

In Black & White

COMMON SENSE STRATEGIES FOR GROWING YOUR LEGAL PRACTICE

Excerpt from *inblackandwhiteblog.com* - Week ending December 11, 2009



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Legal Marketing: Your Referral Plan

When it comes to referral sources, sometimes the best resources are right at hand.

Whether it be existing or former clients, if you've done a great job they're more than likely to refer you business. A similar formula exists with your peers. If you've expressed appreciation for the business sent (and even sent business back) you can be sure they'll remember you when a client or friend comes looking for help.

The first step in creating a plan to build and nurture your referral base is to understand where most of your referrals are actually coming from. Once you can clearly see that list, you'll be better able to create strategies to maximize those relationships.

Consider this advice from **Marrero Bozorgi's Susan Bozorgi**:

"Realize that your friends are the cornerstone to your marketing plan; ask for their help and resources. Maintaining friendships is one of the most important things you can do to grow your business."

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Where are your referrals coming from?

RESULTS

1. existing clients - **32%**
2. former clients - **15%**
3. other lawyers - **33%**
4. business leaders - **9%**
5. friends - **11%**

Thanks to everyone who participated in this week's poll...

Just as we thought, a total of 65% of your referrals come from your existing clients or other attorneys with another 15% from former clients. The remaining 20% seems to be about evenly split between business leaders and friends. Now that you've identified where the referrals are coming from, let's talk about your plan to keep them coming!

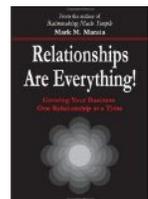
My Thoughts: In my opinion there are two specific plans of action that all lawyers need to have when it comes to referrals. **The first is how to generate them.** Remember the basics when it comes to client service. Meaning: listen to their needs; respond quickly; avoid e-mailing and talk to them; inform them of interesting news relating to their industry or situation; develop a personal relationship; and manage their expectations by communicating your timelines and processes.

The second phase of the plan is to have a strategy in place when a referral comes in. My advice? Pick up the phone immediately and thank the referrer, then follow up with a card or small gift. Keep your source updated on any meetings with the new client and, when it turns into actual business, send another larger token of appreciation. **Finally, send business back. Reciprocation counts for more than you might think.**

My colleague **Leslie Lott of Lott & Friedland** says:

"Lawyers refer their clients to attorneys who send work to them. Years ago, a good friend in New York called to send litigation work to our firm. He had worked with local counsel in Miami for many years. That lawyer was excellent, but had never referred work back to the New York lawyer. We had a client with a problem in New York and had sent the client to our friend. That was the catalyst for his sending his next case to us instead of the lawyer he had previously worked with who never sent him work."

Black Pearl: For more on building your relationships you might want to take a look at **Mark Maraia's "Relationships Are Everything! Growing Your Business One Relationship at a Time."** Highly recommended!



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