is fierce. Recruiting and retaining top producers, key employees, and your best clients is an ever-increasing challenge. Over the past 40 years, our industry has moved away from value and toward the commoditization of our products and services. Unfortunately, these problematic trends are not going away.

“I have been up against tough competition all my life. I wouldn’t know how to get along without it.” - Walt Disney

To make matters worse, the sales and service models for our products have changed, too. Technology allows us to do more with less. We have more data, more options, and better prices, but we’ve lost the personal touch and “value adds” that made our industry great.

In fact, our industry—specifically, how a consumer buys products—is changing faster than we’re adapting. While consumers still “love someone more than money,” the way they shop, make decisions, and buy has fundamentally shifted.

A CHANGING INDUSTRY

So what's next? The rise of internet direct marketers changed the value proposition for most consumers. Society doesn't buy products and services face-to-face; instead, we turn to search engines, mega distributors like Amazon, or recommendations from friends, family, and even strangers.

Over the horizon, new technologies are looming that will redefine the industry: complete sales automation, data-mined target marketing—sometimes called “Big Data Marketing”—and alternate distribution models that we can't envision yet.

Imagine what could happen if Facebook becomes the largest insurance distributor in the world.

Imagine what could happen if Facebook becomes the largest insurance distributor in the world. As of February 2021, they already have *2.8 billion* potential clients who tell them when they get married, divorced, have a baby, buy a home, get a new job, or retire, all without prompting. Now that's a truly awesome prospecting list!

So how are some advisors innovating and accomplishing more with less? How can they spend more time with their best clients, yet provide service and support for their most needy and problematic?

They understand the secret of leveraging new technologies and process improvements. More importantly, they understand that pricing, underwriting, products, and service don't matter. Let me say that again: pricing, underwriting, products, and service don't matter...at least not in the traditional sense. Don't believe me? Let me prove it.

Pricing, underwriting, products & service don't matter...at least not in the traditional sense.

Answer this question: Can you honestly say you have a broad portfolio of products, and that because of your experience, expertise, industry relationships, and underwriting knowledge, you can find the best products, at the best pricing, while providing excellent service to help your clients meet their needs?

Nearly everyone at an MDRT or NAIFA meeting can say the same. So how are you different from each other? To our clients and prospects, we aren't any different. We lack differentiation and we are seen as a commodity.

We failed to add value in the minds of our future clients and we're losing sales opportunities because of it. We need to change this paradigm—something easier said than done.

Fortunately, I have a few tips that I've used successfully in my own business, and now I'm going to share them with you.

2

CUSTOMER 2.0, MEET SALES 2.0

“IT’S NO LONGER ABOUT INTERRUPTING, PITCHING,
AND CLOSING. IT’S ABOUT LISTENING,
DIAGNOSING AND PRESCRIBING.”

- Mark Roberge

Our buyers have changed, but our sales strategies haven’t. It’s time for a dramatic restructuring of the way we do business, from generating leads to nurturing prospects to mining our existing spheres of influence. First, we have to be able to tell the difference between what our customers **say** they want and what they **actually** want.

THE PROSPECT-DRIVEN PURCHASING PROCESS

To become a 21st Century Producer, you need to understand the client of today—Customer 2.0. Because information is so readily available online, Customer 2.0 has unlimited access to business profiles, connections, products, services, reviews, and more. When they consider doing business with someone, they look them up on the Internet and ask for advice.

Consumers' conversations with each other have more influence on their decision to buy than any marketing effort from a vendor. Customer 2.0 has re-invented the marketing, sales, and purchasing process. So how do you adjust your sales methods to accommodate a prospect-driven purchasing process?

ADDING RELEVANCE

In order to sell to Customer 2.0, you have to invent Sales 2.0. The first step in Sales 2.0 is becoming relevant to your customer.

First, you have to educate yourself. Adapting to technology and social media is a must. You need to learn more about your prospect as an individual. For example, you can use LinkedIn to learn about his or her career or business. Once you know their specific needs and challenges, you have an "in." Actively listening and learning allows you to produce individualized service—solutions tailored to their needs. This will drive them into deeper engagement with you and add value to your service.

Sales 2.0 is all about being relevant, knowledgeable, and valuable. Sales will always be relationship-driven, but you have to get in front of your prospect first and be seen as a knowledgeable resource for them to turn to. It all starts with using technology and social media to gain that knowledge.

