

Strategic Marketing and Public Relations

SHADYWOOD COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

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THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS REFERRAL CHECKLIST

Dozens of PROVEN Referral Systems For Exploding Your Client-Flow and Cash-Flow Especially During Uncertain Economic Times.

If you implement even 10 percent of the referral systems in this report, you will never again worry where the next client is coming from...if you use more than half, your business and profits will explode through the roof.

It's **shocking and disturbing** when I hear professionals tell me they've invested serious resources -- time, effort and money -- in the creation of a logo, brochure or advertisement, but haven't given a lick of thought to how they will design, implement and systemize the most productive, powerful and inexpensive business-building strategy there is -- referral generation.

A referral-generated client normally spends more money, buys more often, and is more profitable and loyal than any other category of business you could go after. Best of all, referrals are easy to get. Referrals beget referrals. They are self-perpetuating.

A common misconception is that referrals must come from satisfied clients, when in fact, that's just one of many sources for referrals. Essentially, anyone who knows you or knows of you is a prime candidate to refer to you. To tap into and leverage the vast networks of your clients, friends and associates, all you've got to do is show them how to refer to you.

Three Referral "Tricks"

- The first step is to gain the trust by your **network** (clients, associates, strategic alliance partners, high-impact professionals and sphere of influence) by delivering a high-quality product or service.
- The second "trick" is to educate potential referrers about how to do it.
- The third "trick" is systemizing the process so referrals flow to you on a consistent, automatic basis.

It is not unreasonable to think that 50 percent of your business could come from referrals. If you follow the formula presented here, and implement an ever-increasing number of the tactics and systems described here, so you have multiple "referral poles in the water," you will be well on your way to achieving that goal.

You may be getting a nice bit of your new business from direct or indirect (word of mouth) referrals right now. But if you systemized the process, referrals will be coming to you on autopilot, day-after-day, week-after-week, with little effort on your part.

We're going to change that right now, because referrals should never be left to chance. And because the systemization of your referral generation can result in substantial, measurable and bankable increases in clients and profits – almost instantly.

Measure Yourself By Answering These Questions With “Yes” or “No.”

1. People are most likely to buy from me when they know me or know of me?
2. I buy from people with whom I feel comfortable?
3. I believe I need to sell myself before I sell my services?
4. I continually search for new ways to associate with my network?
5. I am involved with the same causes and organizations as my network?
6. I believe people buy people first and foremost?

You probably figured out that your answers should all be “YES.” Building a referral network is the SYSTEMATIC approach to creating your own visibility and positive perception (positioning) to those you value most.

“Networking” is a crucial element to establishing successful referral systems because it increases your visibility in your target market and helps you become well known. When you become well known for positive results, problem solving and integrity, you also become better trusted. And when your network trusts you, they automatically transfer that trust when they make a referral to you. *That's why referrals convert to clients so easily.*

You must get very serious about constantly and consistently growing your network – consistently adding names and building relationships. You would be absolutely amazed at just how far a simple handwritten “thank you” note will go, when mailed right after meeting someone.

Three questions to always be asking yourself that can explode your referrals:

1. Who are my existing clients and network members; where do they come from?
2. Could this person become a quality member of my network?
3. Who else has already built a relationship with the type of clients I seek?

Remember, your goal is to leverage your ability to meet and cultivate the greatest number and the highest quality people for your network.

How to build a client-generating network.

Start by creating the BIG list:

- List out all the people who have already sent you a referral – these are your champions, the most valuable people to your business.
- List out people you already know – your closest contacts.
- List out people you meet or see in your business on a regular basis.
- List out people who provide professional services to your business.
- List out people who provide personal services to you.
- List out people who belong to the same organizations as you.

- List out people who have the ability to send you a large volume of new clients
- (i.e. High Impact Professionals)

Getting this list together and into a database that makes the information manageable is vital to your success. This list, along with your client and prospect lists, are **THE MOST VALUABLE ASSETS YOU OWN.**

The next step is to begin **systemizing your contacts** with your referral network, just as you do for your clients and prospects. Be sincere, provide **VALUE**, and don't be afraid to ask for their help using the tried and true... *"I'm expanding my business and I need your help."* It works because people like to help. But keep in mind that when you can show them what's in it for them, even if it's just reciprocal referrals, that will always make your offer more palatable, more professional and more desirable.

Never forget that people buy difference, they don't buy similarity. And the greatest way you can differentiate yourself from other fitness providers is to have a RELATIONSHIP.

