

RAPID RESULT REFERRALS

Powerful Tips and Ideas
to Boost your Sales

Roy Sheppard



Rapid Result Referrals

(an eBook extract)

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What Readers Say About This Book

“A fantastic book. Easy to read and practical to use.” Dr Suzanne Turner, Warwick University and Potenza.

“A huge number of practical business generating ideas with an enthusiastic ‘can do’ style...a ‘must have’ book.” Sir Eric Peacock.

“You have me turned on - you have me excited - this is not cyber-sex – it is your book, RAPID RESULT REFERRALS. I scanned the beginning the first time - it turned me on! I read the beginning the second time - it got me excited!! – I will now read it all but already I have a page of notes and the start of an action plan. Please airmail me an additional 10 copies ...” Norm Dove, Echo Valley Ranch, British Columbia, Canada <http://www.EVRanch.com>

“Sheppard has forged highly practical and effective tools for growth... You know instinctively that the ideas will work.. I commend this book.” Marion Royer, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Chamber of Commerce, England

“This book lifts referrals from being a supplicant begging “help me please” to a balanced and dignified dialogue between equals. A noble book on what was an ignoble subject.” Tim Drake, Co-founder Cobra Sports and author of *Wearing the Coat of Change*.

“Anybody who wants to grow their business should read this book. It provides the nutrients needed for growth. Roy Sheppard has given me business advice which works. All I can say is read it and do it.” Chris Moon MBE. International speaker, mine clearance campaigner and author of *One Step Beyond*.

"I must buy 6 copies for my MDs straight away" David Rugg,
Chairman, Christie Group plc (He did).

"I highly recommend Rapid Result Referrals to any business with serious growth aspirations. We all know that referrals and word of mouth are the best form of growing any business. The trouble is many of us shy away from asking for referrals and the excuses for not doing so are varied. This book serves not only to galvanise one's thinking, but also provides lots of practical help with suggested scripts, forms of words etc. It also has interesting chapters on other areas of business growth techniques such as the use of the media and networking. A handy paperback which makes an interesting read and ... an inexpensive handbook to keep by your side". Khalid Aziz, Chairman of the Aziz Corporation

"Anyone in business who does NOT read this book should be shot!" John Gomme, Chartsearch and Columbus Holdings plc, London

"Outstanding... it's an invaluable resource for anyone in sales or running their own business." Paul McGee, The SUMO Guy

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A chronic shortage of time is almost certainly the most common challenge facing business people today. Few business owners or professional sales people can afford to waste it.

Like you, I lead a busy life. Travelling, speaking and interviewing executives at conferences, consulting and running my own business chews up my own precious time. To stay up with the latest business thinking, learning from books has always been an important part of my own personal development. However, it requires a substantial time commitment to wade through hundreds of pages to find the most useful and insightful 'Knowledge Nuggets'. Sometimes too much time. And too many authors and publishers seem to conspire against readers, by hiding this material (or leaving it out altogether!)

It's small wonder that research has shown that over 60% of non-fiction/business book purchases are never read from cover to cover. Readership tails off dramatically after chapter two. I wanted to write a book that a busy freelancer, business owner/manager or sales executive could pick up and benefit from in the least time.

Rapid Result Referrals has been structured with this in mind. No matter whether your business is tiny, small, medium or large, is high, low or no-tech, this book has been ruthlessly edited to eliminate waffle and focus on delivering a large number of practical, easy-to-implement ideas often in a bullet point format.

This eBook extract packs practical ideas into the smallest number of pages. If you want to know more please read the rest of the book! Ordering information can be found at the end, together with my other titles. If you don't have the time or the inclination to read the rest of the book – that's OK.

The most common feedback from the team of people who kindly agreed to read the book manuscript was that they sometimes felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of ideas. So, please don't be intimidated. Choose the 3-5 ideas you can work with immediately, then dip

into these pages again and again. Remember it's structured this way to help save you time – not to induce stress!

May I wish you many Rapid Result Referrals.

