

“Anxiety vs. Security”

Speech to General Agents

My Month Convention, 1979

This “My Month” Production Period brought in \$700,000 of annualized Life premium more than last year. Mr. Rapoport calls it “the best convention we have ever had.” The cement that bonds them together as a sales force has grown even stronger because of their mistakes and their triumphs. Rapoport wants to share with the General Agents the insatiable desire he has to make American Income the most profitable insurance company in the world. He says that technology makes each new day a whole new world. Companies that prosper in this new world are the ones with the foresight to change. The government has encroached on the insurance market and now insurance companies compete with the government in meeting people’s needs. Rapoport says that to play this profit game, you have to function under changing rules. He hopes that after he talks with them about anxiety and security, they will choose to embrace risk and enjoy the thrill of selling.

Rapoport may have built some financial security over the years, but he will never forget “the first 26 or 27 years of this company” and the anxiety he had over his future. Back then he worked with fervor just to survive, and now he works just as hard because he knows that everything could be lost. He says in this ever-changing technological society, “What appeared to be security yesterday is virtually poverty tomorrow.” He refers to these feelings of anxiety and security in terms of having children. He could have avoided all of the financial obligations, emotional turmoil, and sleepless nights that

come with having a child, but he says, “then you would never have the experience of what love from a child can mean to one’s life.” The best payoffs in life come from risky investments. Insurance is a “risk business” because the salesman has to gamble on people being receptive to his pitch. Rapoport knows they have been successful gamblers because they are “intelligent and capable businessmen.” As Rapoport looks around the room, he cannot think of any one of them who would “eliminate his anxieties in a barter for security.”

The company has chosen to take on some risky ventures that have little or no security, but a lot of potential. For instance, the Labor Advisory Board does not directly increase sales, but American Income gains credibility from it with labor unions. Rapoport will pledge \$50,000 from the company and ask for a \$50,000 investment from the State General Agents. This will provide \$100,000 for the Labor Advisory Board “to allocate as they see fit.” Other future ventures include a new public relations department led by Kathy Bolt. The company will be giving public relations personnel more responsibility and more respect. Rapoport says, “We are going to put some meaningful spirit into our PR people as we have never done before.” Credit Unions and other growing markets will be targeted with more direction and ambition. Rapoport hands out a copy of American Income’s national ad that will be published in the *National Credit Union Magazine*. Although some may feel anxious about whether the ad will work or not, Rapoport says that action is the only way to grow. He says, “We have just got to go out there and get them.” Recruiting has been a difficult task for SGA’s and General Agents. Licensing problems have led the company to try to recruit sales people who already have valid licenses. The company will host an “opportunity meeting” that will

attract those who already have licenses to American Income. The first trial of this program in San Francisco was mildly successful, but Rapoport hopes for an even better turnout in Boston. These proposals could give American Income a competitive edge over other companies or they could fail. Rapoport says that they have already “lived through a lot of mistakes.” That’s good, Rapoport says, because the only way to find better strategies is through trial and error. Rapoport believes that the reward is worth the risk in these programs.

All good businessmen need to be receptive to new ideas. Rapoport says, “Old techniques make for unprofitable business.” General Agents can get larger lead returns by 1) emphasizing the Disability Policy, 2) asking permission from unions to put lead letters on the member bulletin boards, 3) making presentations at membership meetings about the mailing, 4) getting the signature of a union official on the lead letter, 5) mailing a follow-up letter entitled “Second Notice” two or three months after the first mailing, and 6) including inserts in labor newspapers. The Houston telephone operation has been extremely successful, and Rapoport suggests that they get more information about it from Darrell Bedford and Art Helms. Although businessmen need to be receptive to suggestions like these, some business principles must remain intact. For example, excellence in this company is supported by the quota system. Rapoport says, “The quota system is just as much an integral part of American Income as its cash reserve, its policyowners, its field force or anything else that is necessary to have a company.” They should respect the structure of the company while being open to trying new ways to increase productivity.

Rapoport thanks them for being leaders of “the World’s Greatest Sales Force.” His heart is full of gratitude for all of their wonderful work. He says, “I don’t have the capacity to articulate how meaningful my relationship with you is.” He hopes that they will find the risk in American Income to be an invigorating, fun experience. He hopes that it will be an experience that will hold many rewards for them.
