

a few minutes
with
**anthony
de la torre**



Photo by Skip Alford

Anthony de la Torre believes in the power of being positive. “Everything starts with attitude... a positive energy,” he says. “The way you attack each day, personally and professionally. Every day starts with exuberance and enthusiasm. I believe in treating people the same way you want to be treated.”

Five years ago he graduated from Florida State University in Tallahassee with a degree in marketing, and went to work for a home healthcare agency specializing in private duty nursing services. “I started in Atlanta and was there for five months, then relocated to Daytona Beach, Ft. Lauderdale and finally Miami... four moves in two years,” he offers. “Being on call 24/7 and working on weekends I started thinking, ‘What am I doing?’ I didn’t see this as a long-term career.”

In 2008, Anthony was introduced to the insurance industry and joined Brown & Brown’s Tampa office as a Commercial Account Executive. It was a challenging jump; the insurance business is very detailed, and he admittedly is not so detailed. “I had to be very disciplined,” he remembers. “The only way I got business is if another agent failed.” The economy in Tampa was not especially thriving, and his target customers – business owners – were apprehensive about change. He had to find creative ways to get in front of these business owners. He remembers his Baby Shoes campaign, in which he would

mail out a pair of baby shoes with a note saying, ‘I have one foot in the door. When are you going to allow both feet in for me to review your current insurance program?’ He would then relentlessly and aggressively call

“I sit down with people and try to find out what has made them successful. Learning just one thing—one take away from that person—is what I like.”

business owners until they finally told him “No,” which he loved. (Sales 101 tells us that the more ‘No’s’ we get, the closer we are to a ‘Yes.’) The Baby Shoes tactic generated about 90% of Anthony’s revenue that first year in the business. Another approach was sending out hand-written cards. “It’s a drip,” he explains. “...just another reason to call people to see if they received my letter.”

Nearly six months ago, Brown & Brown gave Anthony the opportunity to head its Panama City, Florida branch. He relocated to Bay County, where he currently lives in Panama City Beach. There are, of course, challenges one faces when moving to a new area...namely, the challenge of not knowing anyone. There are also age challenges; at 27, Anthony is relatively young to be running a regional division. “It’s challenging to find like-minded people, as a young, single person,” he admits. “Being someone who is a recent college grad, I’m often speaking with people who are my parents’ age. Sometimes

it’s hard to relate.” But, he adds, everyone he’s called has been willing to sit down and talk about their experience in Bay County.

The positive factors of relocating to this market, however, have not been lost on Anthony. “This is a great opportunity professionally,” he acknowledges. “There’s so much growth opportunity here. People have been welcoming, and have immediately made me feel comfortable here.” Another obvious positive is being close to a gorgeous beach with close proximity to metropolitan cities. “We’re five hours away from Atlanta, Orlando, Tampa and New Orleans,” he adds. “This is a place you can make an immediate impact in a short amount of time. If you’re a go-getter, this is a good place for you.”

And go-getter he is. His conversation is laced with phrases like “You’ve got to challenge yourself on a daily basis... feel uncomfortable;” “You ultimately drive your success and your development; no one else is going to do that for you;” and, “I like to lead by example. If I’m willing to make 35 cold-calls, you should want to make 40!”

Anthony directs and administers the team at Brown & Brown, from hiring and training to mentoring and helping sales professionals develop their prospecting skills and knowledge of the industry. “I look for people who have the right attitude,” he says. “Energy providers, not energy suckers. Enthusiasm. Charisma. When these people walk into a room, the energy level elevates.” His other focus is branding and business development, which he cultivates by getting involved in non-profits, local chambers of commerce and professional organizations. He is the 2011 committee chair for H.Y.P.E.,

the Beach Chamber’s Young Professionals committee, and is a member of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association. He is also on the Board of the Children’s Home Society (and was in Tampa as well). “Last year I watched *The Blind Side* and was extremely touched,” he shares. “It left an impact. Just afterward, I got involved with the (organization) because I want to make a difference in someone’s life. I strive to be selfless...to help others. Some of these kids don’t have the structure and direction that I was afforded by my parents.”

So what does this driven young man see for himself in five years? “I would take the office I’m currently running and triple it in size, from both a revenue and employee standpoint,” he considers. “Personally, maybe I’ll be married...(laughs) and I don’t know... a child? *Maybe!*”

