



Free Publicity Focus Group

3 SIMPLE METHODS FOR GENERATING AN UNENDING STREAM OF REFERRALS

Any valid study or discussion of marketing necessarily must begin with the subject of referrals.

Any new business person, whether using the traditional storefront model or marketing exclusively through the Internet, can build a marketing and publicity campaign that will rival those built by the largest of corporations in the world – without spending large amounts of money. In some cases, it can be done without spending any money at all.

Building referrals is one of the major keys in this strategy.

Can you imagine what it would be like to have an unending stream of good, pre-qualified referrals? These are people who are practically pre-sold, just waiting for you to contact them. This would be a dream come true, would it not? Well, you might not believe this now, but you can do this. Easily.

If you are a marketing professional, this is old news to you. If you are not yet experienced, you would do well to listen closely. For the referral marketing method is the core practice of all those who successfully market any product or service professionally. This holds true in the traditional forms of marketing. And, even if you are a high level affiliate Internet marketer and never leave your office, this is still true – perhaps even more so.

Why is this so?

In regards to effective marketing, referrals are hands-down the number one source of new customers or clients. There is a singular reason for this. Whether you are new to marketing or an old timer, you will do yourself a favor to commit to memory the following First Law of Marketing:

People Only Do Business With People They Trust.

We know this to be the case. When we, as consumers of products or services at last manage to find that one, upstanding honest and sincere businessperson who offers quality products or services, we sometimes feel almost relieved. We are grateful to have found this person. We become loyal. And so, when prompted, we gladly pass the name or the

business card or brochure or website address of this trusted person on to our family and friends; to those we like and love.

And we do this gladly. **We** become, in effect, one of **their** greatest assets. In the reverse, we actively seek the opinions of family and friends in regards to who it might be we can trust in regards to buying a product or service for ourselves.

A referral is gold to the marketer. It is gold to you. It is the Holy Grail of marketing success.

Why is this?

Quite simply it is because that 'old saying' is true. It is not what you know; it is rather whom you know.

Complain about the unfairness of this all you like. It will not matter. You can stick your head in the proverbial sand and pretend that it does not exist. But this will do you no good at all. Or, being the wise person I know you to be, you can accept that this IS the way of the world and begin to use this to your advantage.

As a marketer of your product or service, you want to establish referral connections. Establish enough of them and you have created what is called a buzz. As a businessperson, that buzz is what you seek.

So how does one go about creating such a thing; that buzz?

Over the past 30 years I have worked with two major national corporations and one smaller institution of higher learning. Through the years I have been privileged to have sat across the desk from what I consider to be some of the sharpest marketing minds in the country. I knew if I could learn from these very successful people, I too could become successful. And so I paid close attention – very close attention.

My role during this time was in marketing, primarily as a trainer and coach. I have spent three decades teaching others how to gain referrals and create a buzz. It is not an easy thing to do, if one has not received such training. But I will present here what I consider the three easiest ways for the budding entrepreneur or the seasoned sales veteran to create that all-important buzz.

The Goal

The goal is to get another human being to pass along the word regarding your product or service. You must understand that human nature dictates here. People really want to share something they have found that they like. Conversely, if they do not like it, they will not share it. The 'thing' that they like, hopefully, is your product or service. But, even if they don't really like your service, they will nonetheless pass the word along if they like YOU.

Therefore the cardinal rule in creating a personal buzz is to get another to like either you or your services. Either method will end up causing the result you wish to create.

Get people to trust me? This seems almost silly, doesn't it? I want to stress this point just one more time, for it is vital to your success. **People will only do business with people they like and trust.** They will NEVER do anything for anyone they do **not** like or do not completely trust. They might love your service. But if they don't like you, they will simply buy the beloved product or service elsewhere; from someone they DO like or trust.

So now, we are going to learn how to consciously and systematically create a buzz.

Method One

Active Networking

Active networking is not old school networking as such. Nor is it going to card swaps and what have you. It is nothing more than **consciously directed relationship building.**

Step One - Who Likes You?