Bath, Somerset, England. June 2011

Chapter 2 Quick Wins

A systematic method for generating referrals becomes a strategic driver within a business. The Rapid Result Referral Plan described in later chapters and the strategic questions listed at the end of this book will help you develop such a strategy. To gain the most from this book, a strategic approach is recommended.

More referrals, more quickly is the focus of this chapter. Here you will find over 125 tactical tips to demonstrate the effectiveness of referrals. Use these ideas to enhance your strategy. Most people seem to test tactical ideas first to see if they work. Only when they see evidence do they develop a full blown strategy. So here they are, all in one chapter. Each idea has the power to attract highly profitable new business for you. But only if you apply them.

Speaking with and training thousands of sales people and business owners, I have noticed an alarming tendency – for a variety of reasons, seemingly intelligent and professional individuals have a debilitating habit of deciding something won't work for them. They claim to 'know' it won't work because, they believe their situation or particular industry *"doesn't work like that"*. When you believe something won't work, you will do nothing. This will prove you were correct. It may make you feel good about yourself, but it won't necessarily increase your sales. Or would you rather be right than happy and more profitable?

You have a choice – you can read these recommendations and decide they won't work for you, or you can ask yourself *"How could I adapt this idea to my own unique situation and use it successfully?"*

All too often, our behaviour is based on how comfortable we feel about ourselves when we are talking to customers and potential customers. If we don't feel confident about asking

for referrals, we won't ask for them as often as we could or should.

Self-employed or running your own micro-business? The quality of your work or the level of your skill should be enough – right? Wrong. Too many freelancers, consultants and owner managers 'hate' to sell. They don't want to appear pushy or too 'commercial', so they'd rather not say anything. Even though they may really want additional business – the pain of asking is worse than the pain and accompanying stress associated with a lack of business.

- Realise this. Leaving referrals to chance is a crime against your business.
- Speaker coach Burt Dubin describes referrals as *"The oxygen that fuels my business."* A mind-set you are advised to adopt.

Develop the Referral Habit

- Each time you receive business from a new customer simply ask them how they found out about you. Go on to explain that a high proportion of your business (say what percentage, if you know it) is by recommendation and referral – indeed the entire success of your business is based on this. If you wish, add *"Because referrals are so important to us, this means we have to work harder for you so you will choose to recommend us in the future."* All this achieves a number of things; you collect valuable information that you can use to measure the effectiveness of your business. You'll learn how much business comes in by referral. You learn the names of those who are referring you. This means you will be able to thank each person, which in turn makes it more likely they will continue to recommend you. Why? Because you went to the trouble to thank them. Most of the time people don't thank those who refer business simply because they don't know who was responsible. As for

your new customer it reassures them that they have made a good decision placing their business with you – people who rely on recommendations MUST be good! Finally, it is a gentle way of educating your new customer at the outset of your relationship that you take referrals seriously and at the right time referrals will be offered or asked for. How this is done in a professional and ethical way will be covered later in the book.

- One of my clients, a large multi-national organisation, proudly told me that service levels are SO high, and customers so happy their customer survey said “92% of customers are prepared to give recommendations.” “But how many do?” said I. “Nothing like that number.” Came the reply. Why was this? Because nobody had ever thought to ask them!

- Develop a habit of offering at least four referrals each day. Similarly, ask for four - but not from the same people!

- In Rick Crandall's book *1001 Ways to Market Your Services* he tells how Terry Lewis carries 5 paper clips in his pocket every day. Each time he feels one in his pocket he asks the next person he sees for 3 referrals. Once he's received them, he throws away the paper clip. Personally, I'd transfer them to another pocket for re-use the next day! Because this technique helps him keep referrals at the front of his mind, he usually receives 15 new prospects each day.

- Scott Kramnick in *Expecting Referrals* discusses his concept of *The Referral Cycle* whereby an ever-growing pool of cold, warm and hot prospects is fed at each stage of the cycle; the prospect, pre-appointment contact, the appointment, product delivery and after sales service. Each of these is an opportunity to ask for referrals. He rightly describes the importance of making a 'parallel sale' – selling the contact with the idea of giving referrals as well as making the product/service sale. He suggests rotating cold, hot and warm calls to referrals to reduce the potential for rejection and help keep the motivation going.

