

LAUNCHPAD

Learning the art of referral business

Much like cold calling, asking for referrals can seem daunting. However unlike cold calling, referral business usually comes off the back of having done a good job for someone, so you're already on the front foot. The first step is asking for the referral. Before that you need the confidence to ask and, of course, to know how to ask for it and who to ask.



Your best customers are your current ones. Assess your client database. Have you had a recent success with a client? Most people don't think about a potential link until asked. Perhaps someone is willing to put your name forward but they just need a little prompting? Approach satisfied clients and ask if you can help someone they know. You may be surprised by the outcome.

What goes around comes around. Attend networking events and develop connections with other business people. Make the effort to really understand other businesses. Learn what they do, what's important to them and ask questions. By doing so, you will see how their business can help you and your clients and suppliers. And vice versa.

Be seen and heard on social media. If you're not on LinkedIn then you should be. If you lack confidence in the cyber world, simply do a little research and learn how to manage the different sites effectively. There are dozens of websites that provide step-by-step, easy to follow instructions on how to market yourself and your business to create awareness of your brand. Once you've got the basics sorted, you can start to learn about other businesses and get to work on referring and asking for referrals.

Refer business to others. That age old saying 'give and you shall receive' could not be truer when it comes to referral business. Think about your friends, family and current clients. Then think about the businesses and people you've been networking with. How can you connect the two? Try and do this regularly and you will see the benefits. It may take time to start reaping the rewards but referring business will pay off – and it can make it easier if you need to ask for a referral in return.



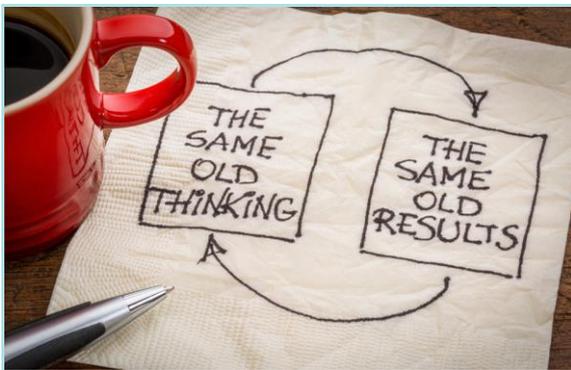
The biggest and most important factor in referral business is awareness. Know your brand. Know your competitors, peers and supporters and how each can provide a product or service to those you know. Try and think this way on a regular basis so it becomes second nature.



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Don't bring me down

We all have an Achilles heel. Sadly, negativity can take us unawares. Negativity is productivity cancer. Heavy words but, in truth, it can hugely hinder success. It saps your energy and the team's. It's deadweight in all your dealings with customers. And if you never want to have a great idea again, negativity's the way to do it. But by being mindful of negative thoughts, we can change our thinking and prevent the effect it has on how we operate.

Here are some of the biggest hindrances to our thought patterns.

Lack of opportunity

Good things come to those who wait. Oh wait, no they don't. We're all hoping for life to dish us up a serving of goodness on a shiny silver platter. But if you think like this, you'll be waiting a long time. The world is far more competitive these days. Opportunities need to be sought out. Make your opportunity by going and looking for it and don't be disheartened when others are rewarded before you. Chances are, they got what they were looking for.

Blaming someone else

It's so easy to point fingers and play the blame game but it doesn't get you anywhere. By admitting and learning from our own botched attempts, we grow. Most successful people have failed numerous times, scraped themselves up and carried on. Embrace failure by seeing it as a hurdle to overcome; one that only gets you closer to your goal.

'It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure.'

Bill Gates

Lack of Time

Everyone has the same amount of hours in a day: those who are successful and those who are not. There is plenty of time; you just need to use it wisely. If you have trouble managing time, look at ways to improve this. Make a list, prioritise tasks and see where the pitfalls lie. Good time management comes with practice and can filter through to all areas of your day-to-day life.

'Successful people are always looking for opportunities to help others. Unsuccessful people are always asking, "What's in it for me?"'

Brian Tracy

What's in it for me?

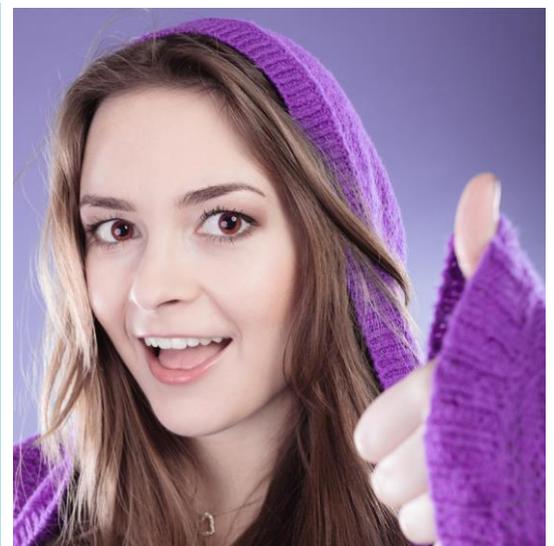
Initially, you may not see the benefits of doing what seem like menial tasks. But a positive outlook and can-do attitude will take you further. Don't think about what's in it for you and what you'll get out of it. That will come. Get stuck in and make the most of every opportunity that comes your way.

