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Title: A Plunger, a Policy and a Different  
Way of Thinking

Speaker(s): Matthew S. Dawson

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## **A Plunger, a Policy and a Different Way of Thinking**

Matthew S. Dawson

I was asked to visit with you today on a few cases that I have acquired and some of the unorthodox items that I had used to acquire these cases. I tend to use a lot of items and props in prospecting and marketing and we thought it would be fun to share some of these with you. Before I begin I'd like to just share something with you very meaningful to me.

Today is not only a very special day because I get to visit with you, but, as of 7:30 this morning, it marks my exact three-year anniversary in the business. I just couldn't be happier to share this time with you. So thank you very much.

As I said earlier, I was asked to visit with you on a few cases and some of the unusual items that I had used. I tend to be a little bit unorthodox, tend to push the line a little bit and thought that maybe you could walk away with some of these ideas.

Just to give you a real quick history about me: I'm a real simple guy from south Texas. I seem to be pretty good with people and with numbers. I always try to accomplish three things when I first meet somebody and that's to shake their hand, look them square in the eye, and try to make them laugh. I think that laughter is one of the easiest ways to remember somebody. I think it removes that protective armor that we have and really reveals what's behind the curtain if that makes any sense.

What I thought I would do is give you a couple of ideas that I had used when I was struggling in the business at first. When I first started I was having a real tough time. I made a commitment to myself that I was going to qualify for MDRT my very first year in the business, If I didn't qualify, I was out. Six months in, not a lot of business. I sold some term cases and was having a real tough time. I was prospecting just like everybody else was prospecting: sending out mailers, sending out letters, joining networking groups. I committed the cardinal sin and bought some leads. Nothing was working. I read an article in *Round the Table* magazine, from a fellow MDRT member, that said market as if you were being marketed to. Prospect as if you were being prospected to. It really struck a chord with me and I thought about it a little bit. I'm a pretty weird guy. I enjoy off the wall things. I fully think that if you spend any length of time with me, you'll come to a quick conclusion I have a very blurred definition of sanity and reality.

Just to give you a couple of ideas before we get into talk about these cases: one of the things that I do instead of sending a normal thank-you card or a birthday card to my best clients, I send a life-size cutout of me. Seriously, it's this big. Looks just like me with a cartoon bubble off my face that says, "Thank you for X. I loved it so much I thought you might like to see my smiling face saying thank you every day for the rest of the year." And, while it's weird, my clients like it. It's completely ridiculous and what's best about it is it leaves a lasting impression. When my client's clients come into their offices and they see this atrocity standing in the corner, inevitably my clients tell my story for me. They say who I am and tell about the services that I provide. It's a great marketing tool and it's helped me actually get about a dozen clients.

Next real quick idea: I've got to set the stage for you first just a little bit. Let's imagine that you are headed into your championship rodeo ride, your grand slam appointment. This is the guy who is going to make your year, make your career. A very, very high stress appointment, high tension. You walk in and you see him sitting there with his CPA, his estate planning attorney, his corporate attorney who have all come, by the way, just to ensure that you know that they are his sole authority for all of his decision-making. Ten minutes into your proposal. it's a real stressful environment. You can just feel the tension in the air. You very, very quietly pull this out to do your math. I'm telling you this is completely ridiculous, but it works. And, if your client isn't the very first one to make a joke, crack a smile, give something right back at you, he's probably a tough guy and you don't want to work with him anyway. It shows him you are confident, you can be serious but you can enjoy the journey along the way. I can't tell you how many times something like this has helped me and usually they'll just make a wisecrack right back at me like, "Matt I know you're pretty young, you're almost bald and you're losing your eyesight too?" And I say, "No it's just when the numbers are big, it makes you feel like you're richer."

Another real quick idea before we get into these two cases. I call this my meaningless mailer campaign. There is a guy who belongs to a pretty prominent Republican organization in Orange County. I belong to the organization as well, and I just could not get in front of him. I tried as many times as I could. He was not only avoiding me, he was avoiding the people who agreed to introduce me to him. So I said OK, I've got to figure something out here to get in front of him. I know he could be a great client, but I also know he gets marketed to every single day. I didn't want to send the normal "Hi. My name is Matthew Dawson. We belong to the same organization. This is the services that I provide. Let's get together and sing 'Kumbaya'" kind of letter. So, I felt I would be better served by sending him a coconut. I don't know why I thought of a coconut. I thought it was a pretty good idea. I've never gotten a coconut in the mail before. I thought why wouldn't you like to get one? He didn't think it was a great idea because he didn't call me back.

