

Networking for Referrals

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As sales professionals, we are always looking for ways to generate sales activities.

Utilizing suspect lists, making cold calls in the field, hosting lunch and learns, and sending e-mails are just some of the tasks we undertake to schedule sales meetings. But when you look at the all the Diamond Award winners, on top of all those other tasks, they always ask for their clients for referrals.

Think about this – people would rather do business with familiar faces than strangers. When you're introduced to a prospect through a personal contact, that prospect has a vastly higher comfort level than someone found through a cold call. After all, few things are more reassuring than a positive endorsement from someone they already know and trust, especially in similar industries or associations.

Here are a few easy ways to start developing good referral-building habits:

- When you begin working with a new client, make referrals part of your everyday sales culture. If you under commit and over deliver, chances are your new client will be impressed by your dedication, enthusiasm and drive, and making it easier for you to ask for referrals.
- Whenever a client compliments you, respond with a thank you and quickly follow up by asking for a referral. A good follow up could be, "I'm happy you are satisfied with our work – do you know anybody else who might benefit from our services?"
- Use every client meeting as an opportunity to collect referrals. Keep yourself on track by writing a reminder in your meeting preparation notes and make it one of your go-to talking points during your deliveries.
- Set weekly goals for yourself keeping track of the number of referrals you ask for each day. You don't need to limit your requests to clients; you can also ask business associates, acquaintances and prospects. Always be "hunting" for referrals.
- Make the most of every networking opportunity by stepping out of your comfort zone and talk to at least three new people. Make plans and have talking points in place, as we are all drawn to interesting, engaging and enthusiastic people.
- When asking for referrals, always be specific by focusing on industries and markets. If you don't tell your client your target industries and markets, you may end up wasting time by pursuing leads you can't use.
- Always thank clients who have provided a referral by sending them a note, keeping them informed and maybe even treat them to lunch. This builds a great rapport with your existing client and may result in more referrals.

Hopefully these referral tips and techniques help you gain more opportunities in your day-to-day tasks in the field.

