

Idea Exchange Niche Marketing

Niche Marketing, continued from page 14

good for the referral business. ... It makes you want to work even more and help them more because they are grateful."

Soderberg's pursuit of the Hispanic community was not always well-received by her business partners or some of the insurance companies with which she has relationships.

When the agency started to get recognized for its expertise in the area, one carrier suggested that they shouldn't pursue that market. "I just thought, are they crazy? In this recession, in this down economy we have right now, I think — thank God for that, for the Hispanic clients, because they're still rockin'

and rollin'. They still believe in the American dream, they're still buying stuff, they're still starting businesses."

The personal relationships she's developed with her Hispanic clients have not only helped to expand the business through referrals, they also have been useful in the hiring process. When Soderberg, 18 years ago, was looking for the agency's first Spanish speaking employee other than herself, she "told a client, who told a friend." Since then, none of the agency's Spanish speaking employees have been hired through traditional methods. "We found them through networking. Networking in this culture is extremely valuable," Soderberg said. "It helps us establish our credibility. ... Helps us also find answers to situations that we have. It helps us find employees."

Soderberg stressed it's not absolutely necessary to have employees who speak Spanish in order to serve this market. "But you have to have people that have the right attitude, that have the patience to work with people for whom English is not their first language."

For example, Hispanics typically like to conduct their business in person and that can take a lot of time. Employees need to be prepared for that. Also, because application and claims forms are generally written in English, clients often need help filling out those forms. Hispanic clients usually want to pay premiums in cash, Soderberg said, and the agency has had to make adjustments for that. While it's an inconvenience, she figured if they didn't find a way to handle cash payments, some other agency would. Additionally, all conversations with clients regarding coverages are "100 percent documented" in English, Soderberg said. "So that everybody in the office understands what transpired."

A Nice Ride

Soderberg Insurance Services recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. Soderberg's mother and father, who started the agency, still work part time, and her sister is involved as well. The rest of the staff — there are eight in all — feel like family, she said.

Of their foray into the Hispanic market, Soderberg said, "It's kind of serendipity. I never really thought that it would turn into what it has turned into. But over time it has grown. It's been a nice ride." ■

Click, Print, Covered!

TEXAS HO-B HOMEOWNERS PROGRAM

Highlights:

- ▶ Coverage A up to \$600,000
- ▶ Competitive Rates & Commissions
- ▶ Quote & Bind Policies Online, in Minutes!
- ▶ Rated A- "Excellent" by A.M. Best Company
- ▶ All Policies Direct Bill
- ▶ Product available in most locations throughout Texas

With GeoVera's online homeowners program, getting the coverage you need is as easy as **Click, Print, Covered!**

GeoVeraSM
INSURANCE
HOMEOWNERS

Interested?

- ▶ Visit www.geovera.com
- ▶ Email marketing@gyhomeowners.com