

Ask and you shall receive: 8 tips to get better referrals

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The topic of lead generation is raised in almost every one of our client engagements. At some point, every salesperson and sales leader asks themselves, or us, *“How can I get higher quality leads that are more likely to turn into business?”*

If you have found yourself asking the same question, you may want to think about how you use referrals.

There’s strong evidence that referrals are the most productive leads for salespeople. One study showed that, for B2B sales, referral leads were more than twice as likely to convert into business than leads from the website, and more than six times as likely as leads from trade shows or webinars.

However, it seems many sales professionals are either blissfully unaware of the power of referred business and rely on lower converting leads, or they are executing their approach poorly (so here is your nudge).

These 8 tips will help you improve the quantity of your referral leads but also find the quality within that quantity.

1. Manage your self-talk

Managing unproductive self-talk will remove internal belief barriers, sharpen your process and ability to ask for referrals, and ultimately improve your level of success. Too often, we are our own worst enemies, and defeat ourselves by thinking, *“I’m embarrassed to keep pushing someone for referrals, especially since they’ve already given us business.”*

Reframing that self-talk can have a much more positive impact on our mindset:

“I’m happy to ask the client for advice. By acknowledging their introductions, I’ll be helping them reinforce their own professional credibility as well as building out my pipeline of opportunities.”

2. Ask for advice

The word “referral” is sometimes misunderstood, and can be confused with asking for a job reference. Adjusting your approach to ask for your contact’s advice instead may help you feel more confident.

Furthermore, giving a clear and positive reason for your request will also increase the likelihood of the referrer providing you with productive contacts by as much as **50%**.

3. Make the request specific

Be as specific as possible to help your contact recall relevant individuals more easily. Rather than saying, “Do you know anyone you can refer me to?”

try,

“Do you have any connections from previous companies, ex-colleagues, family or friends who work in [insert specific industry] who might find it valuable to have a conversation with me?”

4. Time your request

Don’t leave it until the end of a project to ask for a referral. The right moment is when you’re having a positive interaction with your client, when specific success metrics have been highlighted, or when your client has praised you for doing a good job.

Sometimes, this “magic moment” may arise quite early in the project, when the client expresses excitement about the value that your solution will or has already started to bring them.

5. Be politely persistent

You are going to hear variations on “Not that I can think of,” and “Let me give that some thought and get back to you,” at least half the time. If you leave it there, the trail will go cold. By asking early in the project cycle, you give yourself the opportunity to be politely persistent and return to the referral question again.

Prepare to hear some kind of “No” and set yourself the goal of asking at least twice.

6. Ask for more

We have been socially conditioned to respond to a question with a single answer. Asking “**Anyone else?**” will encourage the referrer to review their mental little black book and think of more contacts.

7. Make it easy

When your contact does say they can introduce you to someone, the way this introduction is executed will have a huge impact on the effectiveness of the referral. Give your referrer an e-mail template: this makes it easier for them, increases the chance they’ll do it, and will improve the quality of the introduction and the likelihood of a response.

8. Incorporate referrals into your sales methodology

If you use a structured sales methodology or Sales Playbook, take some time to add in tools and templates that focus on referrals. Write some scripts, record some role plays, create some e-mail templates, and add the process to your regular project management agenda.

Start applying these tips today, and you might discover a diamond that was sitting in front of you all along.

To discover more about how you can improve the quality of your leads, [let's talk growth](#).