We will begin by making a list of people who like you. It matters not if you are brand new to your business, or have been in business for decades. It IS necessary to begin fresh, right at the beginning.

This seems really silly, I know. But it is vitally important that you ask yourself this question and answer it honestly.

Of course, you are going to start with your family and friends. Don't skip over anyone simply because you are 'too close' to them. Physically write down the name, every name of family members and friends on this first list. Include your spouse and your children. Your grand-children. Your brothers and sisters, mother and father. Aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, on and on and on. There is a reason for this, as you will see in the next few steps.

Step Two – The Second Level

Expand the list. How many friends does your daughter have? Your son? Old aunt Bessie? . . . you get the idea. Continue to expand this list until you cannot think of another person.

Step Three – Business Associates

Now make a list of everyone you do business with. The local grocer. Your plumber. Your mechanic. Everyone you can think of. Expand on this list if you can. Your lawyer. Write and write and write some more. Keep going. . .

Step Four - Others

Casual relationships. Business associates. Church members. Your waitress at the local diner. Keep writing . . . and writing . . . and writing . . .

Your goal in all of this is to make a complete list of every other human being with whom you have a relationship – any kind of relationship.

In the financial services industry, we hired salespeople based on many factors. One of the factors was ‘How many people does this potential employee know?’ We actually required that this potential employee develop a list of people known to him or her. The number of people on the list was a key factor in the hiring decision. The end result?

Those with the most names on the list were generally more successful than those with a smaller list.

This concept is not fantasy – it is one of the most important keys to success.

The Two Approaches

We are going to learn two different approaches now.

HOT TIP: For our purposes here, I am going to assume you have a web site in place. If you do not have one, get one. Period. There is no getting around this step if you wish to be successful in marketing your practice. Why?

Your web site is your store. It is, hopefully, your showcase. It presents you and your services in the most positive and perfect light possible. But it is much more than this -- It is mobile. You can bring people into your store. But, more importantly, you can actually take the store to them. They may peruse the store at their convenience. I spend a lot of time in front of my computer while sipping my coffee, dressed in my underwear at 4 am. I do not have to take a shower, get dressed, get in the car and drive over to anyone's store. I can shop at my convenience. I can visit this store at 11pm, if I wish. This store never closes. Your store is sitting electrically in the home of each and every person you have placed on . . .

The lists.

You **ONLY** goal in all of this is to get them, somehow, to visit your store. And anyone, **ANYONE ANYWHERE ON THE PLANET** can do the same. Like the list, do not skip this step. To do so will most certainly spell your marketing doom.

IMPORTANT: You will also need some small cards. The cards will have the following information imprinted on them

1. Your name
2. Your product or service
3. Your website address
4. A statement that says 'A free gift is waiting for you at www.YOURSITE.com.

That is all. NO MORE! This is not a business card. This is not a brochure. It is something altogether different.

In the advertising game, there is a concept known as 'white space'. White space is the area in a print ad that contains just that - white space. It is known that white space is second in importance only to the message of the ad.

Why is this?

Newbies to marketing have a marked tendency to clutter up their ads with far TOO MUCH information! The real message gets lost if there is too much information on the card or in the ad. You must deliver the necessary branding message only. Your goal is not to sell your products or services in the ad (the card) but rather to CREATE ENOUGH CURIOSITY to get them to visit your store. The selling is done by the store. Not the card.

Again, the card is used to create curiosity. Period.

Approach 1

This approach is used for close family and friends. You will need your cards and a pen. Sign each card with your full signature in the white space you have wisely created. Now, ask your (FAMILY MEMBER) to take 10 or 20 of these cards and pass them out to each of their own friends. You know your family and friends, I do not. Therefore, use whatever words you wish when asking them to do this for you. Just ask them to help you out by passing these out at work, at parties, whatever. Don't worry. These people want to see you succeed. They WILL do it. This is the beginning of the process.

