

Selling Significance

An interview with Joseph W. Jordan, senior vice president at MetLife and responsible for the company's behavioral finance strategies.

He has taken his message of personalized selling far beyond MetLife and is spreading the word worldwide in his inspirational presentations. In this interview with InsuranceNewsNet, Jordan discusses his latest endeavor, his book, Living a Life of Significance.

INN: What prompted you to write a book on living a life of significance?

JORDAN: Since 2003, I've been involved with something called behavioral finance. Now, there's a whole push under this idea—that behavior and emotion have as much to do with people making decisions as the facts.

One of the observations that I made was that financial services had gotten too clinical. It focuses more on the left brain, the analytical side. And as a result, it's very difficult for people to make decisions with only one part of the brain when they make them with both. It's more of an emotional sale than an analytical sale, especially with protection products.

I started fee-based financial planning at MetLife, because that was the way to go with people who had money to pay money, and when you mapped everything out, people would see the logic and they would buy products. But when I looked at the material, I said this stuff is very clinical, and I think we have to start focusing in on the emotional and behavioral side.

INN: Is behavioral finance more engaging for salespeople also?

JORDAN: In selling protection products, you have to create a culture that celebrates the impact, and that also means the impact on the seller. Very few professions these days can have such a significant impact.

If you deliver a death or disability claim, you've really had a major impact



on this family or organization. You helped keep the family stable, save a business or create a legacy. It's something that should be focused on from a personal point of view.

INN: What was your personal connection?

JORDAN: My father died very young. But I had never made the connection between the business I was in and the effect on my own life. It took me until I was 54 to make the connection between my father cancelling a very sizeable New York Life policy before he got killed in a car accident and how my family's life would have been a lot different if he hadn't cancelled it.

It wasn't until I brought my own

personal experience together with the facts and the figures that I began to really recognize what the business was about.

INN: That certainly brings home the significance of what you're doing. You were a football player, rugby player and a very successful agent and manager, so you must be a hard-charging kind of guy and it took you a while to see these personal aspects. Isn't it tough to bring this message to similar, take-no-prisoner salespeople?

JORDAN: Yes and I think that's a cultural issue. You have to create a culture that celebrates not only the fact that you can make a decent living, but also acknowledges the impact that you'll have on others.

The book is part of my answer. The book is peppered with a lot of stories from other agents in terms of their impact. You can be in the business 20 years and never deliver a death or disability claim.

INN: Right, in the old days, the agent knocked on the door while the wake was going on and saved the family. But you don't have that anymore. So, isn't there a disconnect?

JORDAN: Well, I can't say that it's completely gone, and I do want to bring that back. But the other thing that we've done is a series of videos that I shot of agents. With some of the people, you just can't believe the emotional outpouring that they have when they talk about it.

INN: What were some of the stories?

JORDAN: I'll give you a quick example. An agent was trying to sell a life policy to someone and the wife objected because she wanted lawn furniture or something like that. Later, the agent got back to the guy, who said, "Look I want to do

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this anyway.” So, he did and about three years later he just happened to bump into someone who knew him, and the agent said, “How’s so and so?” And the guy said, “Well, he died.” And the wife didn’t even know that there was a death claim. So the agent got to the house, which had a for-sale sign on it, and he delivered a \$750,000 death benefit.

INN: Did this approach result in more sales?

JORDAN: People still, overwhelmingly, want to buy these products on a face-to-face basis, so it is important to understand the impact of what you’re doing.

What you have to do is get inspired. And you are inspired when you recognize the impact you can have on others. If you think outside of yourself, and more about your potential impact, you can have the courage to face rejection.

The fundamental thing of productivity is this: people who prospect more see more people, and they tend to sell more. We all know that. But, with more activity comes more rejection. You can face the rejection if you recognize that your value is not just for you, but for others. You know you do something worthwhile.

Here’s what no one talks about in financial services: the low self-esteem

factor. These guys get kicked around so much, and then with the new regulations and all this other stuff, they can really get worn down and not feel good about themselves. When they don’t feel good about themselves, they’re not going to face rejection well. So let’s turn it on its ear and talk about the real function of our business.

The only thing you control is your effort. And, even if I get seven noes, I had a successful day because I faced my fears, because I have a worthwhile purpose. **INN**

Joseph W. Jordan, senior vice president, Behavioral Finance Strategies, MetLife, offers compelling insights into the financial services industry, illustrates the concepts of managing behavior and demonstrates how to emotionally engage customers. Joe is the company’s voice at many industry events and is known worldwide for his inspirational speeches. He is also recognized for his advocacy programs that inspire both new and experienced financial services professionals—helping them realize purpose and commitment in their chosen vocation. To contact Joe Jordan, visit his website at www.josephjordan.com.

