



INTRODUCTION

Why throw money at expensive advertising when the best marketing, referral marketing, is often free, or very low cost?

Think about this ... If every single one of your customers told just one person about you over the next year, that would double your business in a year!

Referral marketing is a system of getting your customers to introduce you to their friends, family, work colleagues, and to the people they know. In short, this is a marketing system that encourages your customers to do your marketing for you!

Referral marketing is a superb way to grow your business without spending a huge amount of money on advertising! How totally cool is that?

Although we all appreciate getting referrals for our business, very few business owners invest their time and energy in actively developing a strategy that seeks and targets referral acquisition. Why? It really doesn't make sense to ignore such a brilliant and cheap way to get more business does it?

To get more referrals you have to develop an easy to implement, easy to follow system that works well for you and ensures all your customers refer you to their friends and family.

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THE BASICS

This mini guide starts from the premise that you have decided to increase your business with the help of your customers. Here is some advice to make sure your customers are thrilled enough to stay by your side and recommend you:

- Keep your promises. Only commit to things that you know you can deliver.
- Don't overdo it, don't get carried away and don't oversell yourself.
- It is better that you surprise your customer with a better experience than they expected, than disappoint them with a worse experience than expected.
- Always strive to be the very best you can be
- Find out and promote your USP - that's your "why should people buy from you?" positioning statement.
- Keep your customers informed enough to make them trust you, but don't tell them all your business inner workings.
- Stick to the agreed cost!
- Listen to your customers and handle their requests and observations with respect!
- Stand out from the crowd and make an impression!
- People like to know what to expect, so, instead of looking for something amazing and failing, they often settle for something great that they feel comfortable with.
- Never ignore complaints! Take them seriously.
- Make it a whole team effort to get more referrals.
- Bond with your customers, be there for them, and help them out whenever you can.

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- Make sure your office is clean, tidy and inviting, even if you don't usually welcome guests there.
- ***Everything matters.***
- Ask for feedback
- Ask your customers whether they would recommend you. If they say no, ask them why, and improve those aspects of your business. If they say yes, ask them why and keep doing what you do well!
- Give people the tools and materials they need to promote you.
- Last but not least, ask for referrals! You would be surprised how many customers fail to realize the value of their recommendations or that you actually want referrals in the first place!

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ASKING FOR REFERRALS

When customers recommend you to someone, they put their own image at stake and feel responsible for the outcome. If you do a good job, they feel proud, but if you don't, they will certainly never recommend you to anyone else.

People don't give recommendations lightly so you really must treat them like gold!

So what is the best way to get more referrals? Simply ask for them!

The catch is that you can only ask for referrals from those customers that are really ~~happy~~ thrilled with your services!

Don't solely look at it as a source of income, and don't feel like you are asking for favours. Instead, remember you are actually providing something valuable. You are a professional and you deliver what you commit to. With the help of your customers, you will make sure that their friends and family get quality products and services, instead of dealing with a trade cowboy – a person that is looking for easy money from poor quality work.

The Business Super Heroes regularly talk about the awesome power of **sales scripts**, so write a referral request script, make up scenarios, and practice them in your mind, in front of the mirror, or with your friends.

Practice this script until it feels right, and then try it out on your customers, but don't stick to it to the letter or you will sound robotic! Instead, improvise, be playful, make it just part of a normal conversation. In short, make asking for referrals just a natural part of doing business with you. The first time you



get a customer to say "Actually yes, I do have someone else you can help"
you really will feel on top of the world!

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ASSESS YOUR REFERRAL TOOLS

No matter *how* you decide to ask for referrals, you have to understand that, even before a first contact, your flyers, sales letters, catalogues, brochures etc. say everything about you. Don't forget a referral can also be when someone simply passes on your business card, flier or brochure too.

So, look at all the materials you are sending out and ask yourself "How do they look?" Is all the spelling correct, are they written clearly, do you use quality paper, is it easy to read with short paragraphs etc etc?

