

7 Secrets to Creating Client Referrals

by Dennis Roberts

Ask the proprietor of a professional service firm where they get their business from and most will tell you that over 80% of their business comes from word-of-mouth referrals. What is astounding is that most professional firms do not have active referral strategies. Now while devoting 80% of your marketing budget to referrals is a bit far fetched there are seven killer strategies that don't cost the earth to boost your business.

Maintain Visibility

Invest time in attending events such as Chamber of Commerce meetings, networking breakfasts, small business forums, wealth creation seminars anywhere your potential clients go. You have got to be seen to be heard.

"People like doing business with people they like and trust."

Go easy on the sales pitch, just be there offering friendly advice, brokering connections with people you know and letting them know you are still the area specialist or whatever is your unique angle.

Keep in Touch

Once you have sold to your client the relationship is just beginning. It is essential that you track customer records/transactions in a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database. Ask for their permission if you seek to distribute marketing information.

Electronic newsletters or e-zines are an inexpensive and easy way to keep in touch with your prospective and past customers. Invest the time and energy in compiling newsworthy articles and visually appealing graphics. People love people stories and photos.

Ask for Referrals

The easiest way to get referrals is to ask for them. You may want to pre-position your client by asking upfront, "When I deliver the outcomes we have agreed upon I would very much like for you to refer me to your friends and associates, how does that sound?"

Or even just ask, "Who else do you know that might be interested selling their home quickly and for the top dollar?"

Describe your ideal client to them; for example, "The kinds of people I am looking to help are young families looking to move closer to private schools in this area."

Make sure they know to how to refer clients to you. Say, "If you know someone that might be interested, call me first to discuss and then I'll call them."

A Simple "Thank you"

An easy and inexpensive way to leave an indelible mark on your referrer is to simply and sincerely thank them. No song, no dance just a sincere and heartfelt "Thank you."

The most powerful word in the English language is a person's name. Do use it when conversing with your clients.

People love to help. Clue them in as to how they can help you, make it easy for them and sincerely thank them. Miracles will occur.



Deliver on your Promises

There is no substitute for delivering the goods. Without it you are pushing uphill. Make sure you set clear performance expectations, maintain open communications and listen attentively. If you hit a hurdle be open and upfront - you will gain respect in the long term.

Form Partnerships

Think from the customer's perspective. If you are in real estate moving house is one of the more traumatic events one can encounter. Make the passage as easy as possible. Form partnerships with lenders, removalists, boarding kennels, cleaners. Be respectful of security and privacy concerns.



Provide Incentives

It is perfectly acceptable to offer rewards to regular referrers. Make it worth their while especially where they go out of their way to help. It is the sentiment of the thing rather than the face value of the reward. Find out what they indulge in, for example, chocolate, weekends away, dinner, theatre or sporting tickets. These strategies are neither expensive nor time consuming. They are simple in design but powerful in effect. Give them a try. Your clients will love you for them.



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