At the end of the day, negative attitudes often mask a lack of energy to 'just do it'. At worst, they can be just plain old excuses. You can change the way your day's going and increase your success by being aware of and avoiding negativity - both in your career and personal life. Try it and see.

Shake it off

Practise these simple tricks, if you catch yourself in a negative mind set:

- **reframe** immediately as a positive statement. Is there a 'glass half full' rather than a 'glass half empty' way to say it?
- **get up** from your desk and walk briskly. To the photocopier or the tea room, doesn't matter where. Just distance yourself from the negative thought, even for a moment or two. If you can schedule a walk around the block to go for lunch or get a coffee, a little fresh air might do the trick
- **smile** - If that sounds corny, just try it, OK? 'Fake it till you make it', at least long enough till you get a grip on your thoughts
- **wallpaper it**. Think of a phrase from your favourite happy song – or whistle or hum, or plug in those ear buds, so as not to get on your colleagues' nerves. After all, negative thoughts are just a habit; they don't necessarily have anything to do with anything. If pop psychology fails try pop music





Closing the sale

You've put in all the hard work. You've marketed the product or service, established a relationship with your client and you've worked through the early negotiations.

Now, you have to seal the deal. Aside from the initial contact, this can often be the hardest step to take. It's about asking the big question and not being afraid to follow through.

Whether you're negotiating a large deal or something on a smaller scale, here are some pointers to help you see your client over the line.

Listen

By listening carefully to your client throughout the process, you'll have a far better understanding of their needs, desires and wants. This can assist you with the negotiation process.

Learn as much about your client as possible and find the ways that this deal may help or improve their lives in some way. Then, use the information you've gained to leverage the deal and sell it to them. Make the product or service relatable to their lifestyle.

Create a sense of urgency

Time is your enemy. Most purchase decisions are emotional ones, so ensure you take this into consideration and act on it. The more time your client has to engage logic in the equation and weigh up any pros and cons, the less likely they are to go ahead with the deal. Don't let second thoughts creep in.

There are tactical ways to do this without being too pushy. It really comes down to practice and being able to read your client, but don't be scared to ask for the sale.

Sell the value

Make sure that throughout the process, you're not just thinking about 'what's in it for me?' You need to show your client what's in it for *them*.

But don't just cop out and reach for the steak knives. Before you go throwing away freebies, try and prove to your client the value of what you're already offering.

If at any stage you see their interest waning, *then* look at offering something in addition to your deal. Always try to provide added value and make your client feel valued while doing so. A strong belief in the value of what they're buying goes a long way to heading off a case of buyer's remorse.

Under promise and over deliver

This always generates good rapport. Nothing works better than good service and exceeding expectations is one of the best forms of service you can provide. This may lead not only to repeat business, but also to referral business.

Close your mouth

There is a golden rule in sales. After a closing question is asked, be quiet.

The first person to speak often loses. By talking too much, you can often miss the signals for a sale.

When you've done the work and asked for the sale, stop. Close your mouth and wait for your client to speak.

The temptation to speak under such pressured silence is great, but this may be the one simple step that secures the deal.



Whichever way you choose to go into a negotiation situation, keep the end result in mind. Closing a deal is a challenge but being fearful of it will not help you in any way. Face it, practise it and you'll become better at it over time. When it feels natural to you, chances are it will feel natural to your prospects when you're closing the sale.



Exit: stage right

We read a lot about the ageing population and its potential impact on the economy but what does it mean for small business?

In business, typically, it takes a lot of energy and planning to get started and a lot to keep going and keep growing. Very few business owners start a business with exit in mind. It seems completely counter-intuitive. You start with a dream and the tenacious passion to make it real and then you just want it to grow. But when do you start thinking realistically about what you want to happen when you retire?

For some, it's too hard to think about. Many business owners might talk about funding a lifestyle but actually work has been their lifestyle. Straight up, they'd rather go with their boots on. But then what happens to the business? Economically it's a waste – a waste of the business' assets, client base, employees; it's a waste of the dream and the hard work it took to make it real.

What's your plan? What do you want to see happen? How much money do you need to retire? How do you start even thinking about all this?

In search of success(ors)

Are there family members working in the business who are interested in taking the business on? Do they have all the training and experience they need? What about your team or franchisees? Do any have management and leadership potential which could be developed further? It doesn't have to be a single individual – there might be a couple of key people motivated to form an effective partnership with some serious buying power. Is this a good time to start a conversation?

Alternatives to exit

If the idea of selling the business and retiring to a beautiful lifestyle bores you to snores, don't think about it in terms of complete cessation. If you find the right people, it might be feasible to keep an interest in the business and a slice of the decision-making. It could free you up sufficiently to discover more of the great lifestyle you could have had, if you'd ever had time to have a life. At the same time, you'll be able to share the rich business knowledge you've built up and you'll have the added satisfaction of seeing the business continue to grow.

Ready to sell

If selling is your best option, is your business 'sale ready'? To achieve the best possible price, you need your business to be in the best possible shape when it goes up for sale. You need to analyse your business from the point of view of a potential buyer. Is there clear documentation on business processes and performance? Is your business performing at peak? What would it take to be ready for sale and what is the most realistic timeframe to achieve it?

These are all things we can help with. At the very least, we can help you to start the conversation and work out a plan.



FYI...

Non-current assets: on the balance sheet, these are assets which you don't expect to be used up by the business, sold or converted to cash during the 12 months after the end of financial year. Also known as fixed assets.

An Important Message

While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.