- Your habit of reconnecting with others when you DON'T want something is one of the most effective things you can do to stand out in the minds of others as someone who is worth knowing and referring business to.

Communicate The Importance Of Giving And Receiving Referrals

• *"How's business?"* This is a question I routinely ask members of my audiences. They usually answer "Fine", "Great", "Fantastic", "Brilliant", "Never been better", "Very buoyant" etc. Perhaps they are telling the truth, or may be a few are putting on a brave face, when in reality business could be better – or even MUCH better! NEVER NEVER answer the question "How's business?" in the way I've just described. It may be true. It may make you feel better, by appealing to your ego – but it sends a subconscious signal that you don't want or need additional business. And for anyone who wants to increase their sales – this isn't a good idea. Instead, say something along the following lines; *"Thanks for asking. Business is terrific at the moment. I'm convinced its because we are working really hard to be a company that people choose to recommend. It seems to be working, 65% of our new customers come from referrals."*

Your first thought may be – that's too much of a mouthful. Or it sounds too mechanical for you to use as a response. All too often people ask about your business to be polite, or because they can't think of anything else to say. That's fine. By thanking them for asking, you help them feel good about themselves. Just give it a go. Rehearse it a few times first, you'll feel more comfortable.

- We are the gossip species. Human beings talk about each other. It happens any way. But when we encourage those we know to do it proactively, we dramatically increase the effectiveness of our word-of-mouth business. If prospects hear about you in a positive way, they may decide to become a

customer right away. Although for most, they will just begin to view you more kindly. A combination of positive word-of-mouth from a variety of sources goes a long way towards converting a prospect into a customer.

- Assuming you have earned the right, simply contact your closest customers and ask them to talk about your business to people they know. Just being talked about in a positive way will start the referral process for you.
- I don't believe in business 'rules' as such. However, when I ask audiences to tell me what they think the first 'rule' of referrals is, they are usually unanimous. They say "Ask for referrals". I don't agree. Asking for more referrals is the second 'rule'. To me, the first 'rule' for receiving more referrals is to be seen to **offer** more. How many referrals have you and your colleagues provided to your contacts and customers in the past week, month, year? It's unrealistic to expect to receive referrals if you don't give them. By offering high quality referrals to your own contacts, they quickly learn to look for referrals on your behalf too.
- The next time a customer gives a compliment say "Thank you. Would you be prepared to put that in writing?" They may think you were joking, so gently say "I'm serious. It would mean a lot to me. I am always looking for written testimonials from delighted customers." For more information on how to make even more of testimonials see Chapter 6.

Optimise Your Referral Gathering Capabilities

- How many people work for your company? "About half" is the wrong answer! What if everyone within your company learned to understand why it was so important to take a more active business development role? Think how powerful that could be.
- Brainstorm the possible sources of referrals within your company. Get everyone together (including non-sales staff)

to discuss who you all know from previous companies you worked with, highly regarded suppliers, as well as friends and relatives. How many could and would suggest people and organisations they know who could become new customers. All too often we overlook our colleagues and the people closest to us as potential sources of referrals.

- Non-sales (especially sales support) staff are an under-utilised sales resource in most companies. All too often they complain they don't receive any commission or financial benefits for helping the sales people earn their high bonuses. Many of your people are very knowledgeable about your business, and could be influential advocates for you. Motivate them to attract customers out of business hours by printing business cards for staff who are interested in getting involved. Invite them to hand out these cards to those they identify as prospects. Then offer a commission, or if that's not possible, a non-financial perk for each piece of business that comes in as a result of a caller who mentions their name.
- Have a "Referral of the Month" competition with all your colleagues. This increases the likelihood that they will think more about referrals on a daily basis. Ensure the scheme is structured to enhance and NOT hurt a sense of teamwork.
- Strategically target 'better' clients. These are your biggest fans, not necessarily those who spend the most with you. This has the effect of attracting referrals from even higher profile clients in the future.
- If your current offer does not lead to repeat business, what can you add to your product/service offering that will?
- If you work within a large organisation, make it a priority to get to know colleagues in other parts of the business. You can increase the number and quality of 'cross referrals' if you find out what business they are looking for, and educate them to spot the types of opportunity you are most interested in.
- I once spoke at a conference for a global organisation that

