

Generating Referrals From Non-Clients

The focus here is on identifying your best non-client referral sources and strengthening your relationships with those people so they become advocates for you. Examples are former clients who have moved on to other organisations, intermediaries who serve the same type of clients as you, friends and acquaintances.

The first step in successfully generating referrals from non-clients is to qualify the contacts you have. You are trying to determine who might become a key referral source for you. From all of the third party contacts in your network, consider these qualification criteria ...

Who do you have a high level of rapport with?

Who has a strongly positive view of your services and the value you can bring to clients?

Is there anyone you have collaborated with for a client in the past, with a successful outcome?

Does the contact have a strong professional network themselves?

Is the contact likely to take positive steps to refer you?

Does the contact operate with the same types of clients that you are targeting?

It is likely that you will be left with a handful of people who you have identified as potential referral sources.

The next step is to plan a campaign around each qualified contact the same way you might plan an approach to a prospective client.

The aim here is to identify how you can help your contact to reach their own goals, and overcome the challenges they face. This might be in the form of advice, acting as a sounding board, providing information on a key area, introducing them to others who can help them, introducing them to potential clients and so on.

Think carefully about the benefits you can provide for your contact. There is likely to be many more than you initially think.

Just as with getting referrals from clients, try to do something valuable for your contact first before asking for a referral yourself. Get the Law of Reciprocity working in your favour.

Make sure you train your referrers about how to refer you. They are just like your sales team, and like a sales team, they need to know the types of clients you want to win,

how to describe your services, how to identify an opportunity for your services and so on.

Some contacts will naturally generate referrals for you because they just 'get' how this type of a relationship can benefit both of you over time. They will keep an ear tuned for live opportunities for you and help you meet your own goals without being asked.

Others may need a prompt, such as mentioning someone who they could introduce you to and asking for the introduction. If they appear reluctant, it may be that you have selected the wrong person as a contact for referrals. You can still keep them in your professional network, but you might like to focus your attention on others as referrers.

The key take-away's for you from this lesson should be:

1. Qualify the contacts in your network to identify the most likely referrers.
2. Look for alignment between your referrer's networks and your target client type.
3. Look for ways to help your potential referrers before asking for their help.