North American
A Sammons Financial Company

Issued by North American Company for Life and Health Insurance®

Project Apex

How top financial professionals thrive amid market uncertainty and industry challenges

A Project Apex Exclusive

37573Z

PRT 5-24

We recently surveyed hundreds of top financial professionals to better understand what sets them apart and how they reached the **peak of success.**

Uncertain market conditions, volatility, obstacles, and challenges are a frequent part of the financial services industry. We explore how financial professionals responded to hurdles and obstacles along their journey, and how they helped safeguard both their business and their clients in times of uncertainty.

Facing journey obstacles

When our top producers started in the industry, these were some of the biggest obstacles they faced.

Rejection and failure

Many producers initially struggled with rejection and finding leads, emphasizing the difficulty of navigating annuity sales and establishing a solid foundation in the industry.

Money

Since new producers start with limited capital, financial management and strategic investment in leads and marketing are essential to building a strong foundation.

Overall experience and age

Due to a lack of experience, new agents face challenges in being viewed as trusted financial professionals, highlighting the importance of building credibility to ensure clients feel no need to seek advice elsewhere.

37573Z PRT 5-24

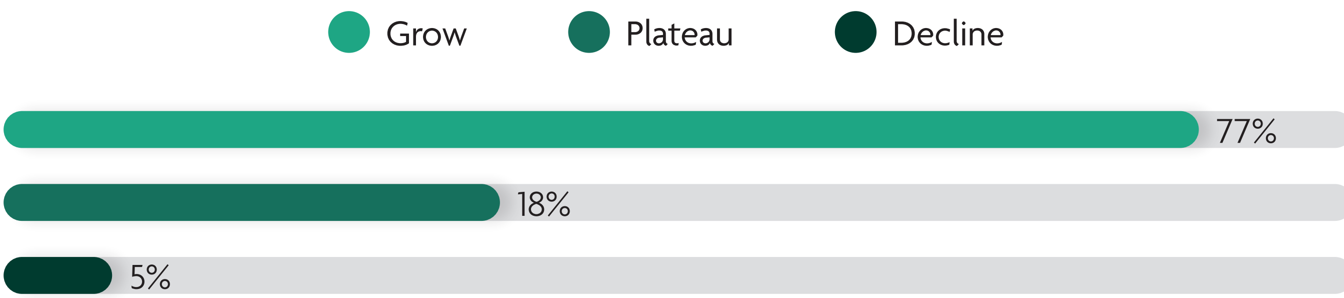
Reflecting on uncertain times

Financial professionals were asked to reflect on industry and market challenges they've faced throughout their careers, from economic downturns and periods of inflation to the most recent years of dealing with the global pandemic and its aftermath. The common thread was that all of them had to reevaluate, pivot, and implement new ideas to continue to grow and thrive.

When asked if they were working as a financial professional during the 2008 recession, **93%** of respondents said 'yes!'

A look at the numbers

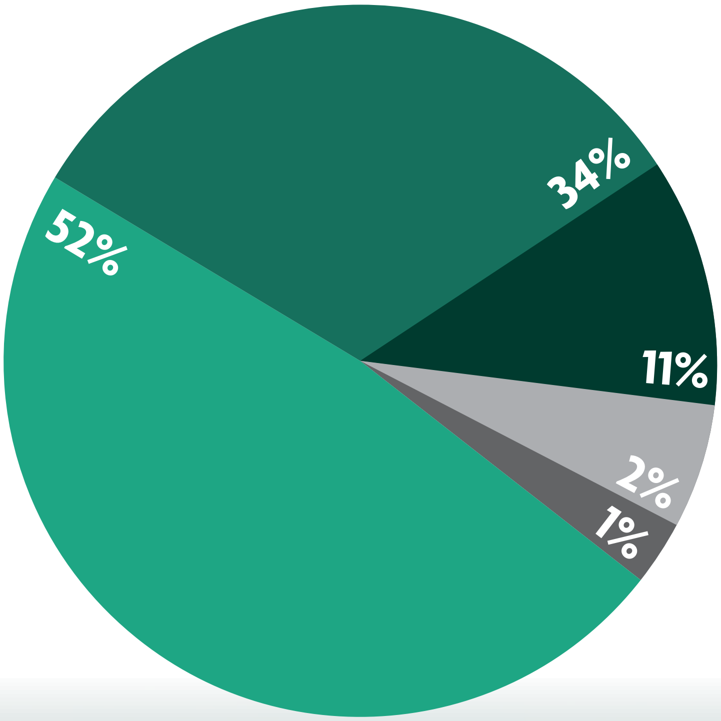
When it came to market downturns, recessions, or times of great market volatility (such as the 2008 recession or COVID-19 pandemic, etc.) top producers indicated whether it caused their business to grow, plateau, or decline.