REMEMBER – NO LARGE GRAPHICS – NO SMILEY FACES – NOTHING ELSE on the card. Just the card with plenty of white space and your signature. Anything else dilutes the attention of the receiver. We are attempting to create curiosity only. Here is an example of the card:

Jon Smith
Author of "The Complete Guide To Everything"
www.completeguide.com
A Free Gift is waiting for you at www.completeguide.com

Jon Smith

So what is the free gift that is given away?

In this scenario, the person giving the gift is an author, so the gift may be a free excerpt of the book. Or it may be an entire copy of a public domain book (these are books that have an expired copyright and are old enough to be considered 'public domain') It may be a spreadsheet you have created. A recipe. A brochure. A top ten list. Anything you can imagine!

HOT TIP: Please don't give away a discount coupon or a 'free consultation'. These are nothing but sales gimmicks and people will see right through them! Whatever you give away, make sure it is useful, free and creates no obligation.

Approach 2

This approach is used for business acquaintances, casual friends, etc.

These people are not so interested in seeing you succeed, yet will most likely help you if you ask in the right way. Here is the right way:

'Bob, I was just wondering if you might be willing to help me with something?'

Wait for a positive response

'I have just (written a book, opened a business, whatever) The title is 'TITLE'. I am really excited about this. Could you help me get the word out? I am giving away a free (GIFT) for everyone who visits my web site. . . .'

(Here you pull out 5 or 10 cards and hand them to Bob)

'Would you be so kind as to hand these out to people you know?'

In nearly every case, this acquaintance will say 'Yes'. Now, maybe Bob will. Maybe Bob won't. In most cases he most likely will.

Be certain to thank this person and be very excited when you do so. Now, let's look at what has just happened.

The people who like you are going to spread the word to the people who like them. You have just created something called 'third party influence'. By default, your friends and family are giving your new (book, business, etc) their own 'seal of approval' and recommending it to others. They would most likely do this anyway, but now you are FORMALLY ASKING them to do this and creating a TRACKABLE SYSTEM for getting it done!

The 'others' (card receivers) in this scenario already believe your friends. But now they also know you personally, as your signature functions at a subconscious level as a personal introduction.

The 'free gift' is coming from a friend of a friend. They do not know what this gift might be. **There is a massive amount of curiosity created here.** They will almost certainly feel compelled to visit your store! After all, their friend effectively told them so. Even if they do not take advantage of the free gift, chances are they will still look as a result of the curiosity factor.

HOT TIP: You simply must have a squeeze page on your website if you are directly selling products. This is the gatekeeper to your site. The squeeze page collects the email address of the person visiting your site. This information is vital, as you must create a way to contact them later with additional information. This squeeze page pops up first and says something like:

“Join our mailing list! Before entering our site, please leave your first name and email address. We will send you additional information from time to time, or notify you when our site has been updated!”

There is a box for the name.

There is a box for the email address

There is a button that says, “No thank you, continue on to the site”

Why is this so vitally important?

Quite simply, it is a trust builder.

Studies have shown that the average number of times a person is exposed to a product before making a buying decision is 7. They will most likely need to see your brand at least 7 times before deciding to purchase. Your newsletter or email contact is done monthly to the people whose names you collect here.

Trust, as we now know, is vital. They will come to know 'you'. They will get used to seeing 'you'. They will look forward to it. And, eventually, they may even buy your product or service.

HOT TIP: – DO NOT USE THE OLD “SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER” statement within the body of your web site page. If you do, you will lose far too many visitors.

For more free information regarding setting up a squeeze page contact don@heavenonearthsystem.com

HOT TIP: – NEVER SEND A TEXT EMAIL NEWSLETTER OR AN HTML BASED NEWSLETTER. Be certain your newsletter resides only on your site! For more information on why you should utilize web based newsletters, read the article on this topic located at <http://www.freepublicitygroup.com>

Method Two

‘Creating’ Referrals

(This method works in cities or counties that have a printed city directory. It is primarily used for service businesses, but can be adapted for any business. You can also use Internet based street maps) Here we are assuming you are using the traditional business model.

Step 1

Get out your client list. If you do not yet have a client list, pull out your friends/relatives list.

