

The Power of MDRT – Not Just for Qualifiers!

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The fact that you are sitting in this room says something about you...that is, an extraordinary person has given you a rare gift, and you have accepted it. I'm here today to help you recognize and maximize the value of that gift on both a personal and a professional level. I think it's awesome that MDRT has created this first member/guest meeting, to allow many more people to have that same experience.

I've made a comfortable living in the life insurance industry working with agents for more than 20 years. Even in the earliest stages of my career, it was nearly impossible to get through a week without hearing the letters "MDRT", or the words "Million Dollar Round Table" uttered in the hallways, cubicles, offices or meeting rooms of the small life insurance company that I worked for on Long Island. I happened to be the certifying officer for MDRT, and worked with our producers on helping them to qualify, and absorbing how important it was to them to do so. However...

While intellectually, those working in that home office understood that MDRT was the world's premiere membership group for financial services professionals, I don't believe any of us really knew why. That's because none of us had ever attended an actual MDRT meeting, and with good reason...we were never invited! Why? Because you have to sell to qualify for an invitation. None of the people in that office, including me, had ever done that.

For those of you who make your living in this business, or if you are a family member or friend of a qualifier (which probably covers just about every guest in the audience!), you can't help but know how challenging it is to sell something like life insurance, for example. (Show of hands, how many are guests who make their living in this business in a capacity other than selling? How many of you are in sales, but have not yet qualified for MDRT? How many of you are friends or family members of a qualifier? How many of you just snuck into the meeting without being invited by anyone?) How many of you agree that this is one of the toughest products to sell? Why?

It's an intangible product that pays a benefit to someone else...only AFTER you die. Now while many

The Power of MDRT – Not Just for Qualifiers! *(continued)*

of you who are surrounded by insurance professionals who work in advanced markets may have absorbed information about sophisticated planning strategies involving attorneys, accountants, trusts, estate taxes and the like, life insurance was really developed in the 1700's to prevent widows and children from becoming destitute after the loss of a breadwinner. The tax favored status of life insurance, borne out to the incentive to help people help themselves, is available to everyone, regardless of their economic status.

So selling life insurance is a noble and worthy profession, because life insurance protects the futures of families and businesses, preserves wealth and dignity and is the only vehicle that delivers any kind of relief at the most stressful time in someone's life....and yet, PEOPLE STILL DON'T WANT IT! That's why it takes a certain type of person to make others understand its value and take action. It requires determination, discipline, and a true understanding and caring for people. They must handle rejection and negative perceptions while balancing complexity and uncertainty. That results in some fairly unpredictable cash flow. Contrasted with those of us in the home office, who consistently expect and receive a set paycheck every two weeks.

That's why MDRT is for those who qualify for that recognition. Learning from the best, and sharing that common bond recognizing that exceptional life insurance producers have to understand themselves as "whole people", before they can overcome barriers and help others. And while MDRT does provide significant technical/educational opportunities for its members to understand the complexities of these financial transactions... and to become better sellers, it focuses equally on making them better people.

So if even if you are not a seller, attending this meeting and making the most of it, will make you a better person! I believe that I am as a result of attending the 2004 meeting. Additionally, for those of you who are family members and friends of a qualifier, this meeting gives you an inside look at what motivates others like him/her, the challenges he/she faces and what you might need to do differently in support of that.

I'd like you to have the benefit of some of my personal experiences so that you can get the most out of being here! Is that OK? Great! Even if it's not, I'm obligated to tell you anyway!

For those of you who don't know anything about last year's meeting, there was a theme...the theme was simply "WOW!". While this may not sound very complex, for me it was extremely accurate. I was "wowed" in a number of ways, some you might expect and some you might not. Wow was about what I learned, who I met, what I felt, and most importantly, what stuck with me after leaving. While you might find yourself saying "Wow" a lot this year in any case, the 2005 theme is Synergy. Do you know what that means? Synergy is the combination of two forces so that the sum of the two is greater than each individually. Those two forces are you and MDRT. You will leave enriched, and the MDRT organization will be better off for your having been here.

