

Control Your Destiny

NAAFA Article #4:

SURVIVING TO THE END

by Bob Korvas

By now you know that I'm a firm believer in controlling your destiny. Having been a top 10, 100 and Life Diamond Champion my entire career, it took me 4 years after I began planning to leave American Family until I became an Independent Broker in 1997.

But, what about the agents that 'believe' they're too far along in their careers to change paths. What can you do? What should you consider? How should you adapt? What is your future 'likely' to bring under the American Family market and management direction?

If you and I are asking these questions, know that AmFam management already has. AmFam's first mission is to survive as a company. Management is only doing what comes natural. Self preservation for the management and the company is paramount. *Why do they keep changing contracts more often than some people change underwear?* It's to adapt to 'their' future market plan. I don't know too many captive agents who have thought in terms of "What is the market I compete in?" It's time that you do.

AmFam management knows that the market American Family competes in is the 'commodity' based segment. It's where people don't want to think beyond price. I've read policy contracts for the captives. They're a lot like a gallon of milk; virtually identical. *In case you don't know what I mean, it's like comparing a gallon of milk between several different stores. If all the milk comes from the same cows, the same processing methods and distribution channels, it wouldn't make any difference where you bought it. Same with the captive policies--- why would someone decide to buy from you?*

If you're nearing the end of your career with a good loyal client base,

you should stay put and not collect your extended earnings. Put in only as much time as needed to meet the company's minimum requirements, service your clients' claims, and answer their questions.

Read your contract and review it with an attorney. Then follow the contract. If you're considered an independent contractor, AmFam will have to honor the law.

Case in point: Back in the first few years after I left, another good friend of mine that had stayed at AmFam was in his 60's. He had health issues and was depressed because of AmFam's management. One day, he told me he was going to probably leave for health reasons and take his extended earnings. I told him, his clients were all loyal and similar in age. They're low maintenance and he only needed to come in a few hours a day. Why not stay, continue earning an income. This way if he ever had to leave, his wife could still collect the full extended earnings upon his death. Carl did stay. It was years before he died. He thanked me for talking him into staying. His widow did the same.

Everyone else who is in mid career or so, it's going to depend on a lot of variables. Most importantly is, "how do you feel and how is your disposition?" If you're truly an entrepreneur and independent business owner, then you'll eventually do what many are doing. Leave for independent agency.

The rest of you that choose to stay, who don't plan to leave for what ever your reason might be, protect yourself and again, **know your contract**. Don't sign a new one or any documents without reading and reviewing them with legal counsel. No one can force you to sign either. Never use computers, software or systems provided by American Family for your personal accounting information. These days they can watch every keystroke and reproduce what ever you do in their

servers. Buy a completely separate computer and software. Keep it by your desk. Use that for keeping track of your personal transactions and communications that you don't want AmFam to ever have a right to. Some examples are people that become friends and long time acquaintances, Keep all that info safe and sound. Do your business accounting and private email communications through it as well. Be sure that all contracts for leases, phones, internet and so forth are owned by you and can not be accessed or owned by American Family. Protection against the invasion of your privacy and business pursuits is very important. Such preparations will come in handy as a deterrent or protection upon notice of termination. You can hire a high school kid to come in and do the data entry in a few hours per week.

Create marketing materials about 'YOU'. Tell clients what makes **you** valuable and how **you** are different. Go beyond just being an American Family agent. Create a network and circle of assets around you that you can tap if you ever need to start fresh. Or if the day comes when American Family finally completes the transition to the direct, internet and in house employee based sales (GEICO) format, you'll be ready.

I hope this helps open your eyes to a few things that you may not have even considered. Or if you have, it should remind you about what kinds of things you need to prepare for. Any ideas, questions or comments you have or information you would like to hear more about? Feel free to contact me. Good Luck. ☺

Bob Korvas
Phone: 847-470-8330
Email: Bobkorvas@earthlink.net