When asked about the strategies they uncovered during economic volatility to help their business thrive, respondents shared the following:

- Implemented email marketing to address current economic conditions
- Educated clients on the patterns of the market and past market volatility
- Did not react to economic downturns or run away from the market
- Focused on downside protection and proactively reaching out to clients
- Worked with products that help protect clients from losses during an extended market decline
- Used Fixed Annuities, Fixed Indexed Annuities, and Life Insurance to help protect clients from market downturns yet still allow for upside potential when the markets improve

Financial professionals were also asked how prepared they were to help clients through any upcoming recession.
Here's what they shared.

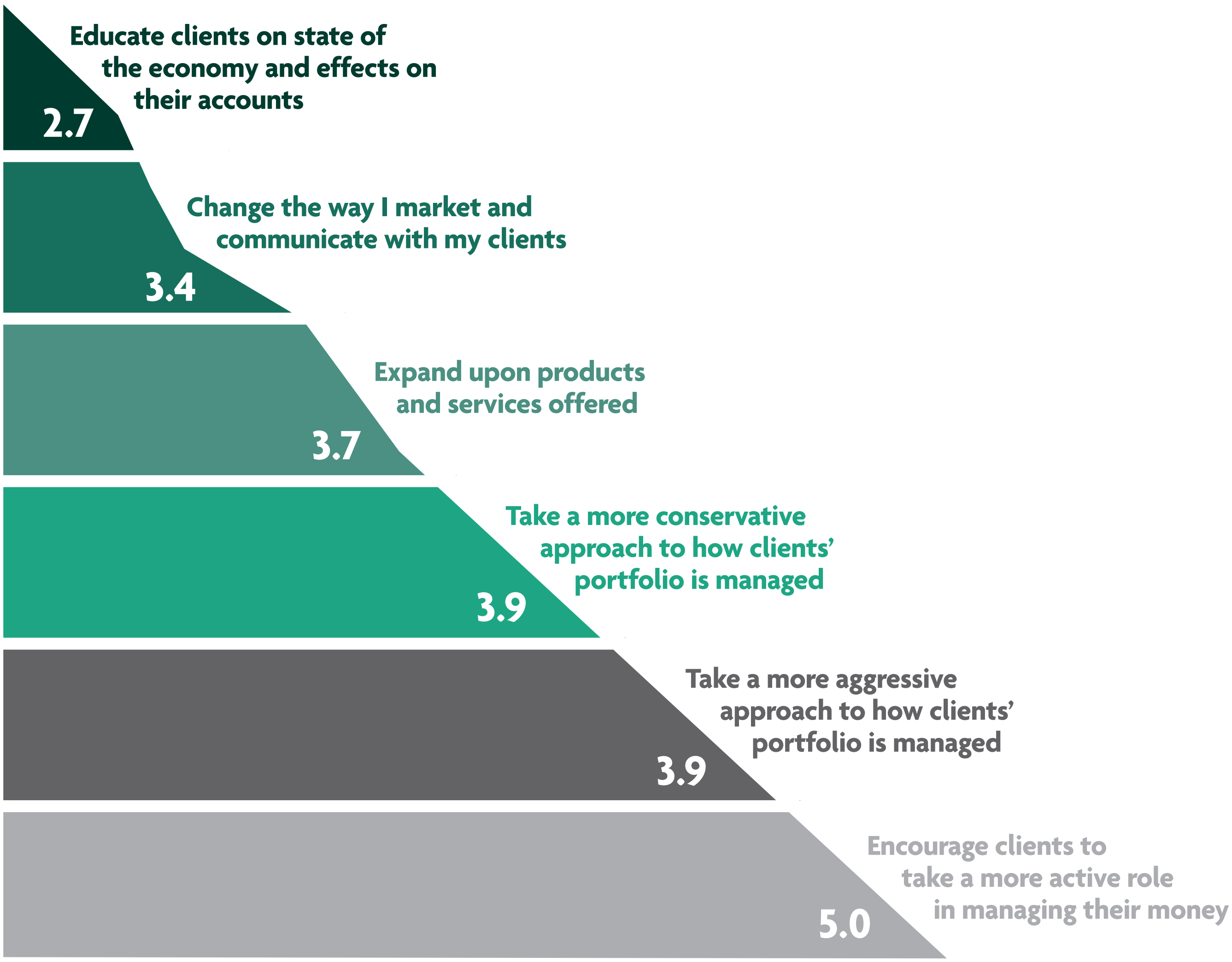


How prepared are you to help your clients through a recession?