ADDING VALUE

Customer 2.0 has specific needs that aren't met by the sales practices used today. The problem is that what consumers *say* they want and what consumers *really* want are separate things. They say they want “low prices” and “great service”—goals that are often mutually exclusive. What consumers really want is value.

For agency managers, this is key. If you encourage your producers to focus on value, they'll be significantly more successful. Let me give you two specific examples that illustrate what I mean by value.

- **Grocery Store Checkout.**

When was the last time you were in a grocery store checkout line and you grabbed a soda, magazine, or pack of gum from the displays while you waited? Did you think about the price? No. In reality, you probably paid more for it than a comparable item elsewhere in the same store

or online. So why did you buy it? Maybe it was convenient. Maybe you were thirsty and it filled a need. The key point is that the price wasn't important. It didn't really matter at all. What matters is that you felt the purchase had value. Consumers of today are exactly the same.

- **Moissanite.** Moissanite is almost identical to a diamond. In fact, the sparkle and clarity of Moissanite often exceed a diamond's. These gems cost far less than a diamond, yet diamonds are advertised and sold far more frequently than Moissanite. Why? The strength, clarity, and quality are all similar, but it doesn't matter. People feel the purchase of a diamond has value. Consumers want value in everything. In its absence, things become commodities, and only then do consumers decide based on price and service.

“Selling to people who actually want to hear from you is more effective than interrupting strangers that don't.”

- Seth Godin

Once you understand the difference between “what consumers say they want” and “what they really want,” it’s important to give them “what they need.”

*Consumers need to hear
how you can be of value to them.*

That’s not a sales pitch about you, your agency, or the carrier you represent. That isn’t important to them because it’s all about you. Consumers want... no, *need*...it to be about them.

It can be as easy as saying, “If you hire me, I will help you define your personal financial goals and create an uncomplicated plan to achieve them. I will help you along the way and recommend any course corrections needed as your life changes.”

Notice I didn’t say anything about the “how” or “what” of accomplishing this, or about myself. I didn’t mention a product or service or give them a brochure. None of that matters until what I “do” matters, and what I “do” doesn’t matter until I make it about them.

What I “do” doesn’t matter
until I make it about them.

3

THE NEW SALES FUNNEL

“YOU DON’T CLOSE A SALE,
YOU OPEN A RELATIONSHIP
IF YOU WANT TO BUILD A LONG-TERM,
SUCCESSFUL ENTERPRISE.”

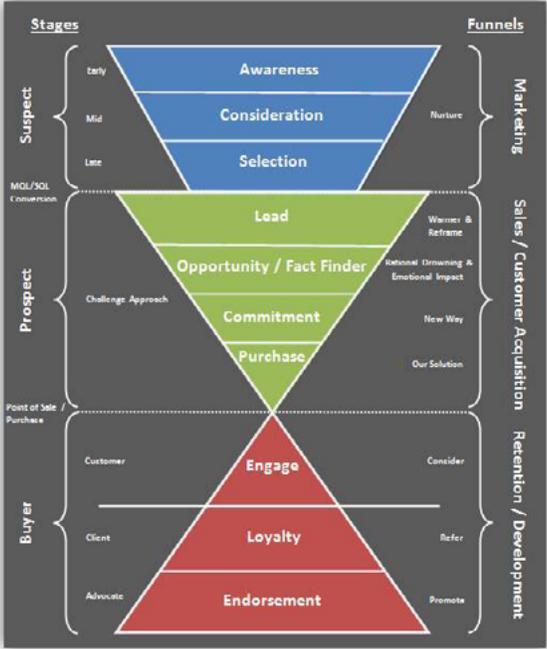
- Patricia Fripp

Most agents ask me how they can get more leads, especially online leads. While internet marketing and SEO were a great way to get leads a few years ago, it’s no longer a good idea to depend on search engine traffic to bring you an easy source of revenue. The new sales funnel will require you to look elsewhere to make more sales—and it’s somewhere you probably don’t expect.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR KEY CONVERSION POINTS

To become a 21st Century Producer, you need to understand the new sales funnel. Because of the changes previously mentioned, the sales funnel is now split into segments. Visualize this as three vertical, interconnected funnels:

The 21st Century Sales Funnel



In the past, you could be relatively successful simply by being a good salesperson. Today, you need to be a top-notch salesperson, world-class marketer, and provide elite customer service. I don't know about you, but I'm a decent salesperson, an average marketer, and my customer service isn't anything to brag about ... yet I managed to sell thousands of individual insurance policies last year. How? I standardized, systematized, and automated as much as possible. But I couldn't automate until I understood the new sales funnel created by the reality of Customer 2.0.

