

3 Keys to Reaping the Rewards of Relationships

By Stephen Fairley

<http://www.TheRainmakerInstitute.com>

I was recently coaching an attorney at a small east-coast law firm who was lamenting how slow new business had become in the past few months. As we talked, I asked him, as I ask dozens of attorneys every week, “What have you done in the past 3 months to build relationships with potential referral partners?” He mentioned going to lunch a few times and speaking with a couple over the phone when they made a referral to him.

I asked him to open up his Outlook contact database; there were more than 200 non-client contacts in it including: accountants, financial planners, angel investors, business brokers, and private investment bankers. Here are the 3 keys I share with him to develop the relationships in his “Golden Rolodex.”

Law Firm Marketing Key 1:

When It Comes To Referral Relationships Take An Active Role

There is a Jewish saying “A man who has friends must show himself to be friendly.” Don’t wait for someone to take the initiative and contact you – be the first to reach out. In the last few years we have coached and trained thousands of attorneys and the ones who are the best rainmakers are the ones who make at least 3-4 contacts with potential referral sources every week.

Action Step: Take 2 minutes and scan your contact list. Select 15 to 20 names of potential or current referral sources and send them an email or better yet, pick up the phone and call them with an invitation to lunch or coffee. Set a goal of having three face-to-face meetings per week for the next month.

Here’s a sample script: “It’s been a while since we’ve connected. I was wondering what your schedule looks like for the next week. I’d like to get together with your for lunch or coffee, just to catch up – my treat. Let me know what dates work better for you.”

Law Firm Marketing Key 2:

Increase the Frequency of Your Contact

Try as we might, it’s difficult with our hectic schedules to meet with every potential referral source on a regular basis. Here’s one strategy I teach lawyers: Set up a Google Alert for a specific phrase that would be of interest to your referral sources such as “becoming a rainmaker.”

Collect interesting articles and keep them in a separate folder (Referral Articles). Once a month pull one out, print off a bunch of copies and attach a brief handwritten note on each copy (“I

thought you might enjoy this article”). Enclose your business card and mail a copy of the article to all of your referral sources.

Several of my clients have doubled and tripled their referrals in 6 months using this simple technique to stay in front of their referral sources on a frequent basis. You can set up a Google Alert at: www.google.com/alerts

Law Firm Marketing Key 3: Focus on Serving Not Selling

When you meet with referral sources don't make the mistake of dominating the conversation. You are there to listen, not hear yourself talk. Any attempt to “sell” them on your services will be a complete waste of your time and theirs. Look for ways you can serve them and their clients by connecting them with other resources or pointing them in the right direction regarding a legal issue. Ask a lot of questions about their business.

Educate them about your Ideal Target Market and how you can benefit their clients only after you have carefully listened to them.

Attorneys who want to become top Rainmakers don't wait for someone to knock on the door or the phone to ring or the referral to come in. They take the initiative, stay in touch, and focus on serving their referral sources, not selling them a service.

Remember, people will forget what you tell them. They may even forget your name, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

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Questions to ask potential referral partners:

- How did you first get started in your line of work?
- What are some of the major trends in your industry?
- What kinds of challenges do you face?
- What do you like best/worst about your job?
- And here's the most important question: How will I know I know if I'm talking to someone who's a good referral for you?

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Stephen Fairley is a nationally recognized law firm marketing expert and has helped more than 6,000 attorneys from hundreds of law firms across the country to discover the

secrets of generating more referrals and filling their practice.

He is the international best-selling author of 10 books and 5 audio programs.

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