

## expANding Your reach

GROWING A SMALL BUSINESS IS TOUGH WORK. THE SALES FUNCTION IS A TIME CONSUMING TASK WITH A CONSTANT NEED TO REGULARLY FILL YOUR SALES FUNNEL WITH FRESH, QUALIFIED PROSPECTS. FINDING THE BEST QUALIFIED LEADS DOES NOT COME FROM A COLD CONTACT SITUATION BUT FROM BUILDING A STRONG REFERRALS NETWORK, SAYS INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVISOR, GREG POGONOWSKI.



The business referral economy is alive and well, but small businesses are missing out. A report published in 2009 found that 81% of SMEs regularly refer business to others.

If you want to get noticed in the world you need to network and make contacts that can help propel

your SME to the next level. Making business contacts is one of the most important things a business owner can do to further their company. Make an effort to contact owners who have a business complimentary to your own. Talking to them can give you insight on what they did right to advance their business.

Ask important questions. Ask

**Making business contacts is one of the most important things a business owner can do to further their company. Make an effort to contact owners who have a business complimentary to your own**

other business owners who they do business with and who they trust in the industry. Those people may be able to help you as well. Show interest in other people's businesses. If you meet a new business owner ask questions about how they got started and maybe even try to act as a mentor. Maintain solid relationships. Keep up with the people you made original contacts with. Don't forget about them and they won't forget about you.

Get involved. Join a business networking organisation – there are a few around, but beware as some may not turn out to be all they promise, and some are more like social gatherings. If they are an international business network, check to see if the local meetings operate as others in other countries do, as that is not always the case in this region.

Talk to members, and try to find ex-members to ask them why they left, before you commit. Remember, some of them are just run as franchises to make money,



so perhaps a non-profit organisation might be better.

Another avenue is to use social media and the Internet. Not that long ago it was thought that putting a photo of a real name online might lead to having an online presence. “business friendxaggeration, but up uninvited on come out in the Maybe a slight ears, and people social media hasto the idea that open in recent yother business are getting usednot that different to interacting with people online is real-life after all.

This mix of virtual and real world interaction is becoming the norm in modern business. The key to social media is that it is more a conversation than a one-way broadcast, where people must engage regularly and genuinely to get the most out of it. Websites should promote this interaction though, as people only get back what they give out, and they soon tire of self-publicists.

When an SME owner begins the process of becoming a hub for their business community, the first step is to develop a careful plan to begin developing the network of outstanding people that can solve problems in times of need.

You need to get to know these people by telling them that you have an outstanding clientele that may from time to time need their services and getting to know these people will build a network of experts that are likely to need your services too.

You should get to know these people and develop a method that requires little work but will keep you in contact with these people. The best methods are to send them



Greg Pogonowski

**of becoming a hub for their business community, the first step is to develop a careful plan to begin developing the network of outstanding people that can solve problems in times of need**

articles that pertain to their interest or to issues related to you being able to refer the right people to the idm – Twitter and blogs are al for this.

to As it will take some time o listbuild this list of referral r urces, I suggest making a wh t that deli oritises your at you most li eve needs wil clients to then mkely schedule l be and know at l ake a of these r to get to opportun east 17 each year efferal How dities become a .

o you n SME hub? You start by researching and contacting the one hundred most important professionals in your geographic area, and the areas where your clients live. These experts should work in a number of disciplines and industries, including accounting, real estate brokers, architects, business brokers, computer experts, insurance professionals and so on.

In addition, you should know presidents of local banks, presidents of local universities, council members, leading merchants and you should also try to get to know the chairpersons or executive directors of the major local charities.

Make a list of people or the businesses that sell complimentary products and services to your own product or service. If you sell athletic shoes your list might include health

clubs, running clubs, basketball teams, or podiatrists.

Now create a referral programme that pays referral fees for people that are sent to you by your referral partners. To make this system more effective, give your referral partners customised coupons, tickets, or cards

## Top tips for building your referrals business

- 1 Set a target:** In business, measure the results to improve performance. Set a clear goal with a time line. For example, a 10% increase in referral business over the next ten weeks.
- 2 Timing:** Conventional sales wisdom claims the best time to ask for the referral is immediately after the close. This tactic is far too aggressive. Give your clients time to experience your service or product before asking for a referral. Ask for the referral at close only if your client is already delighted with your business.
- 3 Top 20:** Not all customers are referral candidates. Find the top 20% that are happy with your business and ask them for referrals. Make sure their network has the type of clients you want.
- 4 Give and you'll receive:** Give your clients extra service and follow-up support before asking for referrals. When you give willingly to your customers, they will return the favour.
- 5 Type of customer:** Inform your referring clients of the type of customers you can help. Provide a clear picture of the customer demographics will help your referral marketing.
- 6 Rewards programme:** Provide special rewards to your referring customers on a regular basis. If a customer provides you with five sales, offer them something special, for example discounts.
- 7 Thank you:** The three traits for business success are: turn up on time, do what you say you are going to do, and say please and thank you (especially when you get the business).

that the referral brings with them to your business so that you can correctly track each referral source.

These tips are simple but when executed on a regular basis they can drive your referral business and build sales revenue. Start today and watch your referrals grow. ■

### ABOUT:

Greg Pogonowski is an independent financial adviser with over 27 years experience in the financial services profession, he works with Pinnacle Asset & Wealth Management. He can be contacted at [greg@yourmoney-matters.com](mailto:greg@yourmoney-matters.com), or by calling +971 (0) 50 8769035.