Positive Perception + Relationship + Programming = Referrals

The proven referral-generation FORMULA

You must EARN the referral. Internally (with present or past clients) that means delivering **VALUE** and a "WOW!" experience with results, showing you care, going the extra mile, continually educating, supporting and reminding your clients, always reminding them how your products and services add value and make a difference in their lives. This sets up the desire to reciprocate. Externally (with those who are not clients), earning referrals is accomplished by educating potential referrers about you, why they should trust you, your credentials, your services, your successes and how you have a unique solution to a particular problem(s)...and of course, **what's in it for them.**

You must ASK for the referral. This is called "programming," and it can and should be almost fully automated, hands-off process through the use of systems (a duplicable process that is proven to work). Nobody wants to badger or beg clients, friends and associates for referrals, and there is simply no need to do so when you implement systems (although never be shy about personally asking). The main reasons you are not getting more referrals are that you are not known and/or trusted, and you're not consistently programming people to refer; people don't know, specifically, WHO to refer to you; and people don't know HOW, specifically, to refer to you. Simply showing people how to refer, and programming them to do so, will double or triple your referrals almost overnight.

You must RECOGNIZE and REWARD for the referral. You must recognize the individual who refers and immediately reward him or her for the referral. This type of conditioning reinforces the behavior you want (think Pavlov's dogs). Recognition can be something as simple as a thank you card or phone call. Reward could be in the form of reciprocity (referring back to the referrer if it's an external source), monetary compensation (if that's appropriate), additional services (for an internal source), giving a

small, personalized gift, or a full-blown referral rewards campaign.

Note the use of the word “perceive” in all three of these issues. It does not matter what YOU think. It only matters what the client/referrer thinks.

Perception is reality.

The Referral Systems

Wall of Fame: load up your walls with pictures and testimonials of all your successful clients/customers. The “hook” here is that you want to add WHO the client was referred by at the bottom, thank that person, and then say something like “ask your trainer for information on our referral rewards program.”

Referral Rewards: A comprehensive program (including 2-3X/year VIP campaign) incentivizing your clients to refer by offering them ethical bribes. There should be an increasing number of gifts related to how many referrals are submitted, and one BIG gift (like a weekend getaway to the spa, or romantic weekend in a nice hotel) for the person who sends you the most referrals.

Business Cards: Put something on your card like, “We have a VERY generous Referral Reward Program” and provide a vehicle to find out what it is (i.e. your website).

Stationery: See “Your Referral Means the World To Us” later in this list.

Print/E-mail newsletter: You should have a “thank you for the referrals” section in your print newsletter. Tell stories about how people refer. Talk about your referral rewards program. Share success stories. This can be used with past and present clients, spheres of influence and high-impact professionals.

Thank you cards: Can’t be overused. Make it a priority to mail 10 cards every single week, without fail. If nothing else, thank them for being a client, say “Hi” and share a little tidbit from your life. Build relationships! You will be amazed, pleasantly shocked, by how powerful this one little strategy is.

Fortune 50 Strategic Alliance: Bringing top local business owners together in a formal reciprocal referral relationship. Hold monthly meetings and educate your partners about how to be an effective marketers. Take the leadership role. (see preferred provider rolodex later in this list).

Lead Box: Another strategic alliance strategy whereby multiple local businesses each have a lead box in their place of business and encourage their patrons to enroll in the “club” and get free gifts and preferred discounts from your town’s leading providers. You compile the list (your admin) and control access to it. The list grows significantly over time.

Endorsed Mailings: Clients and strategic alliances can endorse you. Say your client is a lawyer - you mail his endorsed letter to other local lawyers. His endorsement contains a testimonial (written in first person) and a special offer.

Tell-a-Friend/Viral Web site tool: Create a form (or just provide email copy) on your site that people can complete to send an email to their friends recommending you and/or providing a link to one of your lead generation tools (reports, audio, info-pak, etc.)

Web site Referral Reward Program: Be sure you have information about your referral reward program on your website so people know how to take advantage of it.

Speaking gigs: Leverage your clients and spheres of influence for opportunities to speak to their coworkers, associates, churches, PTA, sports teams, etc.

Give Employees an Incentive to Refer: Set up a referral rewards program for your staff. Let them know you will compensate them for every new client they bring in. Tell them to tell their friends, too.

Provide referral tools to your Employees: Give them tools (business cards, CD's, info-paks, flyers coded with their name/or employee #) they can use to market for you.

Social proof @ point of sale: Educate the prospect during sales presentation (when you are showing social proof) about HOW these clients came to you by way of referral. This subtle programming sets up the "condition of business" strategy below.