- Somewhat Prepared
- Very Prepared
- Neutral
- Somewhat Unprepared
- Not Sure

We asked respondents to rank the top practices or strategies they incorporate during times of market volatility.

View the average response each approach received when asked to rank from #1 (most used) to #7 (least used)



Strategies used during times of marketing volatility

Educating clients on the state of the economy and its effect on their accounts was the most-used strategy, accounting for **58.3%** of responses in the #1 spot.

Top financial professionals have a lot to say about how to protect your business and your clients' portfolios during times of great market volatility. **Here's what they suggest:**

Be proactive and maintain consistent communication

- **Be proactive:** Address concerns before your clients have a chance to worry
- **Be available:** Stay connected online and increase interactions with clients
- **Show empathy:** Show them you care about their financial wellbeing
- **Don't forget the three P's when it comes to communicating with your client:** **P**ositive, **P**rotective, and **P**roactive

Revisit or re-evaluate portfolios

- **Stay focused:** Help clients focus on the stability within their portfolio
- **Address risk:** Help them understand how much risk their portfolio can assume as it relates to current market conditions

Strategies to traverse the climb

Financial professionals cite two main themes when it comes to enduring times of uncertainty: **education** and **resilience**. Let's take a look at how top producers use education and resilience to stay on track.

Education

- **Educate yourself:** Learn everything you can about the products, industry, and consumers.
- **Educate the client:** Explain the ins and outs of the product options that may be a good fit, and how they can fit within their portfolio.

Resilience

- Producers must be able to accept that they are going to hear lots of "no's" before they finally get a "yes." They must accept that rejection is part of the business, move on, but stick with it because resilience will eventually pay off.

"If you get in the business, know that if you try hard enough and work hard enough you can be successful. Because you're going to get a lot of no's. You're going to get that rejection and rejection is just part of our business. You've got to be able to accept it and move on." – *Anonymous respondent*

Producers are clear: The focus should always be on the client, keeping their needs and goals top of mind, building onto what will hopefully be a lifetime professional relationship.

They suggest following a simple three-step strategy to build relationships and client loyalty, which you can remember with the acronym, **EPE: Educate, Personalize, and Empower.**

Educate

Ensure clear communication with clients and a thorough understanding of their needs, providing detailed information on their portfolio and market dynamics to empower their decision-making.

Personalize

Cater plans to each individual client but have a wide variety of product solutions available that can work for your clients.

Empower

Empower your clients to make their own educated and informed decisions; you are just there to guide them.

Facing and overcoming challenges requires a blend of strategic foresight, personal resilience, and a steadfast commitment to client well-being. Following these principles will not only help you navigate through immediate obstacles but will also pave the way for your enduring success.

For information on what sets top producers apart and their prospecting, marketing, and business-building techniques, take the Project Apex smartbook course **here**. You'll learn what producers have to say about seminars, referrals, niche marketing, radio, and podcasts, and the impact these endeavors have on new business and retention.

For more information on Project Apex or North American, call your regional sales team or Sales Support at 866-322-7066.

NORTH AMERICAN®
A Sammons Financial Company

Methodology

This Sammons Financial research study was conducted in two phases between November 2022 and January 2023. Phase 1 consisted of in-depth phone interviews among 20 top producing agents. Phase 2 was an online survey exercise comprised of 309 life insurance and annuity agents, both sampled from the general insurance market and Sammons Financial member company agents. Analysis is for educational purposes only. The experience of the participants of the 2023 Sammons Financial Research Study may not be representative of the experience of all. Be sure to follow all applicable advertising guidelines. Agents interviewed sell more than annuities/life insurance and statements provided may not apply directly to the sale of these products.

All survey responses were submitted anonymously with permission to use in advertising. The opinions are their own and not necessarily those of North American Company.

West Des Moines, IA | **NorthAmericanCompany.com**

37573Z PRT 5-24