In this reality, we need to focus on four things:

1. Conversion
2. Up-sell
3. Cross-sell
4. Referrals

Let's talk about conversion points. These are the four key points where:

- A prospect or lead transitions into an applicant
- An applicant transitions into a customer
- A customer transitions into a client
- A client transitions into an advocate

Each point is important. As you look at your practices, you'll likely find that you're doing little or nothing in the top (marketing) or bottom (retention) funnels, and spending all your time on the middle (sales) funnel. This is counterproductive for your current sales efforts and extremely detrimental to your future cross-sell and referral efforts.

EVALUATING LEAD SOURCES

I'm often asked how to generate more leads, including internet leads.

While this can grow your practice, I no longer think it's a good way to maintain a practice or generate the most valuable leads.

Remember, I'm saying that having generated hundreds of thousands of leads.

Instead, your best leads and sales opportunities come from existing clientele and centers of influence. That's probably not a big surprise, yet how many of you have a standardized, systematized, and automated way of reaching out to these clients and centers of influence?

Better yet, how many know how your clients and centers of influence prefer to be communicated with, educated, and solicited for new business opportunities?

*“Value the relationship
more than making quota.”*

- Jeffrey Gitomer

My experience tells me not many.

That's because today's agents are armed with yesterday's tools, conducting business with the same techniques my father used in 1970. The problem is that most prospects, consumers, and clients are too busy to be bothered by those same old tactics.

CATEGORIZING CONSUMERS

To be effective today, you must maximize each opportunity and customer. This takes a concerted effort and a focus on the metrics of each step in the process. When looking at those metrics, you must know what your conversion numbers are at each stage of the opportunity cycle. For example, you need to be able to answer questions like this:

*What percentage of your **leads**
become qualified **prospects**?*

*What percentage of your **customers**
become **clients**?*

In looking at your metrics, it's important to identify what stage of the opportunity cycle each consumer is in when you interact with them. For us, we place consumers into three major categories:

- **Suspects** – those who we are proactively marketing to but haven't yet expressed a specific interest in a service or product. These people are underappreciated and often overlooked in the traditional insurance sales model. In fact, a Forrester Research study concluded 84% of these people, specifically the ones that say they aren't interested in purchasing today, will go on to buy from you—or a competitor—within the next 24 months. This last fact showcases the importance of effective communications tools and informational content to help a Suspect move to the next phase of the process.

The Opportunity Cycle

- **Suspects:** Communicate effectively with them; 84% will buy from you or a competitor within 24 months.



“Listening is the new prospecting.”

- John Jantsch

- **Prospects** – those who have expressed an interest but haven't actually purchased yet. Most insurance agents refer to these as "leads," and whether you purchase them or cultivate them, it's where most sales people focus the bulk of their time. Why? Because they are often considered "sales qualified" or "ready to buy." The truth is that only 50% of consumers in this category are actually ready to buy today. That is why a lead nurturing process that takes them from "interested" to "qualified" to "ready to buy" is so important.

The Opportunity Cycle

- **Prospects:** Create a lead nurturing process to take them from interested to ready to buy.



- **Buyers** – those who have already purchased at least one product or service from us. This is the most important and neglected category in the bunch. As an industry we talk a lot about providing service, doing annual reviews, and getting referrals, but the truth is that most of us don't actually do so. In our agency, we break this category down into:

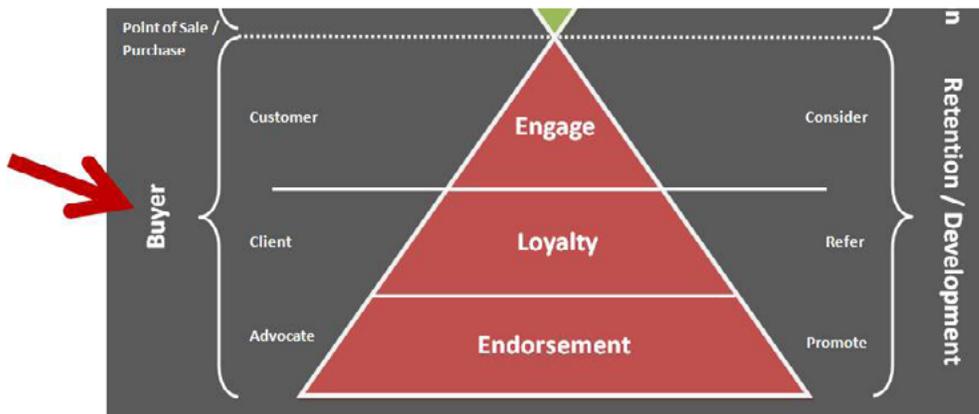
Customers, or one-time purchasers,

Clients, or those who have made 2 or more purchases, and

Advocates, or those who have or make referrals to us.