Step 2

Look up your client/friend/relative in the city directory. This directory is a wealth of information and shows home ownership, employment, whether the person is single/married, etc. If you do not have a city directory, don't worry. This will still work. Look on either side of your CFR (client, friend, relative). Look at the information regarding your CFR's neighbors. Now, are these people you would like to have as clients?

If so, make notes.

Now you know which of your CFR's neighbors you would like to have as clients. You now need a good approach. Here it is:

Simply call your CFR. The conversation goes somewhat like this . . .

“Hello Bob”

“Hello”

“Bob, I wanted to ask you for your help. I was considering calling some people in your neighborhood, specifically Fred Jones. He lives next door to you, right?”

“Right.”

“Can you tell me anything about Fred?”

Now you are most likely going to hear a lot about Fred. Maybe more than you want to know, really! Be that as it may, your next question, should you decide to ask it, will be . . .

“Great. Do you think he would have any objection to me (calling him/sending him a letter)?

“Probably not.”

“Ok. I’m going to contact Fred. Would you have any objection to me mentioning that you are my client?”

“No, not at all . . .”

Thank Bob and hang up. Now, simply call or send a letter to Fred. Assuming you have permission, mention that you are building a (business/practice) in the area and that Bob is one of your clients. Continue with your approach.

HOT TIP: DO NOT MENTION YOUR FRIENDS NAME WITHOUT PERMISSION. This would be a great way to lose friends.

Now, this is not a valid referral, as such. It is, quite simply, one person knowing another. You started building upon a relationship you had with Bob, who happened to have a relationship with Fred.

This though, regardless of the steps, is how trust is built. The only difference here is that YOU are starting the process instead of waiting for Bob to start it. If you wait for Bob to start it, it most likely will never happen.

If a telemarketer calls Fred, Fred will most likely hang up. If you call Fred and tell him Bob is your client, he will most likely talk to you. He (hopefully) instantly trusts you. This simple step sets you decidedly apart from all the others who might call. Fred will simply not perceive you to be a telemarketer. He will perceive you to be a friend of a friend and therefore worthy of trust. This is precisely who you are. A friend of a friend.

Who deserves the business more – you? Or that telemarketer? That telemarketer will call. You simply need to get there first.

The beauty of this methodology is that you can continue to network perfect strangers ad infinitum and simply never run out of ‘friend of friends’ to call. The entire world becomes a potential referral base!

Method 3

What Goes Around Comes Around

This is, out of the hundreds of referrals ideas out there, absolutely one of the best methods for generating good, quality referrals consistently. It is also the simplest of methods. How is it accomplished?

You must give referrals first. You must give in order to receive.

Step 1

First, make a list of all the businesses you do business with personally. These are people you know and trust.

Step 2

Now make a list of friends, family and close associates.

Look at the first list (those you do business with). Do you trust these people? Of course you do. You would not do business with them otherwise. For the purposes of our example, we will use your mechanic, whom we will call Mike. The next time you are in the shop, grab a stack of his cards or stickers or whatever Mike uses.

Now, how many of your friends and family use the services of a mechanic? All of them do.

So the next time a conversation with a family member or close friend takes a turn to things mechanical, mention Mike to the family member or friend. (You would most likely do this anyway). But now, you are going to take one more step. . .

As soon as possible, call Mike the mechanic and say something like this . . .

“Hello Mike. I just wanted to make you aware of something. My mother-in-law is having some trouble with her SUV. I gave her your name and one of your cards and told her to call you, as you have always done a great job for me. I hope you don’t mind . . . “

“Uh, well, . . . heck no!”

“Well, she should be calling you shortly. Take care of her just like you would me, ok?”

“Sure!”

You have just made a friend for life. Or, for a time perhaps. You have done something good for Mike. But you have done far more for yourself, in two ways.

Mike may remember to refer people to you in return. After all, you did this for him. But we will go one better.

The next time you are in Mike’s shop, turn the conversation to how HIS business is doing. Ask questions. Try to be interested, not interesting. Let Mike talk about his business and all the joys and sorrows he experiences.

