



The power of building an attendance-based business

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## **Introduction**

I'm 34 years into this business and have had what most would consider tremendous success, including setting the Regional Leader premium record in 1994 of \$71,000, which held for 7 years, running a 100k base for multiple years, setting the base shop record of \$342,000 and the thru 1st record of \$811,000, (These two records held for over 15 years and have since been broken), Wall of Fame, and of course, becoming a Million Dollar Earner. The only reason I'm telling you this is not to brag or talk about myself, but to make the point that all of this was built in a cold market, not knowing anybody in the area, and to this day haven't talked to more than 240 people total personally over that entire time to build this. This happened by creating and creating and mastering the system that is the subject of this paper.

## **The Three Phases**

### **Phase 1: Always be training**

Always be training. This is you, personally recruiting, field-training, and licensing productive directs. You'll be in this phase for a few years. Or as long as it takes to get wide enough. You should set out to always be training between 3-5 qualified new associates. Below describes a qualified associate:

- They:
- Have a warm market
  - Have credibility within their market
  - Are willing to take you to their market
  - Are coachable
  - Consistently attend meetings (they show up)

The goal here is to get as wide as possible. Remember, you can't get wide enough. Most people stop after producing one or two decent legs. Don't do this. At my high point with the base I was between 22 - 30 wide with active directs that consistently showed up.

As you're producing licensed reps you'll move into the second phase.

### **Phase 2: Produce productive directs**

Produce productive directs. As you train people some will quit before they even get started. Others will quit during training, and some will get licensed. So many, once licensed, will show up but won't do much. You're looking for productive, independent licensed directs. These are the people you're looking for. Don't stop until you've gotten wide with THESE people. This is the one time where you need to get as wide as possible, because once you get big it's not near as easy to personally produce and train, as so much of your time will be spent in the final phase.

### **Phase 3: Drive meeting attendance**

Drive meeting attendance. Now that you're wide, have a team, and an effective sales/client process, it's time to put your focus on growing attendance. You'll discover why below.

## **The Beginning**

My journey started as a Regional Leader back in the 90's, when I was part of a small, yet growing base shop. Ever since I started Primerica at the age of 21, I

struggled with talking to people, prospecting (hated it), setting appointments, and have always had an intense fear of rejection. I still struggle with all of these things today.

As a Regional in a growing base, I wasn't the one leading it. There was another Regional who's team was growing while I was still just myself and maybe two people. My RVP (who's since been terminated) was running daily, in-person full-timers meetings (which I don't recommend!). In these meetings he would have everyone go over their activity, what they had yesterday, how it went, why, and what they had coming up. He would coach, critique, teach, hold accountable, etc.

It was during one of these meetings that a thought hit me. After listening to the Regional Leader who was leading the base go over all of his personal activity, which was a LOT!, (I still don't think I've seen anyone work as hard and talk to as many people as he did before leaving the business years later) I realized that for someone who talks to so many people and has so many appointments set, he really doesn't have that big of a team. Then the thought hit me: Maybe it's not the activity or even the number of recruits that count, but how many you can keep around that are productive. In other words, who cares how many you recruit if none of them stick around?

Understand that up to this point I would constantly punish myself and feel horrible because I never did the numbers he did or even came close to his activity. There were many times that I even questioned if I could make it here due to my fears and procrastination.

When I had this thought it changed everything. From this moment on I focused on building relationships and keeping people. I redefined recruiting not by how many IBA's you collect, but how many get licensed, show up consistently, and independently produce. Who's still around months or even years later? This helped me outsmart the rest of the competition while most outworked me. In a Primerica world of IBA collectors, I actually built. Read that again and let it sink in...

The purpose of this paper to help anyone that is looking for a way to build smart and wants to build a business that doesn't require you to 'do the numbers'. I've NEVER subscribed to the law of large numbers. I don't believe it's required if you work smart, and I never had to 'do the numbers' to build my business. Yuck.

