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## How to maximise the referrals you have to give

One of the most potent weapons in your networking arsenal is the referral you have to give. A referral to one of your networking contacts is a form of emotional currency. Though it is not a direct quid pro quo transaction, most people who receive referrals would want to, or would feel obliged, to return the favour in some way.

Some professionals make referrals and receive no credit for having done so. The prospect often does not call the person to whom they were referred. Sometimes they call but neglect to tell the recipient that you referred them. In either case, you are not receiving any appreciation for the referral and it does not increase the likelihood you will receive a referral from that person in the future.

To increase the amount of 'gratitude' you generate, referrals could be made in the following ways:

When a client asks for a referral, give him the names of three people who have the experience they require. Say, "I will give you the name of three professionals I trust. Each has the experience you need. Call them all and find the one with whom you feel the most comfortable, and just say that I sent you."

Alternatively, ask the client for permission to give his/her number to the referred professionals. Call each of the recipients. Explain that you have referred the prospect to him/her. Give each recipient the prospect's name (and phone number if the prospect has authorised it).

This procedure will increase the amount of appreciation many times over. Regardless of whether the prospect calls, the recipient will appreciate the gesture. This makes the referral more concrete to the recipient. You make a far greater impact if you say, "I referred to you a chap by the name of John Smith with a divorce case. His phone number is 111-1234." as opposed to, "I referred someone to you last month. Did he ever call you?"

If you are in the habit of sending all your referrals to one person to whom you have sworn undying loyalty, break that habit. You are limiting the amount of gratitude you are creating in the marketplace and limiting the number of referrals you will get.



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Use human nature to your advantage. Most people send the majority of their referrals to one person regardless of how much they get back. This is because most professionals do not do enough networking or research and so do not have that many contacts they can trust in any particular category. When they find someone they can depend on, they stick with him or her.

If someone is sending referrals, or at least trying, that person gets pushed up the list quickly and stays there until he or she loses the contact's trust by dissatisfying a client. If you spread your referrals around, you will find that you will get far more referrals than you give because you are sending each referral to three people and each of them sends most of their referrals only to you.

Strangely enough, you would think people would demand exclusive reciprocity, but they don't. Most professionals are just happy that you tried. If they get just a chance of a prospect, they appreciate it.

If anyone finds out you gave out three names and seems perturbed, you can say, "It is my policy to give the client a choice of professionals and let the client choose. I can understand that you would prefer not to compete for clients, but I feel have an obligation to the client to try to find someone with whom he or she can feel comfortable." Any contact who cannot understand this logic is not very client oriented, and should be dropped from your referral list.

Be proactive in your efforts to make referrals. Many professionals wait until the client spells it out for them. They have to be, proverbially, slapped across both sides of their face by the client before they notice there is a referral to be made. They do not offer a name unless specifically asked by the client.

In the course of your conversations with clients, ask questions that might expose a need that one of your contacts can fill. If you are involved in estate planning and you notice the client does not have enough life insurance, recommend three insurance brokers. If a business client's financial affairs are a problem, recommend three accountants.

This approach is better for everybody. The recipient will know you are trying to help his/her business. The client will be happy to have a selection. You will receive more gratitude, and ultimately more referrals.