Now, tell Mike that you too are building a business. Ask Mike, in your own words, who he might know that could possibly be interesting in YOUR product or services.

At this point, Mike will certainly remember that you have sent business his way. He will feel totally obligated to return the favor. He will put pressure on himself to come up with a few names for you.

You will not have to use any pressure at all.

HOT TIP: Two questions . . .

1. How do you feel when you get spam?
2. How do you feel when you get an invitation to a party?

If you are like me, you most likely hate spam. Most of us do. Seeing several hundred unsolicited emails in my inbox every day makes me somewhat upset.

But, when I get an invitation to a party, I get a little rush of good feeling inside. Somebody has thought enough of me to invite me to join them.

My point is this: Sometimes, especially in the case of older clients (or those who don't quite trust the Internet) it quite simply pays to be old-fashioned. When you get a referral from anyone, please do not send him or her an email to thank them unless this is your only option.

Emails get lost. Emails are cold. Your email is just like everyone else's email. Emails can get deleted. Emails are very easy to just push away. Most get deleted without ever being opened.

Instead, be old fashioned and send a physical thank you card by United States mail. I know, I know, this is really old school. It seems a bit silly. Sappy. Touchy-feely. But just think about this.

When your referrer pulls the physical card out of the mailbox, a subconscious process will be triggered. They will unconsciously associate the card with good experiences from the past. They will experience a warm feeling inside. This is something special, it whispers to them. Someone thinks I am special. And no one, NO ONE! ever throws a card into the trash before opening it and subsequently reading it.

Trust me. They will never forget it. Well, at the very least, not for a long time. That is the key to this technique. The next time that person sees you they will thank you. And you will have a friend.

HOT TIP: Be certain the card is a hand written card, not a template or run of the mill, pre-packaged piece. This also packs a powerful punch at the subconscious level. Be sincere in your comments and completely up front. Use the referrers favored name ONLY IF YOU ARE CERTAIN YOU KNOW IT. For example, my name is Don. I HATE it when anyone refers to me as DONALD. Yuk. Be careful here. Anyone who is really my friend knows this. So use familiarity sparingly. Here is a quick example:

Bob,

Thanks so much for your recent referral to Mr. Stevens. I believe that relationships are the key to true success in business. I always prefer to do business with friends of friends. I will do everything in my power to return the favor and hopefully send some business your way soon!

John Stiller

HOT TIP: Always continue to follow up. You have used these simple methods to create a localized, temporary buzz. Now you must keep the buzz going. If your squeeze page is set up properly and has generated a good-sized mailing list for you, you are now contacting all the people on your list on a regular basis through your newsletter. Don't overdo this, or you will appear to be needy! Once a month is more than enough.

HOT TIP: Every time you send a newsletter to the list, ask each person to forward the letter to THEIR list of friends. Studies have shown that 70% to 80% of people do this without being asked, but ASK ANYWAY. If your newsletter is well written and gives the potential client good information, they will pass it along. When they do, others will hit your site, sign up for the newsletter, etc, etc. Soon you will have a very large, opt-in base that will become self-sustaining!

These are but three very simple methods that may be utilized to create an unending stream of referrals. There are many, MANY more. It goes without saying that using referral techniques to build your business creates massive trust, endlessly repeating business and true client loyalty.

Using but these three may be all that is required to set you far above your competition in the areas of trust, client allegiance and long-standing, repeat business.

Referral marketing can be viral in nature. It creates a self-sustaining pool of new potential clients and prospects.

Don McCauley, ICM, MTC, CH has spent 30 years in marketing and management, primarily in the financial services and educational fields. He is the author of two books, an editor, an Independent Marketing Consultant and is the facilitator of the Free Publicity Focus Group, a group dedicated to demonstrating how to build massive marketing and publicity campaigns for little or no money.

Don is also a personal coach and a certified hypnotist. He specializes in working with small businesses, authors, Internet marketers and those building service practices. Feel free to contact him with comments or questions regarding the content of this booklet.

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