

60-Second Guide to Building Word-of-Mouth Referrals

http://www.score.org/60_building_referrals.html

Even in today's media-driven world, there is no better form of advertising than word-of-mouth—a personal referral from someone whose opinions others trust and respect. Small business owners are among the biggest beneficiaries of word-of-mouth referrals, as they require no advertising and marketing budget.

While you cannot always control how and when referrals come about, there are many ways to start and sustain a positive buzz about your business. Here's how, in just 60 seconds, you can attract high-value, low-cost word-of-mouth referrals.

0:55 Recruit Cheerleaders

Build a team of supporters for your business—friends, family members and colleagues who routinely talk up your business to their friends and acquaintances. Make sure that they know enough about your qualifications and capabilities to make an accurate and convincing case to others.

0:49 Network, Network, Network

Get involved with professional associations related to your industry or field. You'll get to know experts and colleagues in your specific market. And, they may know of immediate or potential opportunities for your business. Other good networking opportunities include local or regional business associations, Chambers of Commerce and non-profits aligned with your field.

0:34 Capitalize on Your Current Customers

At the conclusion of all successful projects, thank your customers for their support and express your interest in working with them again. Also encourage them to pass along your name to others. If your operating budget can handle it, consider offering discounts for customer referrals.

0:27 Become a Knowledge Source

Take advantage of opportunities to show what you know by offering free presentations or articles on timely issues to business, professional and community organizations and publications. Make sure that your presentation/article is relevant to listeners' interests, not a thinly veiled commercial for your business.

0:20 Keep in Touch

Don't wait for customers to call you. Contact them from time to time to see how things are going, personally and professionally; what issues or trends they're dealing with; and perhaps alert them to an event, article or Web site that may be of interest. Also consider issuing a newsletter to current and prospective clients with relevant news, tips and other information that can help their business, or simply brighten their day.

0:13 Give as Well as Receive

Every small business should have a network of colleagues and associates to call on to handle excess workload, or provide service or experience you may not have. These relationships almost always result in "reciprocal referrals" to you.

0:01 Do a Good Job

There's no better source for a positive referral than a happy customer. And remember that the quality of your service says as much about you as the quality of your work or product. Responsiveness, the ability to help out with tight deadlines, and a willingness to do those all-important "little things" (e.g., working in small jobs for no charge) builds goodwill and a good reputation for your business.

ExtendedOffice provides marketing and administrative support to small business owners. We can help implement your marketing plan which will take your business to the next level and increase your bottom line. Visit us online at www.extendedoffice.com; a **FREE** consultation is only a phone call away!