

Connect!

REAL RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IDEAS



Earning the NEXT referral

by CHAD RUEFFERT

It's an outstanding feeling when someone in your sphere of influence refers your services to a friend, family member or co-worker. It's proof that your hard work, excellent customer service, and relationship marketing efforts are working. You've broken through the "referral barrier".

But getting the first referral is just one step in the process of earning endless referrals. When a past customer overcomes his natural inclination to avoid the "referral risk", you have to reward them by ratifying their faith and trust in you.

Dealing with a potential customer that comes by referral requires some extra effort. Here are a few steps to take to ensure you continue to receive never-ending referrals.

Be sure you're the right person for the job.

Explain to the person who made the referral that you'll only take on the job if you're the best person to accomplish the goals. If not, assist the referral in finding the best person. It's tough to turn away business, but you owe it to the person who made the referral to be honest with yourself. Doing this will also ensure you get better, more appropriate referrals in the future.

Remind the referrer why they like and trust you.

Immediately reinforce the referrer's decision to endorse you by reminding them of all the reasons they chose you in the first place. Sell them in the same way you will sell the new prospect. Acknowledge that you know there is referral risk and thank them for overcoming it.

Promise special treatment.

Even though you may treat every customer and potential customer with the highest level of service, the referrer expects the promise of special treatment for their friends and family. Assure them that you'll provide it. One of the most important steps is to make immediate contact. No matter how busy you are, begin a conversation with the referred person right away.

Respect everyone's privacy.

Remember that the personal and financial details of both the referral's and the referrer's transactions need to remain confidential. Sharing anecdotes are fine, but gossiping about the other party is not. Avoid it all costs.

Send a thank you right away.

Even if it's just a note or some flowers, immediately send a thank you for providing the referral. It doesn't matter if you don't get the business or close the

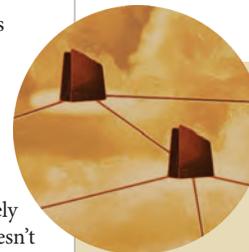
sale; you're rewarding the effort of making the referral, not the money that comes from it.

Keep them in the loop.

While you don't want to share details of the new transaction, you can share milestones. Drop a note after the first meeting to tell them it went well. Tell them often how much you enjoy working with their friend or family member. If you don't get the business despite the referral, be sure to explain why.

Return the favor.

If it's at all possible, find a way to return the favor by providing a referral of your own. Reciprocal referrals are the number one way to earn more in the future!



Chad Rueffert is president of Braintree Marketing, Inc. and the creator of the From Your Friends Relationship Marketing Program.

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