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## We Need To Change Our Image and The Public's Perception

*By Ron Cohen, RHU*

Having just returned from the 2nd Annual International DI Conference at Lake Las Vegas, I realized why so many Americans just might have a negative attitude towards the disability insurance industry as a whole. Most Americans are subjected to negative publicity and claims that are denied.

Few hear the real life stories from the other side. You should have been sitting in my seat as several of the scheduled speakers discussed their experiences... nightmarish stories, but their disability policies saved them from ruination. Near death experiences, stories about divorce, lack of self esteem, thoughts of suicide, they brought most all of us to tears. That's no easy task for me, as I have been through 3 disabilities personally and everyone in my family, yes, everyone, has experienced some form of disability. Mother, Father, Sister, Wife, both sons, Mother-in-law, Father-in-law, everyone of them.



Let's get something straight right off the bat. Most Americans would go bankrupt within 90 days of a disability. We just do not save any money and thus find ourselves without an out. Fact. No fancy words are needed here, disability insurance is a primary need. Being disabled is a living hell that disables more than just the individual. It takes the whole family down, as well as friends, employees and businesses. Just look up the figures on how many businesses declare bankruptcy due to disabilities.

The problem is perception. How many ads on TV are running at this very moment relating the need for disability vs. ads by attorneys telling the public to call them and sue insurance companies? How many Financial Advisors and Consultants discuss the need for disability insurance? How many life insurance agents discuss disability insurance with their clients?

### **How many Americans actually know about disability insurance?**

As an industry, we have done a very poor job in responding to the need for educating the public. We must change the public's perception and this takes time and a united effort. This course has begun with the Council of Disability Awareness being formed, the International DI Society and the American College.

The International DI Society's purpose is to self educate its members and share information which will result in the public benefiting. The Council of Disability Awareness consists of the insurance companies. Its direction is indeed to make the public aware of disability insurance and create a more favorable image towards the industry. The American College has partnered with the International DI Society in an effort to educate those within our industry. Courses related to disability will be taught by disability insurance experts all around the U.S.. It is indeed time to teach our own and carry this message to the public.

I suggest that Financial Advisors and Consultants take another look at disability insurance. One that is more realistic in the overall planning of their clientele. One that begins with the need for disability insurance. I suggest that life insurance agents consider protecting their clients from a living death as

well as protecting themselves from future law suits by not offering their clients disability insurance coverage. This becomes a win win situation that indeed benefits all those concerned. It really is a simple story that goes like this. When Jack came down the beanstalk, what did he take? The goose. Not the golden eggs.

So the change begins... Within our own industry. That's as it should be. It's up to us to spread the word to our own first and for our own to relay it to the public. I suggest that if you want to learn about disability insurance, you consider joining the International DI Society. Agents/brokers, regulators, administrators, human resources, actuaries, claims people, legislators, you name it, are all welcomed.