What about your branding? Are all your fliers, ads and brochures branded with the same colours, logos and visual messages? In this day and age where the customers have so much choice, branding is so vitally important to inspire customer loyalty; this is no longer a topic that can be ignored.

There is a course available at incredible value to all the Business Super Heroes Academy members all about this essential subject to take you through the "Branding" mine field if you need further help with this.

If you were the referring customer, would you share your companys' promotional pieces with the people that trust you?



BE 100% CUSTOMER FOCUSED!

One of the key attributes of a business is the level of its customer service. The relationship you have with your customers and staff is what makes or breaks your business; this is why you should make having a great relationship with your customers your priority (after looking after your business figures and your bank balance.)

The human component – either good or bad - will always help people to talk about you and spread the word about the quality of your services. There are certain things that you should offer your customers, to ensure a great overall experience:

- Be fair – don't oversell and don't up sell unless you can fairly and accurately state it is in the customers best interests
- Teach your staff to analyse every customer's needs and concerns and address them
- Be on time – whether it's for a meeting or a quotation, and always respect the schedule you and your customer agreed to.
- Take your time. When it comes to meeting with your customer, you should never speed up a meeting, and you should certainly never make or accept personal phone calls during the meeting.
- Be there for your customers.
- Ask for feedback from your customers within a few days of completion of the work.
- Tell customers what you are doing for them and how you are trying to make their lives better.
- Make your customers a part of your business decisions.

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- Always put yourself in your customers' shoes and ask yourself "How would the customer feel about me doing this?"
- Keep an eye on the every single detail of your whole sales process.

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TIMING

When it comes to referral success, timing is essential! The best time to ask for a referral is when the customer's level of gratitude is at its highest and the relationship is still hot, so this is probably after you deliver your services and they have stated how pleased they are with your work.

Ask in a casual, rehearsed, relaxed way, without putting pressure on them: "You're very welcome. It's been a pleasure to serve you today. Please do tell your friends about us!" or words to that effect.

If you feel your customer is not yet thrilled enough with what you delivered, don't push it. Asking for referrals from someone who is not yet a massive fan of your work will almost certainly close the door for further opportunities, so adapt your sales pitch according to the person you are dealing with and their reaction to your work.

Some people may be very vocal about how excited they are with your business, and some may keep it to themselves. Questions like "are you thrilled with the work we have done for you?" or "has this been useful to you?" will encourage the customer to acknowledge how pleased they are with your work and express their satisfaction – this is vital.

Also, always bear in mind the customer may be an "open" or "closed" person. "Open" people are those who invite you into their home warmly and are willing to discuss their concerns with you and to share a bit of their experiences. Therefore, you can ask open people for referrals a lot sooner in the relationship.



“Closed” people may still refer you to some great people, but you will have to accept that it will take longer for you to get referrals and build that trust. Still, closed customers may actually offer you the *best quality* referrals, because people know they are much more selective about whom they recommend so their friends and family would be more likely to pay attention to their recommendations.

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NETWORKING

The final decision of choosing a supplier is a very emotional one for a customer. We all tend to buy from the people we know and like, because we want to feel comfortable with the choices we have made. This is why, as much as possible, we end up working with the people we know and trust, or those who appeal to our core values and make us feel at ease.

This is why it is really important for you to “get out there” at every opportunity and meet people to introduce yourself to, and let them meet you. Possibly the best way to interact with people who are ideal to help you market your business is to become a member of local networking clubs. During the networking events, you get to meet potential customers and get leads and referrals.

Most of these groups allow you to attend a couple of times before applying for full membership, so you can understand whether it brings you added value and they understand whether you fit their profile.

If you decide to join a business network you must realise that membership on its own will not work miracles. You need to attend meetings, be open, get involved and support your colleagues. You have to make a great impression on people, and they have to like you otherwise they will not recommend you.

