



GOING Farr





Many new multiline agents fail, while others succeed.

Why?

For answers, check out a day in the life of one top producer, 31-year-old Paul Farr. BY LISA SINGH



It's Thursday afternoon, sunny, and Agent No. 3907 slips on his Oakley shades, hops in his Jaguar and cruises down the highway. His mission: to persuade one of his clients—a 59-year-old widow named Betsy—not to drop her whole life insurance policy. Welcome to the world of Paul Farr, a multiline agent who lives and works on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. He's young—31. He's got the credentials—CLU, ChFC, LUTCF. And he's a rising star in an industry in which half of all new multiline agents call it quits by their fourth year. As for those who remain, many do not sell clients on the importance of life insurance. A recent LIMRA study, for example, found that only 6 percent of 44 million households have auto, homeowner's and life policies with the same company.

Farr is going on his seventh year—in his case with Southern Farm Bureau—but he's anything but burned out. His go-get-'em approach, as well as his knack for getting clients to buy property and casualty (P/C) and life insurance policies, proves as much. About one-fourth of his 1,400-plus clients have life insurance with him, and he has plans to increase those numbers. But now it looks as if one of his clients is about to bail.

A few hours ago, Farr learned that a client, Betsy, wanted out of the whole life policy he sold her five years ago. She was eyeing a term policy with AARP instead. He promptly called her up and said, No problem, he'd just have to swing by her office and have her sign the cancellation papers. But Farr's got something else in mind. "I think I'm going to make this a 'win-win' situation," says Farr, as his Jaguar speeds up past 50 mph, "but we'll just have to wait and see."

He takes a sip of his Tropical Smoothie Fat Buster shake, then flips on the radio and scans the stations, trying to find a song that will rev him up. Half the selling process comes down to attitude, he says, and putting the client first.

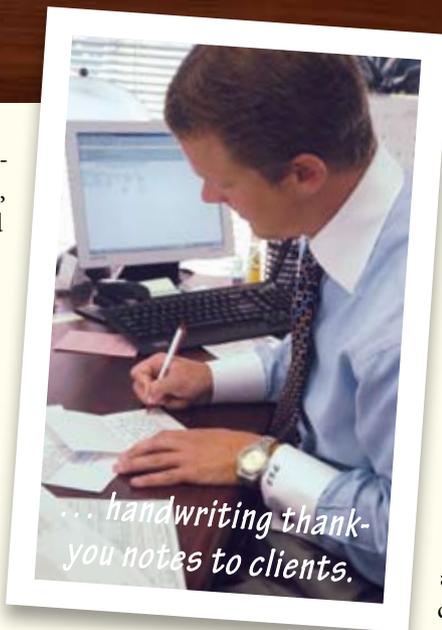
"I'm not worried about me," says Farr. The bottom line, he says, is Betsy and her family and how they'll fare without that policy. "Her kids won't have the means to bury her or pay whatever bills she leaves behind," he says. He soon hangs a left and parks in front of a pharmacy, where Betsy works as an office clerk. Farr straightens his silk tie and cuff links and grabs his briefcase. It's show time. But will the story end as Farr hopes, with Betsy keeping her whole life policy?

Best of the best

Day in and day out for the past seven years, Farr has been "putting out fires" like this, while rising to the top of his field. Because of his sales, he ranks No. 10 out of Southern Farm Bureau's 4,200 agents. And in his home state alone, he's the No. 4 "Best of the Best"—not bad for a former gas station clerk who once earned \$6.25 an hour.

Farr has also breathed new life into his local association, Northeastern AIFA, which he joined during his second year in the business and which he was president of for three years. He's also on the national committee of the Young Advisors Team and is the regional vice president of North Carolina AIFA. He's also a Leadership in Life Institute (LILI) graduate. But here's the really amazing part: In an industry in which many agents often go after the top breadwinners, Farr's clients are mostly low-income (households that make \$40,000 a year or less). Yet he has carved a lucrative niche for himself. "If you see enough lower-income people, you're probably going to make more money than someone who went for that one big sale and spent two weeks doing it," he says.

This year, his practice has grown 12 percent, the year before 8 percent. A big part of that growth comes down



to life insurance sales—and Farr's business style. His clients use words like "likable," "easygoing" and "straightforward" to describe him. "And he's not pushy at all," says Mary Holt, a 47-year-old hairdresser and mother of an autistic son, who bought life insurance from Farr a few years back.

