

[7 Steps to Getting More Small Business Referrals from Clients](#)

It's no secret that [referred clients](#) make better clients. They cost less to acquire because they are already pre-sold on your services. They are less price resistant because someone they trust referred them. They tend to be more understanding and easy to please. And since they were referred to you, they are more likely to refer others. If you want to get more small business [referrals](#) from clients, here are seven steps to creating your referral marketing system.

1. **Educate clients about your excellent client service.** Your clients aren't as intimately familiar with your business as you are. They don't realize all the add-ons and special treatment you provide over your competition, so whenever you go above-and-beyond for a client, make sure they understand that most service providers won't do what you do. Always [stress the benefits](#) of working with you to manage your clients' expectations and demonstrate your superior client service. Disappointed clients don't refer business but happy clients will continue to sing your praises.
2. **Educate clients about who you'd like them to refer.** Put together a one-page guide explaining who your ideal prospects are, the best ways they can refer business to you, and what you'll do when they give you a referral, such as how you'll contact the person, what you'll say, and how you'll follow up. By outlining your referral process, you reassure your clients that you won't hound or annoy the people they refer, and you can give them the opportunity to be involved if they choose.
3. **Ask the right people for referrals.** Ideally, the people who have the greatest potential to refer lots of business to you are those who have a large sphere of influence and are well respected within their social circles. Look for people who are natural "connectors" – people who are always telling you that you should meet "so-and-so."
4. **Ask for referrals at the right times.** Whenever a client tells you what a wonderful job you did for them, thank them and ask for a referral. Ask when you first start working together. Ask after successful presentations. Ask after celebratory moments. Look for opportunities where your clients are particularly happy with your services, then don't be afraid to ask.
5. **Follow up quickly.** Whenever you receive a newly referred prospect, follow up immediately. Ideally, you'd like the person who referred you business to be involved with the [follow up process](#). Is he/she willing to set up a lunch meeting? Have a phone conversation? Write a letter of introduction?
6. **Reward your referral sources.** Keep your referral sources informed on those referrals they give you, such as whether they became a client. You might also consider rewarding your referral sources to provide additional incentives to refer you more business. Cash is always welcome (if your ethics board allows it), but you can be creative with other options. Perhaps you can hold a contest with each new referral being an entry. You can also partner with local service providers to offer special services to clients. For instance, if they refer three people who become clients, you will pay your personal accountant will do their taxes this year or you will give them a three-month membership to the gym.
7. **Promote your best small business referral sources.** People like to be recognized, so consider featuring your best referral sources in your monthly [newsletter](#). If you want to do more to show your appreciation, hold a special lunch for "preferred clients" and their guests who have referred at least one new client to your business that year. At the lunch, you can recognize your best referral sources by handing out prizes or awards.

By putting a referral system in place, you'll start to attract more and better small business referrals by motivating your referral sources to send you new business regularly.

