

SPECIAL REPORT

Bring Continued Value to Your Clients With Themed Meetings or Phone Calls

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If you no longer provide great value to your clients, you are no longer necessary. If you do not continue to bring great value to your clients, your clients become great prospects for your competition. If you don't bring continual great value to their clients, you won't get as many referrals as you would like.

So how, you might ask, do you continue to bring great value? Well, here's a list of things you can talk to your clients about throughout any given year. You can turn some of these into themes for more frequent value-oriented phone calls or meetings. How do you think your client relationships would improve, if you stayed in contact with your clients in ways very few financial professionals do?

January

- **Set credit report dates.** Each year, have clients check each of their credit reports from AnnualCreditReport.com. It's wise to stagger the dates that clients check each report, because irregularities might surface at different times of the year, and that way they will catch them faster. Everyone is entitled to one free credit report a year.
- **Think about college aid.** On Jan. 1, kids and parents can start working on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the upcoming school year (2007–2008). To meet deadlines in most states, you should submit your FAFSA no later than March 1, with Feb. 15 being the optimal date.
- **Encourage clients to start an emergency fund.** Experts believe you should have three to six months' worth of living expenses set aside. Have clients commit to saving a fixed amount each month to work toward that goal.

February

- **Start pulling tax information together.** W2s and 1099s should be arriving, so have clients get their records ready to start their returns. If you need a ballpark estimate of their tax liability, look online, where there are a number of tax calculators that might do the trick. Search on "1040 tax estimators" in one of the different search engines.

March

- **Get ready to fund IRAs.** April 16 will be 2007's tax deadline (the 15th is a Sunday), and that's the last date to make a tax-deductible contribution to an IRA. Encourage clients to make the biggest affordable contribution they are allowed.

April

- **Tax deadline.** April 15 is the deadline for federal and state taxes.

- **Education account contribution deadline.** Don't forget that contributions to educational accounts for the previous year are due on tax day. (529, UGMA/UTMA, Coverdell)
- **Check insurance coverage.** Check to see if clients can afford a higher deductible on home and auto insurance. Consider umbrella liability coverage if you haven't already.

May

- **Encourage clients to talk to their parents.** If they've never discussed estate, health, and long-term care planning with their parents, they should do it now. Remind them that the best time to talk is before a crisis even arises.
- **Do an energy checkup.** Suggest that clients have their furnace and air conditioners checked to make sure they're working properly during the heating and cooling season. (This is a good time to do the same for the office, if it applies to your situation.)
- **Order second credit report.** Clients should request their second credit check around this time.

June

- **Do a midyear financial checkup.** Take the time to do a review of clients' tax planning, retirement savings, home, health, and life insurance needs, and do a midyear check of their spending.

July

- **Do a beneficiary check.** Is the beneficiary information on all clients' investments, insurance policies, and bank accounts up to date?
- **Check wills.** If clients haven't checked their wills in five years, encourage them to review and see if their instructions are current. Make sure their powers of attorney reflect their intentions.

August

- **Go over money issues concerning college students.** Whether parents they've got freshmen or seniors, encourage parents to take some time to go over financial details with their students.

September

- **Order last credit report.** Clients' should request their third and final credit report of the year.

October

- **Get ready for open enrollment.** Many companies set open enrollment for their benefits plans in September and October. Make sure clients have thought about their benefit choices for the coming year.
- **Tax extension deadline.** If clients have to file for an extension on their federal taxes this year, their final deadline to file will be Oct. 17.

November

- **Total potential tax losses.** You and your clients should confer with a tax advisor to see if it makes sense to sell stocks before the end of the year to balance out capital gains in portfolios or to carry forward losses for future use.
- **Spend any flexible savings account money.** Check the employer's rules, but clients should spend down the amount they put in their flexible spending account by Dec. 31 or the end of the plan year. They should be sure to schedule any procedures or medical expenses to occur before the end of the plan year.

December

- **Give.** Ask clients about charitable deductions they want to make for the end of the tax year. Remind them that they can make financial gifts of up to \$12,000 with no penalty.

- **Pay deductible expenses early.** To lessen their tax impact for the current year, encourage clients to pay mortgage interest or property tax installments early if their tax situation would benefit from it.

Miscellaneous (not tied to any specific month)

- **Mortgage.** Even if you don't sell mortgages, do you know what rate(s) your clients are paying? Check in with them from time to time to see if they are getting the best and most appropriate rate. This can be a great opportunity to give referrals.
- **Health Insurance.** Even if you don't sell health insurance, check in from time to time to make sure your clients are with a good plan. This can be a great opportunity to give referrals.
- **Homeowners.** Even if you don't sell home owners, make sure your clients are updating their coverages every couple of years, or if they make substantial changes to their home.
- **Bankers.** What relationships do your clients have with bankers, in areas that don't compete with you? You should know some bankers for possible referrals to help your clients.
- **Identity Theft.** Learn as much as you can about identity theft and make sure our clients are taking appropriate precautions. If a client thinks they are a victim of identity theft, do you know how to help them?

If it has a dollar sign next to it, you should be able to help your clients in some way. Either directly or with a referral to another resource!

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