A day in the life ...

So, why has Farr thrived while so many other new multiline agents fail? To get at the answer—and to learn how you can better run your practice, as well as increase your sales and clients—check out this snapshot of a typical Paul Farr day:

6:30 a.m.—Plays catch-up: After a quick dart to the beach for some surfing, Farr reaches the office by 6:30 a.m. He uses this time to "get my head on right" and remind himself, "It takes years to create a good customer—and a minute to lose one." Farr catches up on emails and other tasks, such as making policy changes. Also, he handwrites thank-you notes for every new policy—often six to seven a day. The cards include verbiage that Farr picked up at a Tom Hopkins sales seminar: "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer you service. My goal now is to offer you excellent follow-up service so you'll have no reservations about referring others who have similar needs."



Farr slips three business cards in each card—one for the client, two to give away. The approach works; 90 percent of his business comes through word of mouth. Farr also emails his centers of influence—the four attorneys and 60 real estate agents he works with. He keeps his roster of real estate agents growing by emailing free P/C quotes that they can use with their clients. "I learned that [tip] at a NAIFA convention," he says.

9 a.m.—Opens the office: And everyone is off and running. By everyone, that means Farr and another agent, Anthony, as well as a receptionist and two associate agents who are licensed to sell P/C. One of them, Carol, sets Farr's appointments and knows where he is at all times, often thanks to Microsoft Outlook's calendar. "That's a little scary for agents my age," says Farr of his transparent schedule, "but you just have to get past that so the office can run more efficiently."



10 a.m.—Makes calls: By now, Farr has slipped on his headset and is in the thick of calls. And here's the critical part: He tracks every one of them with Microsoft Outlook. The program's "journal entry" feature includes a timer that allows him to time and date-stamp each call and to write a brief note



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... driving to meet a client.

about what the talk entailed. He then files the entry under the appropriate “client” tab.

Farr started this routine five years ago, when he got hit with his first—and only—errors and omissions claim. A client had charged that Farr didn’t explain a policy thoroughly. The charge was bogus, but it took Farr a month to prove as much—a “lengthy ordeal” he could have easily avoided had he documented all his calls. “It sounds hard,” says Farr, “but it becomes routine.”

11 a.m.—Gets the appointment: “Be a slave to your calendar ... get those appointments and work them,” says Farr. To help, his assistant, Carol, tells clients, “Did you know that we also sell life insurance, long-term care insurance ...” She then looks at Farr’s schedule and says, “Paul will be in your area next week ... he can discuss these options with you then.”

If Farr makes the call, he says, “Just wanted to let you know it’s time for your annual review.” At that point, Farr has one goal: “To get the appointment, and nothing else,”



he says. “I don’t want to answer their questions over the phone.” Even a tentative appointment is good, he says, “because the person on the line generally feels committed at that point.” Farr makes 10 to 12 of these calls a week—six to seven lead to appointments. And 80 percent of these meetings occur at the client’s work or home.

Most of the time, Farr’s goal is to make that life insurance sale. But today, he’s more concerned about keeping a policy in place—Betsy’s to be exact. He calls her up. Immediately, he catches something off in her voice. “Sounds like you’re having a rough day,” he says. She restates that she wants to drop her policy, and continues talking for several minutes. Farr listens, never interrupting. Finally, he finds an “in.” “OK,” he says, “I would need to have you sign in order to cancel.” They agree to meet later, at 3 p.m. Jackpot! Farr’s got the appointment.

1 p.m.—Takes lunch: Farr never goes to lunch before 1 p.m. The reason: Most of his clients and prospects lunch at noon, and chances are good they’ll use that time to sneak in a phone call to his office. “I’ve gotten a lot of business just by being in the office at lunchtime,” says Farr.



... finalizing a P/C sale.