included an exhibition. There was a booth for every department within the company. Each department competed for prizes to produce the most informative and interactive exhibit. The result? The best way they had ever educated everyone within the company to more fully understand the focus, needs and expertise of their colleagues. For the first time, everyone had a clear idea of how they could sell solutions from other parts of the business to their existing client base. The number of cross-referrals soared.

- Hire high-calibre people with lots of contacts.
- If you are looking to recruit more high calibre people to your company, encourage (even financially reward) your existing staff to recommend the best people they know. Be proactive about it. Your staff will feel they are being listened to.
- What perceptions are staff creating by the way they describe the company to those they meet out of work hours? Obviously, you can't tell people what to say in their own time. If they feel unappreciated or mistreated they will share it with who ever will listen. So, treat your people well and help them realise how fundamentally important it is to the future success of the business (and their jobs) for them to talk well of the business 'behind your back'. They have a crucial role to play to help generate positive word-of-mouth within their circle of friends and contacts. What do staff say when asked "*What does your company do?*" What would you prefer them to say? Perhaps you and your staff could formulate a consistent response. Work together to come up with a few options that staff would be willing to use.
- Put up a sign in your office, waiting room or store saying "*We appreciate referrals – please tell your friends and business associates about us.*" If you're a new business, tell your customers "*We are a New Business – Please Recommend Us*".
- Print on the back of your order forms or business reply envelopes a request for referrals.

- Include similar notices when you send out invoices. Put them on your brochures, website, company vehicles and business cards.
- If you publish a company report, it will be read by those most interested in your business – especially shareholders who have a vested interest in your success. Include a section clearly defining the profiles of your preferred customers. Provide details of a specific person for readers to contact with the names of people they can refer to your company.
- Include something similar in your newsletters, staff journals, customer magazines and website. It costs so little to do – yet the payback can be high.

Align Yourself With Others

- Identify people in complementary businesses. Refer business to each other. Think laterally.
- Create affinity groups. Membership organisations are often strapped for cash and are keen to offer their members preferential terms on a number of services. Provide a genuine good deal to their members. This is great for the organisation, because they are seen to offer higher value to members at no cost to them. Perhaps you would be able to offer a small commission to the organisation for each sale. Many not-for-profit organisations are desperate to find ways to maintain or increase their membership subscriptions – so help them. Doing so is a great way to increase your own sales volumes ‘privately’ so you are not seen to openly discount your products and services and perhaps undermine perceived value or brand position. Members could be a healthy source of new referrals, more than making up for lower profits per initial sale.
- Become an expert on where to get the best deals on a wide variety of products and services. And educate your best contacts to call you whenever they are thinking of making a significant purchase so you can help them find the best deals.

This avoids the problem of calling them on a regular basis when you haven't got anything specific to offer them. When they are motivated to re-connect with you, referrals will be easier to ask for.

- Assemble on one sheet of paper a list of your preferred suppliers and professionals. Put your name at the top and entitle it [Your Name] Recommends... And send it out to the people in your network. You may be able to persuade those on the list to offer a preferential rate to anyone who mentions your name when they call.

- If you are an estate agent/realtor – why not put together a list of local service providers who you can confidently recommend to new people in your area. Brainstorm the services needed. Include builders, decorators, plumbers, cleaners, gardeners and babysitters. Local organisations. This is added value for clients and potentially increased income for you if these suppliers agree to pay you a finder's fee for each piece of business that comes their way.

