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THE DANCE OF BUSINESS**



Twelve Proven Ways to Not Get Any Referrals: A Tongue-in-Cheek Look at How to Make Getting New Client Referrals *Really* Difficult.

By Jeri Quinn

Why would we want to get referrals and make marketing easy when we could make it complicated? After all, we're all told you have to work hard to be successful, right? If you don't want 'word of mouth' direct connections to new potential clients, then just continue these sure-fire ways to sabotage your efforts at getting highly credible easy-to-close referrals.

1. Don't target your marketing efforts.

After all, business owners in a niche talk to each other. They have strategic alliances, attend the same trade shows, sometimes get continuing education credits together, work together on committees. Why would you want one person to talk to another about anything they liked about your firm? Besides the work you do for one company in a niche might be so similar to the work in a referred company from the same niche that you might save some research time and productivity effort. Why not reinvent the wheel over and over again with both your reputation and your time and effort?

2. Don't develop a network of referral partners.

Heaven forbid you seek out other professionals that go after the same clients so that you could learn from each other, share resources, do seminars together or recommend each other to prospects and clients. That would be too easy. Like a gift you haven't earned through hard work. By all means, don't keep in touch with those most likely to give you referrals. Don't ever take them to breakfast or lunch, share an article to keep them informed, or invite them to something they might find valuable. And don't ever send them something it would be easy for them to forward, no blurbs that describe your business, articles or emails they can easily send out to their contacts.

3. Don't get on LinkedIn.

On LinkedIn you might have to connect to people you meet at networking events, you might have to see what's going on with your clients, you might have to enter a discussion where your expertise might shine. This might lead to a referral from someone who respects what you have to say, or it might yield deeper knowledge about a client or a conversation with a prospect. Avoid at all costs (which is free).

4. Don't ask your clients for referrals.

Everyone knows clients can read your mind. They are more concerned about you than about their own businesses so they think about you all the time. You never have to remind them or

strategize with them. They always know exactly what to do to communicate who will call or how a recommendation might happen by itself. And by all means don't put any notes in your email signature or on your invoices that might suggest a referral would be welcome.

5. Do not form an emotional and personal relationship with a client.

Stand aloof. It's all about the business transaction. Don't share anything personal because then the client might like you too much or develop trust. Let's prove 50 years of Gallop research wrong and not pay any attention to that 'emotional intelligence' crap. Clients would really rather do business with you if you're cold and transactional. Always try to keep it short. No fluff.

6. Don't send out newsletters, reminders, articles.

Clients, prospects, strategic partners have memories like elephants. You are always top of mind. Everyday they think about you. So there's no need to send out reminders that you exist, that you provide value, that you invite them to continue the conversation and (heaven forbid) give you a referral (themselves or someone they know)

7. Don't put a referral form on your website.

By all means, everybody likes to make things complicated just like you do. They don't want an easy to fill out form just when it occurs to them that their friend might really benefit from what they are currently seeing on your website. They want to go through a more complex process of reaching you to make an introduction. They have lots of time for this.

8. Never ask for referrals on evaluation forms.

Maybe you've spoken at a seminar or presented to a group. You just put lots of time and effort into the preparation and the presentation for the fun of it. Right? No need to ask each individual to complete an evaluation form and ask for permission to contact them. You've become an expert in their eyes and at the height of their respect for you, when you are top-of-mind, you have no need to leverage your efforts by capturing their information and assessing their interest in referring themselves or anyone else for a more in-depth one-on-one conversation.

9. Don't listen.

People love to hear you talk. They never like to hear themselves talk. They and you believe you have all the world's wisdom. People are not concerned about how you make them feel. They are only concerned about how *you* feel because you are the center of the universe and the recognition of 'you' is all that matters. What you sell is most important, not what they need. So never listen to their needs. Never question what their needs are. Never change your offerings to meet the needs of your clients and prospects. Your business will really grow all by itself.

10. Don't follow up.

You may meet people in a variety of ways, through friends, clients, partner alliances, networking, professional events. By all means, do not follow up with anyone. Don't call them, email them, send them notes, contact them through LinkedIn. Do not reach out in any way. People might think you want more business, are a caring person, or are so passionate about what you do that you want to share it with them to better their lives or businesses. This kind of reaching out and following up might lead to someone actually becoming interested and referring themselves or a good friend or a business contact.

11. Don't introduce your clients to each other or to any prospects.

They might get together and actually reinforce for each other why they do business with you. They might learn that you provide other services that someone else bought and you performed that service really well. They might have their choice of doing business with you validated making them feel smarter. They might bring a guest who might consider doing business with you, especially if that guest is surrounded by people who are singing your praises. Never have a wine and cheese reception, an educational seminar or a LinkedIn group where your clients can get more excited about you and your business, and where they can easily bring a referral to participate in a non-threatening conversation.

12. Never say 'Thank you.'

If a client gives you a referral or recommendation, don't say 'thank you'. He might want to do it again. Never give him a little gift that you choose personally for him. Make sure he doesn't feel any extra appreciation as people don't want appreciation. No need to feel any gratitude. The world owes you, the client owes you and it's your due. No need for any acknowledgment.

See any self sabotaging mindsets or behaviors that you recognize? Maybe you recognize the behavior but didn't realize the underlying mindset that you are communicating. Sometimes there is a disconnect between what we intend to convey and what actually gets expressed by what we do. Gaining clarity yields great results.

You are invited to go to our blog and continue the conversation about gaining clarity about getting referrals and many other topics. I'd love to hear what you have to say. We all do.

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Jeri Quinn from Driving IR (Improved Results) is an executive business coach who focuses on helping professional service firms (both traditional and creative) and individuals achieve their goals on a regular and consistent basis. Results have included doubled profits, astounding revenue growth in a down economy, promotions, big bonuses, career jumps, successful business launches and transitions from startup to various growth stages to mature firms. Jeri focuses on self-leadership to create transformational change in mindset - from which emanates the long term results of effective strategic planning, attentive communication, better business and culture management, successful sales strategies and heightened client loyalty. She is the originator of The Dance of Business™ and the Driving/Dancing Duality™. She loves to give interactive seminars. Please contact her to speak for your group or conference. Thank you for forwarding this report to anyone you feel might appreciate it.



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