Birthday/Holiday/Anniversary Gift Certificates: For clients, include a gift certificate (to a restaurant, for example) but also give them three gift certificates for your services they can give out to their friends. Say something like, "Now, when someone wishes you a happy birthday, you can give them something in return." For spheres of influence, give them a gift certificate for your services. For high-impact professionals and strategic alliance partners, give them a gift certificate for your services, plus give them a letter/email they can mail to their best clients offering gift certificates to them as a gift.

Client appreciation events: This is a HUGE opportunity. Invite all your past and present clients to a big appreciation event at least one time per year. Tell them to bring their friends. Make a **big deal** out of this. Capture contact info for all in attendance, give away prizes, and follow up to invite those who attended in for free trial.

Tele-seminars/webinars: Offer tele-seminars and webinars to your spheres of influence on topics that will be of interest, ideally themed towards time of year. You may not get huge attendance, but it will be nicely targeted and you can make a strong message to market match. Plus there is little cost involved here, and you get the benefit of possibly going viral. Encourage all who are interested to forward your emails to their friends.

Free recorded messages: This is dirt cheap marketing. Set up free recorded message hotline providing information that is valuable to your target audience. Give great information, explain your USP and make an offer at the end. This number can be posted to your website, all collateral and given out to all in your spheres of influence on a special offer gift certificate. People will call, and your message will sell them on giving you a try.

Client surveys: Survey your clients to find out if you are meeting their needs (valuable Intelligence) and then ask them for referrals if you have met their needs. A free source of survey software can be found at www.SurveyMonkey.com

New program “bring-a-friend-beta-tester”: You’ve designed something new that is not yet offered to the general public. Invite everyone in your house list to “beta test” the product or service free of charge if they bring a friend.

Special Gift: Interview an expert on a specific topic or have your spouse/partner interview you. Record the interview onto a CD and send it to all your clients with three postage-paid postcards offering the free CD interview. Instruct your client to mail the cards to three friends, family members or associates who might benefit from/appreciate the audio interview as a free gift. Be certain to point out in your instruction letter to the client that you have already affixed postage to the postcards – all they have to do is fill in a name and address and pop in the mail. Most people are VERY reluctant to waste postage, and will reciprocate to you for the free gift by mailing out your postcards.

Cross promotion alliance with a business that serves your ideal clients: When one of their customers/clients purchases something from them, they receive a discounted offer for a particular service or product you offer.

The compliment: When your client pays you a compliment, capitalize on the moment by asking if they know of anyone else who may want to get the same kind of results they are getting.

Client success stories: send case study success story postcards to your clients every month. They continually reinforce the value and efficacy of your services. Include a specific offer on the card as incentive for the referral, and drive to a landing page on your site where the client can input names and addresses of referrals to submit to you.

Special reports: Create reports about topics that will contain information that is valuable to your clients. Give a report to each of your clients with a one-page cover letter saying how much you appreciate their business, and to show your appreciation you’re including the report free of charge. (Don’t assume that just because you “talk” about this same stuff with your client when you train them that they won’t appreciate having it in writing. This is yet another way to create a “WOW!” experience.) In a P.S. at the bottom of the letter, you can ask your clients if they know of anyone who might be interested in receiving this report free of charge as “gift” from the client. If so, they can email that person and send them to your landing page to get the special report free.

Preferred provider rolodex: Make a listing booklet of the top 30-50 small businesses in your town by category. Give a master copy to every business owner on the list (great way to gain an introduction to potential strategic alliance partner, by the way) and encourage them to give the booklet out to all their customers/clients as a free gift. Every consumer is looking for businesses they can trust (particularly service businesses), and this is like an endorsement/referral tool they will appreciate and use.

Charity/Fundraising Group Info-Products: If you've ever watched PBS, you know they routinely have experts like Suzie Orman and Dr. Wayne Dyer on their show hawking products in return for contributions to PBS. This is the same strategy. Put a "bounce-back" offer in your info product and then allow local charities or fundraising groups to give away your product in return for donations. If it's a digital product, you have no hard costs. If it's physical, get them to agree to cover the hard costs. And I'd also ask if you can have the list of buyers (might not get that, but it's worth asking).

CONSTANTLY SELL AND RE-SELL CLIENTS

I will not belabor this point, but it merits making it. You must constantly sell and re-sell clients on the value of your solution. Not in the sense of "closing" them on doing business with you, but rather the steady and consistent application of influence and persuasion, the steady and consistent deployment of social proof, the steady and consistent use of education and information to steadily and consistently show them how you get results, why you get results, why you are superior to other options (or doing nothing at all), and why they should continue to patronize you and refer you.