- As a professional speaker on the subject of networking and referrals, giving and receiving referrals is an essential element of my own business. After I have worked with a client, they would frequently tell me they were looking for another high calibre speaker for their next meeting. Who would I recommend? These days I'm more proactive. I say to clients *"If you ever need high-calibre speakers or trainers– ask me. I can probably help."* As someone they have come to trust, a high proportion of people take me up on it. I recommend speakers who I know will deliver a great result. The client can be confident they have someone suitable. I've helped the client, so I've been more valuable. The speaker gets the extra business. It's a service to the client and to my most trusted speaker colleagues. And they are more likely to recommend me to their clients. Everyone is happy.

- In *Getting Everything You Can Out Of All You've Got* Jay Abraham

includes this referral idea; a catering business that offers a special service for food allergy sufferers and a new line of food products, instigated a referral programme encouraging friends and fellow sufferers to subscribe to the meals service or request the foods at their stores. The store products included on-pack ads to cross-sell the meals service.

Clearly defined groups such as food allergy sufferers in this case are a great way to gain access to larger groups of customers. Which groups already service your target customers? If none exist, it might be worth creating them yourself. When members derive value from being a member, others with similar needs will find you, especially if you encourage them to provide you with referrals!

- Offer to carry around 6 or so business cards or brochures for each of your closest business friends. When an opportunity presents itself for one of these contacts, hand one out. Obviously, encourage them to do the same for you.

Generate More Business From Existing Customers

- Get in touch with every previous customer or client (but only those who you would want to work with again!). Assuming you did a competent job, it's safe to predict that you would end up with profitable new business. Forgetting clients you have worked with in the past is a costly mistake to any sales person or business owner. Maintain your relationship with all your clients and customers. Why? Previous happy customers are always the easiest people to sell to. They know and trust you. Working again for past clients is also more profitable than constantly spending money to find new clients. Known as 'top-of-the-mind' marketing - you will find a significant amount of repeat business will come your way. Inexperienced business people tell me they don't maintain contact because they think they will be seen as a nuisance. They don't want to be seen to pester anyone. If your ap-

proach is one of helping your clients, they will not think of you as a nuisance when you contact them.

- Put together a list of your best customers. How did they originally become customers? Where ever possible, track each one back to the source. If you don't know, find out. Customers who came to you as a referral are prime candidates for the following approach.
- You will probably know how your best customers originally joined your company. If you don't, you need to find out without offending them. Ask in person or write a letter along the following lines:

“You are one of our most valued customers. Recently we decided to find out how you became one of our customers/clients. It appears we were recommended by Our research has found that x% of our business is by recommendation. Hopefully this means we are doing something right!

Referrals are very important to the future success of our company. This means we have to remain committed to offering a high level of service to our existing customers.

Seeing as you decided to do business with us following a recommendation, who do you know who might also benefit from working with us? Perhaps we can have a discussion at a convenient time to explore this further. I will give you a call.”

Make this letter as tangible as possible – its worth finding out what proportion of your business is by referral. Use the figures. It will reinforce the perception in the mind of your customers that they do business with a high quality company. This will further increase your chances of referrals. It's essential that you follow it up with a phone call or face-to-face meeting to gather the names of people you are given. Exactly how to do this is covered in a later chapter.

- Develop the habit of contacting your customers at times

when you do not want anything. Better yet, offer something of value to them. Offering business opportunities for them is a pretty good start!

- When you go into every job or contract with the mindset of “*What can I do to ensure my client is so delighted with our work they will want to offer referrals?*” You will.
- Test and measure your effectiveness at gathering referrals with every new customer from now on.
- Many of your best customers and most ardent supporters won’t give you referrals unless you remind them.
- People who have offered you written testimonials are the most likely to offer you referrals. Go to them first. Ask “*Who do you think we should be talking to?*”
- Look at ways you can help your clients make more money for themselves. Re-read this tip. Think about it deeply. Nothing will help you more to grow your business if you become known as someone who seeks to help others grow theirs.
- Especially go back to customers who have been motivated to give you referrals in the past. They are your biggest fans. So long as you have continued to offer a great service, its highly likely they will offer more. However, what stops most people is feeling uncomfortable about asking again. They don’t want to be a nuisance – or be seen to ‘push their luck’. This need not be the case.
- Jay Abraham cites these two examples;

New members at a health club have to make a commitment to use the club and set personal health goals. When they reach those goals, they are asked to write a personal letter of recommendation to their friends. 50% of new members agree to do so.

