

Dear NAAFA,

Here is one time I am extremely thankful to have a place like the Agents Bulletin Board where I can vent my frustrated feelings.

I have just read, read, and re-read the Compass article from 6/18/2012 with the title, "Company to test integrated stores in new sales market," and I'm pissed, to say the least. This whole idea of storefront and business park operation agencies really infuriates me because this is just another slap in the fact to agents. My agent friends, have you read this? If you aren't as mad as I am, then you have your head in the sand.

It becomes obvious that Amfam is pissed about how much the field agents are costing them. They want to see if employee agents are less costly and this is the trial. I knew all along the goal was to cut the cost to the company for *getting their products out to customers*....and they will cut no matter how the customer experience is. Believe me....if costs are down in this store front experiment but customer experience is worse....the company will choose store front experience no matter how the customer suffers. Can't you just see them bragging about how good their customer experience is and yet we all know the surveys are all taken with field agent customers.....not the customers of these employee agents ?

And I love the fact that they think they are "expanding store hours!" What do they think we agents are doing till 8 or 9 o'clock each night....playing computer games?

And then they say they want to "try things in a *controlled setting* through an employee model..." See...they are pissed because they can't "control" the agents enough to suit them. They want "more tightly integrated sales and service" they say. They are going to have "highly defined

processes outlined in a store operations manual.” In other words, these employees will be so terribly controlled they won’t be able to blink without following the manual! They say there is less risk with the employee-store-front experiment. Well, I can see why because these employee/agents will be robots, whose buttons and batteries are powered by levers pulled at the Home Office. When the lever comes down, these little robot agents shut down all function and bow in compliance. What a world we live in here at American Family!

But what really gets me is that they claim to be “committed to the traditional agency model in our current operating states.” Oh sure! If how they have been treating the agents can be considered “commitment”....I’ll eat it!! What things boil down to here is the fact that AmFam has failed in their attempts to expand using “traditional” methods because they simply don’t have qualified people in Madison who know how to expand. And of course, they would never ask the agents with experience who really know. Insurance has been sold successfully by agents for decades and will continue to be sold this way. Problem is, this company has terrible products, less than great claims service, and prices that are totally out of line with the rest of the world. Is that any way to run a company....especially one that is wanting and needing to expand?

And what really made me laugh is they claim they are going to pass along to the field agents all the wonderful “lessons and best practices” learned in their little store-front experiment. What a laugh that is! What they really mean is that they will begin using only employee agents and if you want to remain in the business, you gotta become an employee. Does that ring a bell with anyone? Remember the unsuccessful attempt at this by Allstate a few years ago? Did it work? Was it successful? Heavens, NO! The company went back and made all the employee agents become independent contractors again. Plus, the

company now lets true independent agents sell their products in direct competition to the captive agents...and they pay those independents a bigger commission!!! If that's not a slap in the face, I don't know what is. Oh yes, they claim "there won't be any product or pricing differences between channels" but you and I both know there will be. There always is with the companies who have tried it.

And what does this sentence mean? "However, we owe it to our customer-owners to explore innovative and cost-effective ways to spur growth." Who are the "customer-owners?"

I have heard that from other agents that store front offices are already set up in other parts of American Family land. But guess I've also heard they're being run by "volunteer" field agents. Wonder what kind of an experiment that's going to turn out to be!! But from the sounds of this article, Augusta, GA is the first place they are trying it with employee agents. Hmmm?

Well, I have vented, for all the good it did. I will have to say it's about time the field agents woke up. Tell it like it is, guys. Let NAAFA know. Stuff from the website gets read at the home office they tell me. Or are we all going to just sit here and let them take our agencies away?

Long time agent...doing a lot of thinking.