My direct upline and great friend, Mike Sharpe, taught me many many things over the years. So much of my success is due to his mentorship and absolute brilliance when it comes to building a business. One of the most important things he taught me is that your ability to attract, retain, and move people has everything to do with your success and how big you'll become. So right from the beginning, you must make yourself attractive to others, be able to keep them (or not repel them), and cast a vision with excitement and purpose that gets them to not only follow you, but move in the same direction, with the same purpose, at the same time. None of this is easy, so I'll mention a little about each point below:

- **Attracting:** This isn't about how you look physically, it's people being attracted to follow you. This requires excitement, and a feeling of determination that they get from you when listening. They must feel that you may be onto something, going somewhere, and that you'll do it with or without them. You can't say this to them, by the way. They must feel it.

- **Retaining:** BE A GOOD PERSON!!! Just be nice. If you only knew how many people I've seen in this business that just aren't very nice to their people it would blow your mind. Don't act like a boss. You're a servant leader. Do you know what that means? You're there to help them reach their goals, not the other way around. If your people keep leaving, it's you!!!! Are you open to change? Do you want to get better? Does it matter that people like you? It should! If not, you're screwed and most like won't build much. Remember, people quit on a boss, not a friend.

- **Moving them:** This comes from you not only having a big vision, one that includes your team, but you not being afraid to talk about it. You'll never do it if you can't say it. I was talking about building a 100k base and doing 250k thru first when I was broke, only doing 5k in my base, and had no RVP's. Also, whether you're a competitive person or not, you need to breed competition within your team. Competition with each other (healthy, fun competition), competition to want to beat other RVP's in your region, hierarchy, and on a national level is key.

I was first hit with the idea of making meeting attendance the top priority on a golf trip with my pastor, his brother, and his father, who were also pastors. They were talking about growing his church and I heard him say "Dad, I don't care about the membership rolls, all I care about is how many people are in seats on Sundays. Those are the only ones we truly have and can count on." Hearing this floored me. All of a sudden I saw it with such clarity: We keep chasing and collecting IBA's, thinking we have someone, when in reality, the only one's we truly have are those that consistently show up to our Tuesday night meetings. (doesn't matter what

night you do your meeting, I'll just refer to it as Tuesday night. Saturday training doesn't count)

From that moment on I began to formulate a new model to build the business with. A model that focused on meeting attendance vs. IBA collecting.

## **The Formula**

- It all begins by becoming a 10k team. This is usually made up of 4-8 licensed reps, but most importantly, it has 25 people in attendance throughout the month on average. Obviously an old, tired team of the same people that have been around forever, with no new people isn't going to be a 10k team. This is when Hector Lamarque's formula of '60% of your meeting attendance must be 6 months or less in the business' kicks in. NONE of this applies if it's an old team with no new blood.

Here's the absolute truth: Go anywhere, in any town or city, with any language or demographic and show me a team with 25 or more people showing up for at least 90 days ,and as long as there are at least half that are 6 months or less in the business, you'll see a team that is doing at least 10k per month.

*Note: I'll never mention double-digit recruiting, 10 x 10, or anything like that, because it doesn't matter. All that matters is that you get your attendance to 25 with ideally 60% of them 6 months or less in the business. If you use this as a formula to help grow you business and you repeat this, don't convolute it by using these references. It's a \$10,000 premium team, period.*

Also, none of this applies to any team with less than 25 in attendance.

- Partnership:

Fact: The fastest and easiest way to grow attendance is to get partners to attend. It doesn't matter if they're licensed and active or not. Just that they attend. My biggest year in the base averaged \$140,000/mo. in premium and finished the year with \$223,000 in October and \$342,000 (and a new record) in November. No, I don't know what my recruiting numbers were because it didn't matter. I do know that we averaged 275 in Tuesday night meeting attendance for most of the year, and at least 35% were partners, most of which weren't active as licensed reps. I'll talk more about partnership and how it relates to this later.