DOs AND DON'Ts—FARR'S LIST

Let’s face it, a client is fickle—if another agent offers him a slightly better deal on a premium, he may drop you. But don’t despair; you can ensure repeat business. Set yourself apart from the competition with these dos and don’ts from multiline agent Paul Farr, CLU, ChFC, LUTCF:

- **Dress nicely:** If your budget is tight, “fake it till you make it,” says Farr. He used to shop at a discount store, S&K, until he could afford custom-made suits.
- **Stay connected:** Farr recommends joining NAIFA. “They have access to people, to The American College, to a wealth of information, and local and national networking opportunities,” says Farr.
- **Get your designations:** Then put the framed certificates on your office wall. “Do whatever it takes to present yourself as a professional,” says Farr.
- **Advertise with flair:** Farr puts his photo, a catchphrase (“Wouldn’t life be easier with one agent to handle your insurance needs?”) and contact information on bottled water (each bottle costs him 40 cents). He donates the water to events like health fairs, parades and church picnics.
- **Personalize your email:** Include an embedded image of yourself—that’ll help the recipient put a name with a face.
- **Lastly, be trustworthy:** Keep your word. Show up on time. This, more than anything else, says Farr, will keep clients coming back.



... convincing his client, Betsy, to keep her whole life policy.

1:30 p.m.—Prepares for meetings: Farr leaves his afternoons open for meetings. (Along with meeting with Betsy today, he'll pick up a \$12,000 check for a P/C sale; tomorrow, he'll hand-deliver a life insurance policy). P/C sales are his "bread and butter," Farr says. They're also his chance to open the talk to life insurance—a product he calls "the foundation of any solid financial plan." He steers the talk toward life insurance like this:

Farr: "How much life insurance do you own?"

Prospect: "None."

Farr: "Well, how much do you need?"

Prospect: "I don't know."

Farr: "Let's do a review and find out."

"I've had two life insurance claims," says Farr, "and that really brings to life what we do." A few years back, he sold a policy to a married couple with one daughter. The husband worked as a school bus driver, the wife at The Home Depot. She fell ill with cancer and died. If not for that \$56,000 policy, their daughter couldn't have gone to college, says Farr.

When Farr sells life insurance, he always hand-delivers the policy. "I had to sell the policy to them personally, so I should deliver it to them personally," he says.

This afternoon, he's got an hour to go until his meeting with Betsy, and he prints out a cancellation form—"just in case I don't

win her over," he says. He relaxes for a few minutes and reads a poem by Mother Teresa. "If you look after other people, they're going to look after you," says Farr. As for Betsy, she's just lost her hus-

band, she's emotional. And she probably thinks she can't afford the \$250,000 policy. Farr wants a "win-win" conclusion—he'll aim to reduce her coverage while keeping the policy in place—at the rate it was sold to her, when she was 54. On the way out the office, he tells the receptionist, "Tell Carol where I'm going because she doesn't know."

3 p.m.-6 p.m.—Meets with clients and prospects: Farr usually shows up 10 minutes early for an appointment. And every bit of his presentation—from how he dresses to the way he talks—is carefully planned. Here are a few key elements:



- **Dress:** A silk tie, custom-tailored shirt with monogrammed cufflinks, courtesy of Tom James Co. (Farr only dresses down on Fridays, wearing a short-sleeved golf shirt with a Farm Bureau logo on it.)

- **Talk:** His appointments never run over an hour and 10 minutes. "Because they lose interest otherwise," he says. "Small talk them a touch ... then get right down to business." During the talk, Farr asks questions that he knows will elicit a yes. These questions include: Do you think that life insurance is the building block of a solid financial plan? Do you believe life insurance/disability income insurance is something worthy to carry for the protection of your family?

Moment of truth

At 2:50 p.m., Farr walks into Drug Care Discount Pharmacy and heads for the back office. Betsy is sitting in front of a computer, glum, talking on the phone. She sees Farr, and immediately perks up—she smiles and waves. She tells the person on the line, "Hold on, I have to sign something quickly." Farr says, "Why don't you finish your talk—I can wait."

While Betsy hangs up the phone, Farr pulls up a chair and soon goes over the policy.

"You're locked into your 54-year-old rate," he says. "It's cheaper than anything you can purchase today. Plus, it's gaining cash value."

Betsy looks at him. "Whoa, that's good."

But if she goes with the AARP term policy, he says, she'll have to requalify medically, and at the 59-year-old rate. Farr asks if she'd like to reduce her policy from \$250,000 to \$25,000. She says yes, and writes him a check for a year's premium.

"All right, sweetie," she says, putting away her checkbook. She smiles at him, sizes up his appearance—the \$270 shirt, the cuff links, the whole presentation. "You look mighty sharp," she says. And as he gets up to leave, she adds, "You just holler when I owe you more money."

For Agent No. 3907, it's mission accomplished. **AW**

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