



# Getting More Referrals In Five Easy Steps

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I am often surprised by the number of businesses I work with who feel that if they are not spending money on marketing they are not doing it properly. I am also asked by companies about inexpensive methods of marketing that they should use. This is usually after they have tried the 'expensive' methods advertising, sponsorship etc and found these methods not to work as well as expected.

When we discuss ways to get more customers they talk about word-of-mouth and referrals and then unfortunately don't appear to do anything about them.

Some businesses generate all their clients from referrals. So what is it they are doing that others are not?

Having a system for getting good quality referrals is essential for all businesses. It will provide a stream of prospects that are easier to approach, easier to sell to and most of all easier to get more referrals from. The level of trust that a referral will have for you is greatly increased as there is an implied level of trust transferred from the referrer. People will give you referrals for 3 reasons:

- 1 They want to help you
- 2 They want to help the person they are referring
- 3 They want to help themselves

To gain more and better quality referrals you need to encourage these motives and make yourself more referable.

Detailed below five ways to improve referral gathering techniques

### 1 **Ask for them**

It is the most obvious reason for sales people not to get referrals. They don't want to ask, just in case the client says no, or is offended. Sometimes it is just a technique issue and sales people just need to ask in the correct and most appropriate manner.

To assist in this, salespeople should learn to 'plant' the right seeds early in their presentation, so when they ask for the referral the client is not surprised. This should be included in the introduction to highlight that if you are getting referrals you are a reputable and trustworthy business. Timing is all important here. Most importantly whenever a customer compliments your product or service is an excellent time to ask for referrals.

However some business suit the approach of asking just after the close but others a longer approach will be needed when your client has experienced the quality of your product or service, but for every customer always make it a habit to ask.

## 2 **Reward the referrer**

Changing the win-lose of a normal referral gathering exercise into a win-win can be achieved by offering an incentive such as discounts of further purchases or even high street vouchers in exchange for referrals. Remember potential lifetime value of your customers this is one of the cheapest forms of acquisition. Some customers will become 'centres of influence' start to refer on a regular basis. Ensure that they have the tools to refer you such as your business card and your latest marketing material. Every time a referral is received you must thank the customer referring you. How about some printed thank-you cards to accompany the incentive or details of the discount you offered.

## 3 **Provide a detailed description of your desired referral**

When faced with sales people who ask for referrals by saying "*who do you know?*" or "*any small business will do*" customers tend to clam up and say "*we will think about it*". We have to help them.

Let's imagine I asked you to think of a film star that I'm thinking of. Everyone reading this would be thinking of a different star. So let's narrow it down; I want you to think of an actor who is known for not being very tall. Still not there yet, how about an actor who is a scientologist or who was in Top Gun and Mission Impossible, now you all should be thinking about Tom Cruise.

If you can help you customers to think about your target market the referrals will be of a better quality and more useful.

Describing your preferred target market is always helpful. In my days in financial services I specialised in helping business in the creative professions. If I was talking to a photographer it was easy for them to pass me onto other photographers and also to pass me onto their suppliers and creative contacts.

#### **4 Have a process**

Through no fault of their own, sales people often leave their referral gathering to chance. A process will mean that you always ask for them and there for will get more business because you will get more.

What about strategic alliances that you can build up. If you refer business to other businesses they will in turn refer business to you.

Having pre-printed referral gathering paper work always inspires customers, or a frequent refer reward program.

Do you want your refer to talk first to the referral. If you do than this process should be worked out seamlessly. When you are in a customers office, or they are in yours you can ask them to ring the referral there and than. This will enable you to speak to the referral and subsequently make an appointment to see them.

**5 Become more referable: by being more REMARKABLE..**

One of the most used words in marketing these days is **remarkable**. It is all about being talked about. Being remarkable is about being the business that people talk about by name and not just *'those guys who fix our computers'* or *'supply us with stationery'*. What is it you do that makes you truly stand out? It is not being remarkable to you it is remarkable for your customer. It could be level of service or quality of sales presentation or understanding the customers' requirements the best.

How about sending a customer a bowl of fresh fruit to thank them for a referral or customer service questionnaire filled in by all the staff who come in contact with your business.

**To fully benefit from the strategies detailed above there is one more thing to do.**

**Take MASSIVE ACTION.**

- 1 Visit your top 20 customers and discuss referrals**
- 2 Set yourself a referral target every week**
- 3 Get thank-you cards printed**