- The 70% rule:

This keeps you running a lean, efficient business, with an emphasis on an effective sales/client system that not only works, but is built for the masses. (This isn't a paper on building a sales process, so I'll only say this: We live at a time where most people are tired of being sold to. Sales practices of old where we're taught to be a salesperson, answer a question with a question, etc. are not only outdated, but don't work for anyone that's not a natural salesperson. We offer a true need, and because of this, there's no need for the hard sell. Just educate. Remember, everyone wants to teach, very few want to sell)

The 70% rule means that a healthy base should be doing a 70% life app to attendance ratio. In other words, if your team averages 100 in total attendance on Tuesday nights for the month, they should produce 70 life apps. Not premium. It refers to applications only, or clients, whichever is easiest to relate to.



Once your attendance averages over 25, it's important to monitor how many life apps are being submitted. If you're not hitting the 70% mark then something isn't firing, especially if you're growing. Here are a few things to look at if this is the case:

1. Are new people being followed up with correctly? Are their trainers living and dying by the 15-hour rule?

2. Is meeting attendance being made the top priority? If not, then fix this ASAP! There is NOTHING more important for new associates than them changing habits and consistently attending all meetings.

3. Do you have a sales/client process that works? Be honest with this. My sales process is not only built for the masses by being educational-based and not sales based, but is effective. In other words, it works. People from all backgrounds are able close business with it. My team never had to do the 8-5-3-1 formula. We were way more effective than that. Make sure sales are happening on the training appointments.

4. Are new people being left in the hands of new people? This is the biggest and one of the easiest mistakes to make. You, as the leader, especially if you're an RVP, MUST make sure this isn't happening. So often we, as leaders, are afraid to come across as stepping on the toes of our people, but understand that the new associate that just joined the business is top priority! The day you forget that and don't act on it becomes the day your business takes a downward turn. Bottom line: Make sure your recruiters can field-train effectively. If not, then you must have someone else train their people until they can. I understand that this is easier said than done, but it's vital. Talk about this from the stage often so they know what the expectation is.

You will have months where you do more than 70%, obviously, but if you're doing it consistently then just make sure it's not because you're pushing your people too hard. They will tire, slow down, and grow resentful of the pressure they feel from you if this is the case.

When growing your business and running the 70% ratio you'll be able to push and spike a couple times per year. Contests, incentives, and big months will come and you'll be able to move your numbers in a big way.

## **Building a great meeting**

So here's the problem that most RVP's face: They want to drive meeting attendance, but their meetings are boring, repetitive, and just not good. This must be fixed asap.

Let's start with the basic opportunity meeting that has been around forever:

This must stop immediately if you want to build an attendance-based business. It's no longer an 'opp meeting', but a mini-event every Tuesday night. It's no longer about the new people. They're just guests at a bigger meeting. By the way, this makes it more attractive to them. Let me explain:

When you do a meeting that is only, or at least primarily, driven towards new people, certain dynamics occur that work against you. First, because the guests get the feeling that it's all about them joining, it becomes less attractive to them.

People are repelled at the idea of being needed. They're attracted to something that is bigger than them, going somewhere, and is doing so with or without them.

The next negative dynamic happens because the meeting is usually comprised of a slide show using the same slides over and over again, it's boring for anyone other than the person who has a guest there. It's even boring for most guests because most opportunity slide shows are tedious, long, and filled with slides full of useless information that most stop paying attention to as it drags on. Does this sound a little harsh? Good! Because if you want to drive your attendance then you need to stop this immediately!

A great meeting is one that's built like a typical builders school, or a Super Saturday. How is an all day, two day, or a half day event usually formatted? In it's basic form it usually consists of the leader opening, a brief overview of the opportunity (company, crusade, & compensation), recognition, people that are doing well speaking, and the leader closing with their vision for the team.