The Opportunity Cycle

- **Buyers:** Turn customers into clients and advocates; they represent 80% of profits and less than 20% of expenses.



This allows us to focus on and maximize the time spent with each buyer type. In case you're wondering, this last category—buyers, and more specifically, clients and advocates—is the most important and the one you should focus on most. If you look at the metrics—the numbers associated with these two groups—you will find, like we did, that they account for nearly 80% of our profits and less than 20% of our total expenses.

I want to repeat those numbers.

They accounted for nearly 80% of our profit and less than 20% of our expenses.

Why? One simple reason: they're the most open to the last three items on our focus list, namely up-sells, cross-sells, and referrals.

I'll start with the first two:

- 1. Up-sells** serve several purposes, including making each client more profitable to interact with. Up-selling involves adding riders and additional policy options that help the client better meet their goals. This is where we as an industry can add the value back to the products and services we offer, by making them more personalized and client-focused. This is something Customer 2.0 demands – remember, they want it to be about *them*.
- 2. Cross-selling** is about focusing on account rounding, the process of adding additional products and services to each lead, customer, and client you work with. The goal here is to provide every option you can to every consumer you interact with. Already sold a customer a life insurance policy? Now is the time to offer income protection or retirement planning. The best time to set the stage for the next sale is right after the first. This is when you should start the conversation about the next piece of the financial planning puzzle, filling coverage gaps, and protecting other parts of the client's life.

Unfortunately, your customers often only remember what you sold them last – even if you've talked to them about all of your services. This is because consumers only focus on what's timely and important to them. This is where having a well-thought-out, automated marketing and customer nurturing campaign to keep them informed and engaged is critical.

Remember, with Customer 2.0, you're constantly competing with other sources of information, including your competition, for their attention. To be successful, your content must be relevant and stand out. It's been proven that sending the right message about your products or services at the right time directly improves conversion results.

To get the most out of your marketing efforts, I have a few suggestions for you below.

MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA

Before I go any further, I need to make the following disclaimer. While I did my best to include only practices and tools you can actually use, not all of them are going to be acceptable to the companies and agencies you work with. I strongly encourage you to check with your appropriate regulatory or compliance department before implementing any of these strategies. With any form of marketing, it's critical that it meets the following guidelines:

- **It's customized.** Marketing materials that don't apply to your recipient's demographic or personal situation are irrelevant. Don't waste your time...or theirs.
- **It's visual.** Consumers are marketed to all day long, from mobile ads to radio commercials to Facebook posts. Use images to stand out from the crowd. Studies have shown they are more memorable than text.
- **It makes a connection.** Visual content is the fastest way to make an emotional connection with a consumer, plus it offers a great branding opportunity. It will take you a lot longer to build rapport with words.
- **It matters.** Your marketing has to close a gap between a financial planning question or problem and the solution. The more targeted your solution, the more likely it can be used to nurture a lead.
- **It's easy to understand.** To explain a complicated subject, try step-by-step visual guides, like the kind you get with TVs, computers, and cameras.

“When you have a multi-tiered sales effort, the first thing you want to do is understand the market.”

- Brian Frank

This is a natural point where many of you start thinking about using social media, blogs, and email to deliver your messages.

Let me offer a few quick tips about social media specifically:

- **First**, it's a great communications tool, but it's an even BETTER research tool. That's good, because many carriers and agencies won't let you use social media as a marketing or sales tool, but often have no major restrictions on using personal accounts for research purposes. For example, you follow a client on Facebook. They announce they're expecting their firstborn child. Now you have a reason to call and congratulate them while dropping a subtle reminder that it's time to update their life insurance and financial planning.
- **Second**, it can be a fantastic tool for creating rapport with clients and prospects. In just a few minutes, you can identify things that are important to them, like where they went to school, recent vacation spots, even a favorite sports team. I'm not suggesting you pretend to be interested, but if you have things in common, make sure to bring it up in your conversations with them.
- **Third**, it's hands-down the best referral tool you have at your disposal. It's easy to get a list of referrals from your clients, but are they the names you want? All too often, we fail to ask for the right referrals. To be effective, you need a system in place to ask for and receive referrals. Your clients need to know what type of referrals you actually want. And you need a standardized way of accepting them, as well as a systematized and automated way of following up with both the referral and the referring client.

