

Four surefire tips to build more business through referrals

People overwhelmingly trust word-of-mouth referrals. According to Nielson, 83% of people trust word of mouth recommendations from friends and family while 92% of consumers trust word-of-mouth referrals more than all other forms of advertising. Plus, data from Survey Monkey shows that consumers are *five times* more likely to make a big purchase on the basis of a trusted word-of-mouth recommendation than a paid ad.

Check out these four surefire tactics that will help you pull in more referral business:

1. Adopt a human-first business philosophy. Business is essentially a humanist enterprise. Transactions are a function of trust, but trust can never be maintained over the long term if you treat people transactionally.

To be worthy of referral, you must understand that your success is fundamentally intertwined with your clients' success. That means being an honest communicator, taking maximum ownership when things go wrong and, above all, creating a work environment that fosters team success so that you can deliver that "wow" moment when it counts.

2. Over-serve your clients. Want to know how CAA came to represent so much of Hollywood's top talent? By making "above and beyond" part of their everyday practice. Their philosophy is that whenever they bring on a new client, that client is represented by the whole agency.

And CAA makes a habit of sweetening their services with outside-the-box value adds, like supporting the causes that their clients care about. Working with a client's favorite charitable org isn't a typical business activity. It's an activity that makes CAA feel like *more* than a business. Take a page from CAA and adopt a holistic, generous approach to working with clients: Allow your team to over-serve them when necessary.

3. Turn wins into action with an NPS Survey. No matter how great your work is, most people won't formalize their feedback without a nudge. The New Promoter Score or NPS metric can provide both quantitative and qualitative data to help you understand whether you are successfully serving your customers and how likely they are to refer you.

There are two kinds of NPS: the *transactional* NPS, which asks your customers how likely they are to recommend your product or service to a peer, and the *relational* NPS, which asks your customers how satisfied they are overall with your product or service.

Because the NPS consists of a single question, you'll net more participation than you would with a more time-intensive feedback request. Plus, taking steps to improve your NPS score will help you keep your clients happier and cause them to reflect on your value. And all of that will come into play the next time they're asked to recommend a business in your niche.

4. Don't solicit, *elicit*. Generally speaking, it's not a wise practice to ask for referrals directly. NPS feedback? Yes. Testimonials? Sure — as long as the client is happy. But asking a current client to broker a new relationship on your behalf smacks of desperation, and you'll quickly alienate your customers by treating them as stepping stones to new prospects.

Still, the reality is that most of your clients are tightly networked with other people from their industries who will need the services that you offer down the road. And when they develop that need, they'll ask a trusted friend for a recommendation.

Over-serve your clients by demonstrating that you are thinking of new ways to add value to their business above and beyond your scope of work. Keep in mind that the key to this approach is to perform favors *without* expecting a quid pro quo. They're about building cumulative goodwill and trust, not about cashing in. No, you won't find accurate attribution statistics for this form of business building. And you probably won't see immediate results the way you'd expect with a PPC campaign.

But if you're serious about growing a business that can distinguish itself among a sea of competitors, **turn customers into evangelists and net the kinds of clients you want to work with**, you'll align those goals with your day-to-day by treating client referrals as an essential metric of organizational health.