Typical Tuesday night agenda:

1. *Leader opens:*

This is usually the RVP, but can be another leader who has a team and is doing well. This is usually brief and goes something like this: "Hey everyone, we're getting started. How's everyone doing tonight? We're having a good month (or something like that). I know we have some guests here tonight. If that's you then I want to welcome you, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I'm a Regional Vice President with the company. If you were invited here tonight then it was by someone that

thinks you should take a serious look at the company and what we're doing here in this office. We're going to take a few minutes to give you a brief idea of who we are and what we're about.

This opening doesn't make you sound desperate by making them feel that the entire meeting is about them. **It's critical that they feel like a guest at something bigger than them.** Again, this is extremely important.

## *2. Opportunity segment:*

This must be no longer than 20 minutes if it's a 90-minute meeting. 15 minutes max if only an hour long. Anything longer will lose and bore them. Most company opportunity slides are awful. This is the case because by the time the lawyers are through with them they've been completely watered-down and neutered of their effectiveness. Therefore, use only a few of them: Company (only one page) / Theory page / maybe a couple other retirement and product pages, etc. Be careful of using the compensation slides, as they could make you sound like a MLM or network marketing company, which is a turn-off to most.

Also, NEVER, and I mean NEVER use the word 'recruit' in a meeting or in front of new people. Nothing screams MLM like using that word. I don't care what you call them or how you refer to recruiting, just don't use that word. Ever.

The last point I'll make regarding the opportunity segment of the meeting is that the most powerful thing you can show new people is a client example, especially delivered by a new associate who isn't a good speaker, nervous, and even scared to be up there. By them showing where this client was, what they

were able to do for them with their trainer, how long it took, and how much they would've made if they were licensed (or how much their trainer made) this is something the guests will get, Big time!

Having new people speak that are just getting started and having success with their trainer is the most powerful thing you can do at a meeting when it comes to guests. Them speaking for 3 minutes is more powerful than just about anything the RVP can do or say. Why? Because they're relatable and the guests will believe they can do it also.

### *3. Recognition:*

A great time to pass out checks, recognize promotions, new licenses and associates, and just about anything that you like to recognize. At this point you're done talking to the new guests. It's all about the team, and the guests are observers taking in the environment.

### *4. Speakers:*

This segment is just like any other big event. Have people speak that are doing it and are on their game. An occasional guest speaker is always great also. 5 minute talks are the best, especially if they were written to be 10 minutes long. What do I mean by this: Simply put, long talks that drag out are meeting killers. Over the years I learned this and made sure that my speakers never went longer than 10 minutes. Talking fast to get your point out is a good thing. Therefore, a 10 minute talk delivered in 5 minutes drives the point, keeps the speaker from getting off track, and keeps the crowd listening.

While on this point, let me be clear on one thing: **NEVER** go long! If you're meeting is supposed to end at 8:00 then make sure it ends at 8:00. It's NOT ok to be someone that says that It's ok to go long because the meeting was good or they were on a roll. New guests and your agents' partners not only won't like it, but won't be likely to come back any time soon. Why partners? Because a lot of them have to deal with babysitters, kids, etc. and are planning on being home at a certain time.

A great thing to do is to not tell anyone that they're speaking until they get there. Obviously this doesn't apply to the person doing the opportunity segment or any new people that are speaking for the first time. The person doing the opportunity segment needs to prepare, and the new person needs time to get ready, since most will be nervous, etc.

By doing this you'll create a sense of excitement and anticipation. You'll have reps that had a good week that will wonder if they're speaking at the meeting tonight. They'll show up early, make sure their partner and team is there, will dress nice and will be a little nervous as they wonder if they'll be selected to talk. This is such a fun dynamic to have in your environment.

#### *5. Leader closes:*

This last segment can be anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes, depending on how much time is left. This shouldn't be a rant or another 'world according to me' talk like so many RVP's like to give.