When done correctly, you can get an ideal prospect sent to you with trust already built in because of the referral source.

But most of our clients and centers of influence have no idea what type of referrals we really want.

I make it easy for my clients by providing them with a targeted list of prospects I want to be referred to. I do this by looking at their social media connections, creating my list, then sharing it with them. This makes the referral conversation more natural and productive, while allowing my clients to provide referrals I actually want.

TIP: Agency managers, I would point out that you can and should do the same thing when hiring new agents or employees. You should also use this method to help your producers identify key prospects and new business opportunities in their social networks.

TIP: Still not sure how to get started on social media? Download [The 60-Day Plan for Social Media Success](#). In this guide, I broke down the steps to social media success into daily assignments, making a big task a lot less overwhelming. These strategies are the same ones I used when I started diving into social media. If you're not sure how or where to start, this guide is a great place to begin.

I provide my clients with a targeted list of prospects I want to be referred to. This makes the referral conversation more natural and productive.

4

TOOLS

“THIS IS NOT AN
INFORMATION AGE.
IT’S AN AGE OF
NETWORKED
INTELLIGENCE.”

- Don Tapscott

Today’s technology lets us get even closer to our clients and prospects. Social media is a tool for research as well as communication. Analytics allow us to find out what’s working and what isn’t, while your CRM software system helps you tie it all together and use the data you collect to better communicate with your clients and prospects.

THREE MUST-HAVE TOOLKITS

Let's talk about the tools of a 21st Century Producer—tools that will drive the future of insurance sales. These tools give you a way of focusing on the metrics of conversion, up-sell, cross-sell, and referrals. When used correctly, they allow you to do more with less, spend more time in front of your best clients and prospects, and ultimately make you more successful than your peers.

You need to be aware how each of these tools functions in terms of helping you move leads, prospects, and clients through the new sales funnel.

- **The first thing you need is a database tool or Client Relationship Management system (often called a CRM).** A CRM will allow you to effectively track prospects, leads, and clients. It also allows you to set up automated marketing and follow-ups to your database. Doing so will keep you at the top of your clients' minds, as well as help you track the messages each responds to best. Ultimately, this will help you customize the messages you're sending and target each message to the optimal recipients.

In terms of choosing a CRM, I recommend [Insureio](#). It's the first purpose-built solution for the insurance industry. It has industry-specific functionality, including task and event tracking, integrated case status, built-in quoters and calculators, underwriting guides, health screening, state-specific PDF application & policy service forms, e-Ticket app fulfillment, and more. In addition, it has a range of marketing and communications features that help you make the most of your time. These features include customizable email marketing templates, pre-built marketing campaigns, SMTP email integration, and more.

- **Second, use as many modes of communication as possible.** Whether it's email, text messaging, social media, blogging, or a traditional website, how they get your information isn't nearly as important as the fact that they received it. Most CRM systems will help you utilize all these forms of communication. If you haven't already, download [The 60-Day Plan for Social Media Success](#) to start building a presence on the social media networks your clients are most likely to use.
- **Third, you'll need to use analytics and data tracking.** This information gives you the ultimate edge when dealing with customers and prospects. It tells you things like which emails they opened, how many times they opened it, and how long they spent reading it. You can see which links they clicked on your website, and which articles they read.

Knowing this information will help you identify the specific planning and product interests of each consumer throughout the opportunity cycle. You won't need to guess whether they're interested in retirement planning, life insurance, or income protection—their online activities and interaction with your content will tell you what they are interested in. By the way, a good CRM will help you do this task, too.

Whether it's email, text messaging,
social media, blogging, or a
traditional website, how they get
your information isn't nearly as
important as the fact
that they received it.

5

STANDARDIZE, SYSTEMATIZE, AUTOMATE

“TOO OFTEN, COMPANIES IMPLEMENT SOCIAL SOFTWARE WITHOUT CLEAR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES OR A STRATEGY FOR MAKING AN IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE. THESE EFFORTS TYPICALLY FAIL.”