A stockbroker found that referrals were rarely offered because clients were afraid of feeling responsible if their friends’ investments failed. To address this he told existing clients that his job was to find the best investments for them. If he had to

spend a high proportion of his time looking for new clients he would not be able to devote as much time finding the best investments for THEM. He then asked *“What would you prefer me to do?”* The quality of his referrals improved dramatically.

- Complaining customers are potential sources of many referrals. Seriously! If you are seen to move heaven and earth to sort out their problems, some will be so pleased that they may want to tell their contacts about what you did for them. Others, however may never appreciate you! Who knows, you may reach a situation where you will be able to ‘fire’ your most troublesome customers.

Solicitation Tactics

- Frank Furness is a sales trainer in the financial services market. He is successful at receiving referrals. While working with a particular off-shore company on the island of Jersey, three different people told him the name of someone he should contact. But each person said *“Please don’t mention my name – because he’s such a bastard.”* But Frank decided to turn this into a referral and called him.

After introducing himself he said *“Three people have independently told me to call you. But all three said “Don’t mention my name because you’re such a bastard? I’m intrigued – are you?”* The guy burst out laughing and invited him in for a meeting. He was a direct person and appreciated Frank’s approach. Do you have the nerve to try this?

- Here’s a sales script for gathering referrals developed by trainer Peter Thomson. When you know a client has been particularly happy with your products or service you might consider generating the following conversation:

Q. *“How long have you been in your line of business?”*

Then add

Q. *"I suppose you've met lots of other people in your business over those years - haven't you?"* The *"haven't you"* is important because it gets the person to mentally say *"Yes"* to themselves. It's called a *"yes tag"* question.

Go on by saying

Q. *"If I asked you to write down the names - you could, couldn't you?"* When you say this, shrug your shoulders and almost throw away the - *"you could, couldn't you?"* It's another *"Yes tag"* question.

Then ask

Q. *"Can I ask your advice?"*

Q. *"Which of those people should I contact first to do some work with them?"*

Practice it with a friend or colleague until you become comfortable with the script.

- Here is a very powerful question to ask a new customer face-to-face *"What is the most important thing you expect from your [name of your profession] for you to choose to recommend me to your friends and colleagues?"* Say this with absolute sincerity, look into their eyes and wait. Deliver on what they say. You'll get lots more referrals.
- Referrals trainer Mark Sheer recommends sending out letters which begin; *"I am looking to expand my business. I need your help. Who do you know who..."* He believes this wording is crucial for success and urges you not to change or 'improve' it in any way. Attached to the letter is a customer profile - one sheet of paper giving as much detail of exactly who you are looking to do business with.

- One of the most powerful questions in business is *“How would I recognise a good business referral for you?”* Ask it a lot. And really listen to what you are told.
- A financial advisor once took me aside to share the following story. He’d attended a business seminar and got on particularly well with the other attendees, who were predominantly the owners of small businesses and people most in need of his services. He followed up the seminar with a letter and then a phone call. When he spoke to these people on the phone they were unfriendly, even cool towards him. He sensed he’d made a big mistake but couldn’t figure out what he had done wrong. The content of his letter provided the answer. He wrote *“It was wonderful to meet you at the seminar. As you know I am a financial advisor. If I can ever help you with your pensions or insurance, please contact me. I will call you in the next week.”* When he called, everyone knew that they were now prospects! I suggested this different approach: *“It was great to meet you etc.”* Then add *“As a financial advisor, I meet high level people from all walks of life, and from different industries and businesses. Let me know how I could identify potential customers for your business. Please give this some thought. I will call you in a week to discuss it further.”* Your follow up call will almost certainly be met with more enthusiasm.
- When asking for referrals Bill Cates uses this approach: with a twinkle in the eye he says *“I’d like you to give me 100 names..”* Then he laughs. *“OK, how about two or three?”* This way you get more than one.
- When Burt Dubin asks for referrals he uses the phrase *“If you were me, who would you call next?”* He then says *“Why did you choose him or her?”* He writes down and later uses what is said.
- Write to all of your friends, colleagues, and customers asking for the necessary information to identify customers and clients for them. Be sure to include individuals who have