If you do it right and do it consistently, networking is a useful tool to attract new referrals and build relationships. Brick by brick, you will be consolidating your business. As with everything you need to find, search engines are your best friend. Google “networking groups” to find the options in your area.



There are different types of networking groups, each with its own style and objectives, from relaxed to formal, from no food to full breakfast, from dinner to drinks clubs. Depending on the services or products you are selling, you will need to choose a group and the style that appeals to you.

Networking is an important part of doing business and people take it very seriously, and so should you. Private institutions have cocktail nights, the chambers of commerce offer a wide variety of events to both members and guests, and NGOs organize special balls and functions that gather the city's elite such as Bankers' Night Out or Lawyers' Night Out.

The reason is that, in an era where customers have loads of options for any budget, the only thing making the difference is brought by the way you interact with them and the relationships you build. Just remember that no such event is seen as leisure. Whilst you should not be too serious and turn every conversation into a sales pitch, you should sell yourself, by taking into account the following:

- Be on time for events, as this makes you look reliable.
- Be secure, but don't be overconfident or arrogant.
- People need to know you are successful so they trust you and your business, but they will hate you if you are cocky.
- Don't be afraid to talk about your business, but keep it short and interesting.
- Don't tell people how busy you are, even if you are totally flat out. They will not recommend you to someone if they don't think you have the time to do the work properly and give their clients your time.
- Do your homework: if you know who the other participants at the meeting will be, research them and see which ones are of interest.

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- Be results oriented: go with a clear idea of what you want to get out of it, who you want to talk to. Don't be afraid to plan in advance what you might say.
- Set a goal to talk to at least three new people per session.
- Don't spend all the time talking to people you know! Take the time to develop new relationships (after all, that is what you are there for!)
- When you talk to someone, make sure you take their business card and, when you have moved on to someone else, write a brief note on the back of the card to remember what they said.
- Don't sell to the room! Each person in the room has about 100-200 contacts and customers who could be a potential source of income for you. Make the most of every networking opportunity.
- Remember: we're all drawn to interesting, enthusiastic people.
- Arrange a follow up meeting with anyone of interest. These can prove invaluable to get a better insight into what the other person does and how you can help them! Take them out for a coffee and a chat!
- Always help the other person if you can. This will make them eager to reciprocate.
- Mind the dress code. Standards of appearance at networking events is very important, so you must always dress accordingly. Whether it seems fair or not, people judge you based on how you look or dress.

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SETTING THE RULES OF REFERRALS

Don't get desperate about referrals, and pay very close attention to the customers who do refer you to other people. Follow this advice to use your time more efficiently: Separate your customers into groups: A, B, C and D customers.

"A" customers - are the top quality ones, the ones that pay on time, bring you tons of relevant business, the ones you have history with and the ones who are open to referring you to others.

"B" customers - are still good customers, but may be slow to pay and may not be very open to referring you to others. They may also have an occasional moan or try and beat you down on price.

"C" customers - are ok, but far from ideal. They regularly pay late, may cause you problems, try and beat you down on price and hardly give you any referrals.

"D" customers - they are the nightmare customers. These customers are always unhappy, no matter what you do, they complain a lot and delay payments. They are a bad source of income for you, because they end up complaining about you and hurting your reputation.

Here's a tip: always pass the "D" grade customers to the competition and let them deal your problem customers!

Sometimes, if you don't do this because you are so focused on the small picture (your day to day earnings) you will sometimes lose track of the what is important, for example your long term reputation and efficiency, and you wrongly think you need every customer you can get.



Well, you don't!

Instead of having tons of "C"&"D" grade customers, focus on gaining and keeping a good number "A" and "B" grade customers – consistent customers that provide regular, good income and plenty of referrals and help you expand your business organically.

Birds of a feather flock together, so generally if you stick to the "better quality" customers, they are far more likely to refer you to more better quality customers!

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