About a week and a half went by. I was sitting in my garage. I realized I hadn't heard from him, and this is like a Sunday afternoon before getting back into the work week. I said, "OK, is there something I can send him in my garage, again, completely meaningless?" So I decided to send him a monkey wrench. Why did I send him a monkey wrench? I don't know really. I just thought it was funny and maybe he can have some value in it if I never get to see him. He didn't respond to the monkey wrench. He didn't respond to the coconut. So I said, "OK, maybe this guy's like a high tech guy." Try something else. I never tried this one before. So I decided to send him a very unassuming, unlabeled DVD. If you know anything about human nature or curiosity, it forces us to know what is on an unlabeled DVD. Surprise, surprise it is me. He puts it in the DVD player, I come up and I can't remember what I said but it was something like, "Hi. This is Matthew. I haven't heard back from you. I hope you can appreciate the unique way I'm trying to get in front of you. I'd love to shake your hand sometime soon." I didn't hear back.

So, here I am, like six weeks into the process, and nothing was going well. I said, "Alright, if I'm going to go out, I'm going out in a blaze of glory." So I decided to get a local messenger to send this to his office. A 55-gallon drum garbage can, I'm sure you're thinking right now, the most important question needing answered is how did I fit this into my suitcase? I sent it to him with a label attached to it or a note attached to it on the handle that said I haven't heard back from all

the items that I've sent you. I'm sure they're piling up on your desk by now and I wanted to ensure that you had an appropriate place to put them. He called back a couple days later and he's now one of my very best clients.

There are two cases that the Advisory Board wanted me to talk to you about today. This is one of my most very favorite people. I had a very fortunate opportunity to become very close with this gentleman. I have a rule that I will only take on a client, only someone who I can be true friends with. I feel like in the hierarchy of professional service advisors, you have your everyday advisor, you have your trusted advisor and advocate and then you have a really true friend. This is how I look at this man.

He was actually a pretty long-time client of the firm. I had been working with the senior advisor. I do a lot of partnership and mentoring. The senior advisor was just really being challenged with getting him to increase his coverage. He had him as a client for about 10 years and was just getting hit with rejection after rejection. He was getting the old "If I die, my wife will just sell my property" rejection. Which reminds me he, like most of my clients, have built their net worth by putting it in bricks and steel, and not by building their bank account. I have a very unique ability to find all the rich poor people. Equity rich, cash poor if you didn't get my drift.

On a rejection appointment return, the senior advisor was feeling pretty low. I said, "Why don't you just give me a shot at it. I don't know if can make it work, but I can at least try." He said, "OK." So I called Leon. This client's name is Leon. I called him out of the blue. I must have called him on the worst day possible, because he just handed it to me. I've got pretty tough skin. This guy, I swear, was dropping curse words like he just took a two-week cruise on the USS F-bomb. I picked up the rest of my dignity, called him back a few weeks later, and finally got through.

I too was getting hit with rejection after rejection after rejection. So I thought maybe I should do something a little bit different. When I did go to see him, fortunately, every time I got a little bit closer and a little bit closer and a little bit closer. I love Leon to death, but his decision-making moves about as fast as a herd of turtles. Finally I decided I was going to my very, very last sales appointment with him. This is a little embarrassing to show you. When I was going down to his office, before I stopped by, I went down to a hardware store and I purchased this: very old-school, wooden plunger, red plunger bulb. I'm sure you're thinking what does this have to do anything with insurance?

I walked into his office. He never greets me at the door, ever. He sits down at his desk, doesn't even stand up. I came walking in and right down on his desk, right? I slammed it down on his desk and it held real nice because he had a nice glass top. He looked at me half confused, half angry and goes, "What the heck are you doing? What's going on?" And I look at him with as straight of a face as I could possibly muster. And it's pretty hard to be serious while I'm holding a plunger at this point in time. I said, "Leon, your insurance is just like this plunger. You hope you don't have to use it, but if you need one and you don't have one, you're going to be ankle deep in crap." The client liked it. I took an application that day and I credit this plunger with selling \$30 million of insurance.

Real quick case I want to talk to you about: this is someone who has truly become one of my very best friends, as much as a friend as I can get. When I was introduced to him, I could not have been introduced to someone more adamant against insurance. I mean stubborn. So stubborn (his name is Dave) he would argue with a fencepost. When I went to go talk to him, I couldn't get the appointment. He was actually a recommendation from an existing client. Usually those are the easiest ones because they at least don't want to offend their friend.