offered referrals to you in the past. Offer other types of help. If you can, use a real example of how you discovered a friend or colleague needed help you could have offered if only you had known in time. Implore your contacts to share the help they need. Then help them.

- Offer a referral in the PS of the letters you send out, specific to the needs of that person. Add that referrals are so valuable to the success of your own business that you make a point of offering referrals as often as you can. Include the fact that you can personally vouch for the quality of that person's work and professionalism.

- A tip from financial advisor Morwenna Edwards. When you give out your business card, gently touch their lower arm and say *"Don't just give anyone my telephone number unless they promise to mention your name. When they call, they won't be a stranger."*

- Which of your delighted customers would be prepared to send an introductory letter on your behalf to their mailing list? You write it with their collaboration, print it onto their stationery, they sign it and you pay the postage.

- If you can, fix up a lunch appointment with the sole aim of brainstorming opportunities for them, not you. During your meeting include the phrase *"I realise just how important referrals are to the success of any business – they're certainly crucial to my own. How can I find ways to deliver quality referrals to you."* Then leave it at that. Proactively find referrals and opportunities for this person. Do not ask for referrals - yet. Focus on being of value to that person. Once you have proved yourself, then and only then should you broach the subject of referrals. Do NOT ask that person for their business. Simply educate this person about who you look for as a client. And who you choose not to work with (and why). See the later chapter for detailed information on asking for referrals.

- In *SalesDoctor* magazine, S West of Greenville, North Carolina wrote; *"My brother has an insurance agency that sells all types*

of insurance. Customers visit his office to pay their premiums all the time. In order to get referrals from his regular customers, he has a small sign on everyone's desk that states: *FREE MUG, ASK HOW*. Because the office staff are busy and forget to ask for referrals, the sign encourages customers to enquire about the mugs. The staff member then states that, in exchange for a mug, the company wants 3 referrals with phone numbers and addresses. 85% of the people give this information to get a mug, and many give more names to earn a set of mugs. The cost of the program is about \$1.00 per mug, with an average return of \$35.00 per sale. This has been a big success for the agency."

Recognise The Negotiable Value Of Referrals

- Freelancers or consultants will know that some clients have a habit of asking for a 'deal' – better known as a discount! You may agree a discount if you want or need the project. Rather than simply saying 'yes', try "I would be prepared to offer you a discount – this time (it's important to include this as it sends a signal that you don't always agree to offer one.) Then add "...on condition you provide me with two high quality referrals and a written testimonial following the completion of this project. Of course, I wouldn't expect you to do this unless you were totally satisfied with my work." If the client agrees (most fair-minded people will) confirm this agreement in writing as a follow up. When you eventually ask for referrals, it won't come as a surprise to them. You've been able to save face, they get a better deal and you earn the right to expect referrals and a written testimonial. Not bad - you were going to ask for them anyway!
- A beauty salon in the historic city of Bath published a promotional flyer that said "No tips. We are always looking for clients to be so pleased with our service that you recommend us to your family, friends and colleagues instead." They know that referrals are far more valuable than a tip. Few businesses ever think of

telling their customers that they actually want referrals. By gently alluding to the fact that they aim to deliver particularly high levels of service, the salon helps its customers realise how good the service is. Letting customers 'off the hook' from paying the tip also has the effect of reinforcing a positive feeling about the salon, therefore increasing the chance that the customer will indeed speak well of the salon to her friends. A win-win for the customer and for the salon.

- Build referrals into your client contracts. *"If we take you on as a client and you are delighted with our service, you agree to write 3 letters of recommendation to people who you believe would be most interested in our services."* This can appear harsh, but if you are genuinely selective about the clients you take on, this approach can help you weed out clients you don't want.