Honestly, so often I felt like a pastor of a church, having to come up with something new every week. I was on a mission to deliver something that made people leave thinking just a little differently than they did when they got there. It was almost always mindset training. Topics like winning, changing your life, understand the road to success, etc. Getting them to wake up to the way we were all taught to think, versus the thought process required to be successful, especially here. I still have dozens of slide shows that I created and used during this period.

I always wanted to deliver something new every week. It was critical to me that they changed their thinking so they wouldn't quit when it got tough like so many.

### **Important points**

- The most important thing that could happen when a new guest attended was that they were followed up with and came back the following week. I didn't care about the IBA, as I knew we'd get that. Remember, getting the IBA means nothing. **Getting them to show up again and consistently attend is everything.** You can't expect people to produce and build just because they submit their IBA's, although it's critical to get it asap. You can, however, expect good things to happen if you can get them to change habits and attend your meetings consistently.

If you did a study in your business and monitored 10 people that submitted IBA's but didn't make it a habit to attend meetings, versus 10 people that regularly attended, with no regards to whether or not they even submitted their IBA, or when, you'd be shocked at the outcome, as the 10 that consistently showed up

would be not only doing more, but so many of them would still be around and active months later.

- Partners and their role in driving meeting attendance: I mentioned earlier that the easiest way to increase your meeting attendance is to get partners there. Remember, it's the TOTAL amount of people in attendance, not just agents and guests. It's the dynamic that's created by having bodies in a room, and increased attendance **IS** your environment. You'd rather have 200 people in an old barn with a leaky roof in the rain, than 40 people in a beautiful, modern office. Don't push all partners to get licensed and become active agents. Don't do this! This is the fastest way to turn a partner against you and the business. Instead, make sure they know that there are different kinds of partnership support: Attend meetings, but that's it. We want them to attend meetings so they stay plugged in with what's happening. The other way to support is to get licensed and become an active agent and build along side their agent partner. Look, When someone becomes an RVP their partner should get fully-licensed just for ownership and to take over if something were to happen to the licensed agent. Just don't ever force or pressure partners to get licensed and become an active rep. You'll turn them against the business in a heartbeat, guaranteed. All you want is for them to show up. Also, if they show up then other partners on their team will show up as well when they build, and their attendance numbers will increase exponentially as they build. **This is everything!**

- Remember, the company will always encourage IBA collecting, and that's ok. They can't control what happens on a grass roots level like we can. They're not out there with our people like we are. All they can do is apply results to numbers, such as a certain number of IBA's equals 'X' amount of licenses, life



sales, profits, etc. Because of this, all they can do is encourage us to be IBA collectors. Building an attendance-based business encourages you to be a builder that keeps your people and grows a solid, credible business that doesn't burn your market or create a bad name.

- The most important part of a meeting is what happens before and after. Make sure your full-timers and leaders are there early. Make it your culture to not let any teammates get there before their leaders. Be the first one there if you have a team. Also, be sure your people aren't reviewing mail, policies, or training their people 15 minutes before the meeting starts. They need to be in meet & greet mode.

It's also so important that the RVP is at the front door greeting everyone that arrives and especially meeting new guests. I've had so many people over the years tell me how good it made them feel that I was so happy and excited to see them. They must know that you value and appreciate them, and you making them feel good by being there is a great way to do it.

- Become an expert at building relationships and understanding your people. Make sure they know that you care about them. Don't just assume that they do. Tell them constantly.

This includes you being willing to lose the battle to win the war. Leave your pride and ego in the parking lot always. If your people have a problem or a concern involving you, just remember that it's YOUR job to make it right. It's not their job to get over it. Be willing to apologize and let them know you didn't mean

it, whatever it was. You're people will quit over an issue with you faster than you can imagine.

On this note, it's never ok to say things like 'that's just the way I am'. That's not an excuse to treat your people poorly.