I called him, couldn't really get through. I thought about it for a little bit and I thought, OK, what's his business? Commercial real estate, what can I do with that? So I went down to the local Hobby Lobby and I got a little building that looked just like his building. It was the wrong color so I went down the next aisle, got a paint brush and some paint. I went back to my office, put some newspaper over the desk and started painting this. About that time, my managing partner came down and looked at it. I thought, this is exactly what a managing partner wants to see: an agent doing crafts at his desk instead of making phone calls.

I made this little model building. I got on his Web site and I printed out his company logo and a picture of his face and I glued them right to the side of the building. Then I destroyed it by drilling a bunch of screws into the building. I'm sure you know where I'm going with this by now. I attached to the screws little notes that said "IRS," "death tax," "income tax." I attached a note to it that said, "Dave, I'm sure this is how you feel. Everyone is trying to screw you over. If you give me a chance I can help solve your issues." He called back a couple of days later and thought it was a pretty good idea. He became a very good client.

The last one I want to talk to you about is one of my absolute favorites. And ladies in the room, I will have to apologize in advance. I like to think of myself as a professional and a gentleman. I'm sure after hearing the story you will use those terms very loosely when describing me.

His name is Jim. I went to go see him. A phenomenal appointment, it was eerily easy to get in to talk to him. After talking for a couple of minutes, I discovered that the last time he bought a policy was back in 1972 for \$400,000 of coverage. Since then, his net worth had grown to about \$30 million and \$400,000 just wasn't going to cut it anymore. I talked to him about a long-term life insurance labeled FUD, fear, uncertainty and doubt. He expressed to me his desire to not disinherit his kids and to make sure his sister, who is a partner in the business, wouldn't have to fire-sale the company and put herself and the rest of the employees in a poor financial situation. He had strong charitable inclinations toward his church. He wanted to make sure that his grandkids could go to college and that his great-grandkids could go to college. He and I were getting along great. He had the financial ability to pay for it. I was sitting there thinking, "Thank you for this. It's been a long time coming."

We went to leave the appointment. I told him, "Jim, I'll give you about a week, week and a half to digest the \$520,000 check that you're going to have to write to solve your problem." So I got up, as I always do, and shook his hand, a good firm handshake for 3 to 4 seconds. Right as I was easing up on my grip, he grabbed my hand again and pulled me down real tight. He looked me square in the eye and said, "Matt, young man, I know I need it, but I like my pocketbook a lot more. You're going to have to have a big set of balls to sell me." I was freaking out. This is how

we were going to leave this thing? I was shocked. We're going to sit here and have this amazing appointment and this is how we were going to leave it?

He patted me on the back and said, "I'll see you around, kid." I wasn't sure what that meant. Was I really going to see him around? Was I not going to see him around? I got back to my car feeling like a dog. I drove back to the office and just stared at my phone for two or three hours. I was obsessed over this. This was how we're going to leave it? I had this great appointment. And then, the idea struck.

Again, ladies, please excuse me. Remember his parting words, "Young man, you're going to have a big set to sell me." This is not one of my prouder moments in the insurance business. So I got online and I bought a mold of the lower hanging area of a bull. I'm sure you've seen this from going down the freeway on trucks hanging from a trailer hitch. I got it in, opened it up, and they were disturbingly accurate. To try and redeem some ounce of professionalism, I didn't bring it today in fear that the cameraman would have a field day with the zoom. So I put it in a box, wrote a note and sent it out to Jim. I said, "Jim, I felt it would be inappropriate for me to show you in person, but I wanted you to rest assured that I have that set you were talking about."

I didn't hear back from him for a few weeks. I thought maybe I pushed the line just a little bit too far. Eventually, he called. I went back to see him and, wouldn't you know, they're sitting on his desk as a paperweight. It's absolutely classic.

I tell these stories. I departed just ever so slightly from the program description because I had a fortunate opportunity to get to know a lot of you since I've been here these last couple of days. It's been a humbling experience. This is my very first trip here and I think that you are the true definition of success, those of you who do this year after year after year. I don't have to tell you to think differently, because you already do. You're here because you're the best of the best. I think maybe some of us just need that little bit of encouragement and a little bit of a boost to make it fun again. Have fun with this business. Laugh. Smile. Never forget the amazing power that laughter can bring.

I thank you all very much for letting me come up here and talk to you. Thank you for letting me visit with you.

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**Matthew S. Dawson** is a two-year MDRT member with one Top of the Table honor. He is a registered representative and senior associate of the Tax & Financial Group, where his practice focuses on the needs of high-net-worth individuals by helping them think beyond the traditional in ways they have not thought of before. Dawson is an active member of various Orange County Republican organizations and is involved with the Orange County and Inland Empire Make-A-Wish Foundation's golf tournament, a nonprofit that raises nearly \$100,000 each year for terminally ill children.

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