Each of you will realize your own synergy in your own way. Based on my own experience, here are a few broad categories that you may find yourself experiencing synergy, hopefully lasting!

1. Overcoming Fear – particularly of crowds...This is a big meeting. There are over 7000 people here from all over the world. You will not be able to walk anywhere within 3 miles of the convention center without running into someone with a badge. Now your badge probably says "member guest". Mine was similar last year. You may fear that because you didn't qualify to be here, your badge would be like a neon sign that reads "Intruder Alert!, Put the Cocktail Down and Back Away from the Table"! You may be fearing rejection...that nobody would want to talk to you...that you would not have enough in common with the qualifiers, or that they are out of your league. If you haven't experienced this already, I'd bet that the first person you encounter with a member badge will be happy to talk with you, guide you even share insights of their own with you. Fear not!

Now speaking of fear, they say that public speaking or being in front of a crowd can be more stressful

The Power of MDRT – Not Just for Qualifiers! *(continued)*

than root canal, having your kitchen redone, or even death. I'm not sure if I have that exactly right, but you know what I mean. You may think I am a glutton for punishment in that regard, but one of the members who I met through a function sponsored by my company the day before MDRT began, knew that I sang as a hobby. He asked if I wanted to sing a song with the MDRT Rock band, as he was the drummer and the band was playing during the welcome reception. All members, I might add. That's one of the most interesting things about MDRT, the organization really encourages people to showcase their talents and develop them, even if those talents don't have to do with our industry.

You too will have this opportunity. With a crowd this size, I would bet that we have at least 40 people who would captivate a crowd in Karaoke. Well guess what? You will have your chance at the welcome reception! The crowd is big, but don't let that scare you. They are very encouraging. Just put your selections in early, the queue fills up fast!

What I also found really interesting last year was how the showcasing of talents knows no rank, and that it can show up in places where you least expect it!

In his address, George Pickett, last year's outgoing President of MDRT sang a cappella during his address on the main platform in front of 8000+ people. The song was "You Raise Me Up". Those words really summed up this sentiment, and that is that this organization has the power to make each of us "more than we can be..". That power is important to remember and extremely relevant to the next area that I want to touch upon.

2. **Helping Others** – There is power in numbers. You are going to hear and see a lot about the MDRT Foundation, and all of the worthy causes that it supports.

The MDRT Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT). The Foundation is the ultimate manifestation of the generous and caring spirit of MDRT members. What

they do raises the integrity of the entire life insurance profession to a whole new level.

Since 1959, the MDRT Foundation has granted \$11.7 million to charitable organizations serving people in 61 countries and all 50 states. Starting in 2003, thanks to the Million Dollar Promise Campaign, the MDRT Foundation will give out at least \$1 million in grants a year. The Foundation provides a vehicle for MDRT members and others in the industry to combine their philanthropic activities with their fellow professionals. This pooling of resources provides greater benefits to people in need that individuals can provide on their own. Instead of giving out small gifts that are not enough to promote significant change, the MDRT Foundation chooses to make meaningful grants to a few organizations at a time that will have a huge impact on the quality of life of the people served. In this way, encouraging charitable MDRT members to come together to support the most deserving organizations around the world makes more of a difference than just individual philanthropy. THIS IS SYNERGY AT ITS BEST!

During the course of the next few days, you will learn about some of these causes the Foundation supports. Some may really tug at your heart! This brings me to the 3rd area that you should be aware of.

3. **Acknowledging Emotions** – It is quite possible that you will be exposed to personal stories from main platform speakers like nothing you've ever heard before. The stories run very deep. They can be emotional. They might make you laugh, they might make you cry, they might make you feel a range of emotions all at the same time. It happened to me. And I'm not necessarily anxious to share my innermost emotional experiences with such a large crowd, but because I have this common bond with you, I feel comfortable. Not only did I cry, I was caught on camera crying...on a 50 foot screen....more than once....and received comments from strangers identifying me as such.

