

Optimizing Word-of-Mouth Marketing

STILE Business Bootcamp
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What Was the Last Product or Service
You Referred? Why?



What is WOM?

- Online vs offline
 - The most powerful referral is spontaneous and in-person
- Spontaneous
 - You often won't know about this when it happens, it's when friends talk, etc.
- Requested
 - Referrals made after a prompt



Why Bother?

- According to Nielsen, 92% of people trust recommendations from friends and family over any other type of advertising.
- It's cheaper! But not quite as cheap as you think – we'll discuss more
- Reaches pre-vetted clients; clients who know your work and have crossed that hurdle already
- What would your business look like if you doubled your referral clients?



What percentage of your business is referral/word of mouth?



What do people who have referred you have in common? What did their experience have in common?

The Four Things to Remember

- It is about the experience, period
- ASK
- Make it easy
- Have a system



The Experience

- People talk about businesses spontaneously when they have a truly exceptional experience, and when they have a bad one. Average and even good experiences don't generate spontaneous WOM.
- Focus on creating truly exceptional experiences for your clients
 - Dig to find out what your clients consider above and beyond; it may differ client to client.
- Consider your experience as a marketing budget line item
 - Do you have the resources and staff to provide exceptional customer service?



What is one thing you could do that
would contribute to a “truly
exceptional” experience?



ASK!

- Many clients are happy to refer you, they just don't think about it
- Ask in person, then reiterate in writing
 - Who feels weird about this?
 - Via email, thank you card, etc
- Have a system
- Make the client the hero



When to Ask

- Immediately after a job is done
 - Be aware of the “honeymoon phase”
 - Be sure outstanding issues are taken care of
 - Ask before they get used to the “new normal”
- Again, after things have settled
 - Check in to see if there are any little tweaks you can make (of course, this can be a slippery slope)
 - Reach out for a timely event; birthday, promotion,



Caveats to Asking

- Do you WANT referrals from this client? They may be thrilled but may not represent the type of client you want.
- Be sensitive to your client's need for privacy. Some may not want others to know about your work for whatever reason. Be sure you're clear with them when you're sharing.



Make it Easy

- Provide a yard sign
- Send a form or examples for testimonial
- Suggest some ways to refer: Neighborhood boards, Houzz, Angie's List, Instagram, Facebook
- Send a sample letter for them to send out
- Tell them what kinds of referrals you want
- Give customers a short elevator pitch to use when they talk about you, don't expect them to make it up.
- Let them know when you're posting about their project (with permission of course) and encourage them to share



Make Your Client the Hero

- People do things that make them feel good about themselves. Word your requests in a way that makes them feel like a hero for recommending you.

“You were such a joy to work with, I’d love to help out your friends!”

“Helping you solve X problem really gave me some insights, let me know if you talk with friends who have similar problems.”

“I’m so proud of our work together on your project, I’d love to show it off. May I post about it on my blog? I’d love for you to share with friends.”

“I’ve got a few openings and would love to work with more clients like you, do you have any friends who need help?”



Basics Checklist

- Make sure your website reflects your brand and work
- Create and use yard signs
- Send out thank you cards; bonus if you include a small, relevant gift
 - Genuine, handwritten and specific to your experience with them
- Make sure your clients have the information they need to refer you:
 - Business cards, or even better, an informational postcard
 - A quick elevator pitch
 - A template for a testimonial
 - A clear idea of who you'd like them to refer you to
- Tell random people what you do, you never know!
- Ask your partners/suppliers/vendors to refer you using the same system



The Next Level

- Include a coupon to pass along if it's relevant for your business
 - Make sure this makes the client look like a hero and not a shill...
- Consider a more elaborate thank you gift, something that will remind them of you
- Offer to host an “unveiling” event at their home for their friends
- Make the follow-up system someone's job; give it that level of importance
- Is there a natural follow-up you could schedule?
- Consider a video testimonial
- Have a plan to stay in touch with clients
 - Newsletter with REAL content
 - Phone all
 - Birthday card, holiday cards, etc.



Thoughts?

Go Get 'Em!

- Anita