- Deloitte

Once you have the tools mentioned in the last chapter integrated into your practice, the next step is to make your workflow as smooth as possible. Imagine a day when you call in sick or take a vacation—could your staff, assistant, or even a stranger fill in for you? They could if your business is properly standardized, systematized, and automated.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This part of the process is what brings your knowledge of Customer 2.0, Sales 2.0, and the tools of a 21st Century Producer together.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to standardize, systematize, and automate. Take everything you do and standardize it so that you (or your staff) deal with common situations the same way every time. The example I like to use is McDonald's: no matter where you are in the world, when you order a cheeseburger, you know what to expect. They have standardized the menu, the design of stores and uniforms, and what employees say. You need to do the same thing. Good things to standardize include phone scripts and email templates.

Take everything you do
and standardize it so that
you (or your staff) deal with
common situations
the same way every time.

Next, determine which tasks can be systematized, meaning which tasks can be scheduled or done on a regular basis by anyone, based on the standardized instructions you created.

For example, in my office, we have systematized emails, phone answering protocols, voicemail scripts, client fact-finding, as well as how to conduct annual reviews and client correspondence during the application and underwriting processes.

Once a task is systematized, you can move to automation. This is where you use technology (such as Insureio) to automatically complete the tasks that were previously standardized and systematized. Automation is particularly relevant to your marketing, client communications, sales meetings, fact finding, and annual review processes.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

A good example and great place to start with the “standardize, systematize, and automate” concept is your email. First, start by standardizing common responses, signature blocks, color schemes, and logos for your entire team or office.

Next, systematize when you and your team read emails, how they are sorted and filed, and who handles which types of message. This part of the process should result in an itemized checklist that will ultimately be used to automate your processes.

Thirdly, use your email system rules and alerts—a common feature of every major email distribution system—to make the processes previously established automatic. I have been able to save hours every week applying these rules.

There’s one final step you have to perform—the “Rinse & Repeat” process. The directions on a shampoo bottle read, “For best results, wash, rinse, and repeat.” It’s no different with marketing and the drive toward automation. For me, this is a reminder that I need to constantly review my processes and look for ways to more effectively process paperwork as well as market to and communicate with our clients and centers of influence. It also helps us remember that the process of improving is continuous—we need to stay diligent and avoid complacency for the best results.

AFTERWORD

DEVELOPING THE INNOVATOR'S EDGE

Today's competition may be greater than ever, but you can have the Innovator's Edge—tools and resources that will help you succeed! Take advantage of it. Accomplish more with less work and time by leveraging your knowledge of the three themes shared today:

- Pricing, underwriting, products, and service don't matter.
- What I "do" doesn't matter until I make it about the consumer.
- The future of insurance sales will focus entirely on the metrics of conversion, up-sell, cross-sell, and referrals.

Doing so will provide your agency with the Innovator's Edge, and allow you to thrive in the 21st century!

NEXT STEPS

I truly believe that Insureio is the simplest, most intuitive way to manage your leads, clients, tasks, and marketing. It's the only CRM system designed with the life insurance professional in mind.

From lead management to sales, productivity, communications, and hierarchy management, Insureio is a robust and revolutionary CRM solution for the 21st Century Producer. [Click or tap here to check out all the available features.](#)

About Ryan

Ryan Pinney is the President of Pinney Insurance Center, a national brokerage general agency. Pinney provides insurance, investment, and financial planning advice combined with proprietary tools to assist agents and financial advisors. Utilizing the same principals and technology his firm provides to agents, his agency sold thousands of life insurance policies direct-to-consumer over the internet last year.



*Ryan Pinney
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Recognized for using innovative technologies to drive insurance sales, streamline the application process, and speed up underwriting, Ryan leverages his experience with search engine optimization, social media, and online marketing to assist agents and agencies alike create their online presence and profit from it.



Ryan is a thirteen-year MDRT member with thirteen Top of the Table qualifications. He has been honored by AdvisorToday as a “4 under 40” Financial Advisor, by LifeHealthPro Magazine as one of the “24 Most Creative People in Insurance,” and as a National Association of Independent Life Brokerage Agencies (NAILBA) ID Twenty award recipient. Ryan is also active in the industry, where he has served as National Trustee for the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors (NAIFA) and Divisional Vice President of the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT).