E-Z Does It
EZ Data is updating a venerable life insurance sales tool.

by Robert Regis Hyle

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Before there was a “system” in the IT department, there was a “system” for life insurance salespeople. It was the One Card System (OCS) and it remains one of the most successful sales tools ever used. Now, 40 years after O. Alfred Granum first introduced his One Card System through his book Building Life Insurance Clientele, the publisher—The National Underwriter Company—and software developer E-Z Data are introducing an electronic version of the system.

National Underwriter (www.nuco.com) will continue to sell its print version of the OCS, while E-Z Data (www.ez-data.com) sells the electronic version that is integrated into the purchasing company’s Client Data System.

Barry W. Grant, CLU, corporate services and sales for E-Z Data, said development of the electronic version has been a “real challenge.” There have been attempts to do so in the past, but none successfully converted Granum’s system into a workable software solution.

Steve Nieman, editor of the Building Life Insurance Clientele (BLIC) series of books for National Underwriter, said Granum developed his sales techniques at his own agency using a simple theory of “10-3-1”: For every 10 qualified sales candidates an agent is referred to, three will actually sit down and discuss insurance with an agent and only one will buy a policy. Nieman said that of 45 agents trained by Granum in this method a, 42 achieved Million Dollar Round Table status.

By managing the activities of the agents, a carrier or an MGA can help its agents succeed—something not easily accomplished in the turnover-filled field of life insurance sales.

One Man, One Company, One Card System

One person trained in the OCS system was Dale Okuno, formerly at Transamerica and now president of E-Z Data. Okuno felt E-Z Data was uniquely qualified to create an electronic version of the OCS—one that would create a better way to track sales calls. “When you use a manual system you can mark them up any way you want, but when you automate the OCS you use it correctly,” Grant said. “The real value in this is activity management. The electronic version makes it easier to enter the data.”

The One Card System will be integrated with E-Z Data’s Client Data System. “It will follow the sales process and will anticipate the next step,” Grant said. When a referral name is entered into the system, automatic prompts are issued when the client needs to be contacted. These prompts, for example, would include the client’s birthday or the date when a policy needs renewal. Such “activity management” is displayed in each agent’s “success manual,” Grant explained.

That success manual has been the key to the One Card System’s success, according to Nieman. “It involves tedious record keeping, but it has shown it is successful,” he said.

Granum learned that referrals, rather than cold calls, were the key to successful sales because they came from people who had already purchased a policy. He first wrote about the OCS in a company sales manual and then was approached by National Underwriter to publish it in book form. The BLIC series is now in its ninth edition and has grown to cover financial services as well as life insurance. “The message hasn’t changed, though,” Nieman said.

Nieman said development of the OCS for software was the right step, but an earlier DOS version developed by National Underwriter did not get off the ground. The company was looking to work with software developers for a Windows-based system when it met with E-Z Data. “They had their own client building system and wanted to incorporate some of our stuff,” he said. The OCS relies on a points system with agents generating activity and efficiency points. Agents who reach a certain level of points daily will be successful, Nieman said.

Grant said Granum resisted automation of his system for a while and companies were forced to work on their own client activity systems. Having the One Card System, though, makes E-Z Data’s sales job easier. The electronic version offers proven sales methods and line management with a complete system for empowering agents, executing sales plans and quantifying activity results.

Users of E-Z Data’s OCS software will also receive the BLIC textbook from National Underwriter that teaches the art and the science of Granum’s system. Nieman feels the new software development will be successful because it is based on a successful system. “[The] OCS has a great reputation because no one can argue with the numbers,” he said.

Now the numbers can be entered on the PC, and a 40-year-old sales tool is new again.