Be nice to your people. It needs to matter that they like you.

- Here's the real dynamic that helped explode my meeting attendance: I always talked over and over about the importance of getting 25 in total attendance so they can become a 10k team. That once they became a 10k team we can start having real conversations about them becoming an RVP. That once they become a 10k team all good things would open up for them. Such as they won't be the ones shouldering the entire load every month, etc. They'll have people stand up and start to lead with them, etc.

Attendance was EVERYTHING! As soon as the meeting would end, I'd find all of my directs and get their attendance numbers so I could track it weekly.

My people knew that if they did a recruiting appointment or a follow up, the first question they'd get from me was whether or not they'd be at the next meeting.

- Live and die by the 15-hour rule. Hector talked about this and had a profound effect on my business. The 15-hour rule means that it takes 15 hours for someone to be recruited. He said 'recruited', not '15 hours to get their IBA'. 15 hours to get them to a point that they won't be talked out of the business by family & friends, or just decide that it's not for them.

These 15 hours can be one-on-one, zooms, meetings, or training appointments. Use this time to build a relationship, build the crusader in them by teaching them the concepts and products, especially mutual funds and investing, and get them off to a good start by setting qualified appointments.

A very important point to the 15 hour rule is that you **absolutely can't let more than 24-48 hours go by without talking or meeting with them.** Its critical that you're always in front of them to lift them back up and be a loud voice in their life so they don't talk themselves out of it.

The 15 hours begins after the initial interview or meeting if that's their first introduction to the business. This is also why you NEVER do a first recruiting interview on a Friday. **NEVER!** Why? Because most people love their lives and their jobs on Fridays. By contrast, most hate their jobs on Mondays. Think about it...

A final note about the 15 hour rule: Over the last 10 years I've seen a shift across the company of people running their meetings on Thursdays rather than on Tuesdays. Unless you have to due to other RVP's using Tuesday night, etc. it's a huge mistake. Why? Because when new or newer people attend it's critical that they're followed up with within 24-48 hours of that meeting, and this is extremely difficult to do on a Friday or Saturday. Usually it doesn't happen until Monday, and by that time they've already talked themselves out of it and will cancel the follow-up appointment with a "I thought about it and it's really not for me," or my favorite: "I'm just really busy and have a lot going on right now." Nope, that's not what happened. The actual reason is that they got excited about the business but were allowed to stew with their thoughts for few days with no follow-up, and their

mediocre mentality kicked in. This same rule goes for recruiting interviews. You should avoid doing them on Fridays at all costs.

Live and die by the 15-hour rule!

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to give you an insight into building a business not only by working hard, but smart as well. When you observe most people and their efforts when it comes to building their business, typically all you see is someone that puts SO MUCH effort into getting someone interested enough to want to learn more, only to do most everything wrong from that point on.

That's not necessarily even the main problem. It's their mentality that comes after these people don't stick around. They think the solution is to just work harder and talk to more people. "Talk to more people" is typically a lazy leaders' solution to fixing everything. This, versus digging deeper into what's happening and changing the overall game plan, is the real problem.

Remember, most talks and speeches given by builders, whether on POL or at events and conventions are typically motivation only, with no real 'how to's' of how they got to where they are. Add to that the fact that most speeches are delivered along the company talking points such as 'talk to a lot of people', 'subscribe to the law of large numbers', 'IBA's are everything', and 'recruit, recruit, recruit', and you realize that most people never get the REAL insights in to how to find and keep people and build a big business. This paper is just a small portion of that.

As I wrap this up, just remember that if there's anything in this paper that appeals to you and you decide to implement it, don't just throw out everything you're doing and change everything at once. Make adjustments early and go from there. For most RVP's, the first thing they should do is change their meeting format to the one outlined here.

I'm always happy to answer questions and talk more about this with anyone that want's to learn more. If interested, you can reach me on instagram at:  
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Good luck and happy building,

Shane Perry