My tears were more for the realization that if the people behind these stories could have the will and

The Power of MDRT – Not Just for Qualifiers! *(continued)*

power to survive, overcome and achieve in spite of this kind of life, anything is possible. It makes your own problems seem small and insignificant...not worth dwelling on. That's a powerful gift, another example of synergy and that aspect is a key part of what we all take away from MDRT. Look for it, and when you find it, acknowledge it, share it and remember it!

- 4. Food for the Brain** - The last category I'd like to touch on is extremely important, and can't be underestimated. You are going to be exposed to people from all over the world. People who have made themselves successful. People who have different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, languages, customs and ideas... yet, they share a common bond. They help people preserve a brighter future.

The knowledge base that comes with that responsibility and vast diversity is enormous. It's nourishing! While you are at MDRT, make it a point to meet as many people as you can from different parts of the world. Understand their thinking, learn about how the business differs and is similar. Share the same with them. You will find that you get as much or more out of offering knowledge as you get from receiving it.

Speaking of knowledge and power, you can gain a lot from a few visits to the Power Center. There you will find the exhibitors that have information, as well as many books, tapes and items that can help you grow personally and professionally, and remember and share your MDRT experience. (They take credit cards too!)

Now these are just a few ways that the MDRT experience impacted me. I came in with high expectations and they were exceeded. In fact, I had planned to leave on a flight out the evening before the meeting officially ended. Am I glad I changed my plans and stayed. You cannot fully appreciate the power of MDRT and the experience unless you do so from beginning to end. There are new things to learn every day. You never know, you may just make that one important contact who gives you that one unique idea or better yet, that one special bond that lasts throughout the rest of your career, or even your life. You never really

know unless you commit to maximizing your experience and taking part in as much as you can.

To summarize, I want to express what an honor it is to be asked back to MDRT, to address this group and to hopefully offer some insights about how to maximize your experience, and take something permanent away with you.

Speaking of takeaways...

I've taken the liberty of compiling a list of top ten tips for maximizing your experience here at MDRT. They are printed on a strip that can double as a bookmark for the books you may pick up in the Power Center, or alternatively they can be used as floss if you should get something stuck in your teeth. You will get one as you leave the room, and I'd like to run down the list with you briefly so you know what to expect.

1. Attend all the main stage presentations and special sessions. Attend workshops especially if you are connected to the industry. All the speakers are knowledgeable in their fields..among the best!
2. Get there early! You may not get a good seat otherwise. It's a big room and it takes a while to get inside. Protective headgear is not required but a good option if you want to venture upfront.
3. When you go to sessions, sit next to someone you don't know, and introduce yourself and share experiences. Go out of your way to meet someone from another part of the world.
4. Bring tissues, you may need them!
5. Read the program thoroughly before the sessions, and jot down the most noteworthy points. Don't lose it! You will refer to it a lot!
6. Go to the Power Center, even if you are not into Crummy Trusts, ILITs or QTIPs, you'll find plenty that will motivate, educate and nourish your mind after you leave. You may even meet some of the main platform speakers. The vendors may even give you candy.
7. If you have made plans to leave early, change them. Tell your airline reservation host that he or she must have made a mistake in the booking, and you are furious with them over it.

The Power of MDRT – Not Just for Qualifiers!

8. Wear your member guest badge proudly, (and at all times! So that you can get into the events!)
9. Don't leave before you checkout all the worthy causes that the MDRT Foundation supports. You'll be amazed and you may even wish to get involved. The SYNERGY is contagious!
10. Thank the person who gave you this special gift!

Now that last tip has a special meaning for me. This is the first time I've ever had the opportunity to address

a group like this in a setting as important as MDRT. The reason why I was chosen to do this is because of the unique way in which I thanked the person who invited me, and all of the people that had something to do with my experience here.

And now, in a similar way, I'd like to thank all of you for attending this session, and most important, for your part in creating the synergy you are about to experience! Please stand up and get ready to SYNERGIZE!