- From Jay Abraham; A company selling building plots specified that before a potential buyer could write a cheque, they would not be accepted as a customer unless they provided 5 referrals too. They claim to have sold 113 plots in 120 days.

Incentivise Referral Giving

- The best word-of-mouth promotions bring in new customers whilst simultaneously helping those who refer the business to look good to those they recommend. Perhaps you could offer specially printed coupons, or better still, certificates that look more impressive to your best customers. They could offer a discount or a free gift. Then leave a space for the customer's name. The discount or free gift is from them and not you. They become referrals, rather than just pieces of paper when the customer passes them on to their contacts most likely to take up the offer. Important: Include a time limit for the offer. When the coupon/certificate is redeemed, send a small gift (if appropriate) and a personal hand-written thank you note to the person whose name is on the coupon to tell them who had taken it up. This demonstrates a high

degree of customer care, and more importantly, by showing appreciation, you increase the likelihood that they will direct more business your way. Rewarding a behaviour encourages people to repeat it!

- A hairdresser gave out certificates to existing customers offering a free bottle of shampoo to any friends who had their haircut within the next month. The customer could request as many certificates as they liked. Each one included the customer's name and said *"Have your hair cut at [name of salon] before [date] and you will receive a free [size]ml bottle of [brand name] shampoo courtesy of [customer name]."* When each certificate was redeemed, the person whose name appeared on the certificate was also given a free bottle of shampoo. A low cost promotion that brought in profitable new clients.

- The Institute of Directors in the UK offers a variety of gifts including a case of Champagne to members who refer other company directors to join the organisation. Just a thought; I was to MC a large awards dinner for one of my clients. For the previous year, they had devoted an enormous amount of time, energy and money to convey the importance of values within the organisation. I don't have anything against alcohol but quietly asked the MD what the booze they were offering to reward staff could be saying about the values of the company. This had never occurred to him. They changed the prizes.

- Amazon.com the on-line book retailer pioneered 'affiliate programmes'. These have become a major internet sales channel. How does it work? On your own website you might recommend a book (or any other product). If your visitor wants to know more about it, they simply click a link which takes them to the website where they can buy it. Why would you want to send a visitor to another site? Amazon pays a commission on each product you help them sell. There's no cost to Amazon, your site is seen to offer a better service to visitors, and you make a bit of money. Some

affiliate programmes pay anything from 8-20% on each sale. It's done automatically. More and more organisations have woken up to the profit potential of such on-line referrals.

- This arrived from Amazon.co.uk by email. *"Refer-A-Friend. If you have friends or relatives who haven't yet become Amazon customers, give us their names and email addresses and we'll send them £5 each in your name. And as a way of saying thanks, we'll send you a £5 gift certificate for every one of them that becomes an Amazon.co.uk customer."* They then included a special internet link to take you to a form to fill in the names and contact details of your friends. Amazon have realised that the longer term value of every new customer is worth far more to them than any initial discounts and gifts they offer. Once they attract a new customer, their job is to impress them so much with the service, no customer would ever think to order their books (or what ever else they sell) from anywhere else.
- Howard Shenson stresses the importance of maintaining whatever gifts you choose to demonstrate your appreciation for referrals. There's no point offering a gift for the first referral, then nothing for the second or third. The referral giver may interpret this as a sign of a lack of appreciation or being taken for granted.
- If paying a commission to those who refer business to you is unpalatable, for each new customer they refer, offer to make a donation to your favourite charity, or theirs.

Build Your Profile And They Will Come

- The movie industry learned decades ago that a cinemagoer needs to see a positive message about a particular film at least seven times before they decide to go to see it. The industry relies heavily on what reviewers say. The better the reputation of the reviewer, the higher the credibility of the review and its ability to persuade you to pay to see the film. However, we listen the most to the views of our closest friends

and colleagues. What the public says about a movie will make or break it. It's the same for your business. You can let it happen naturally or you can take a proactive approach.

- Find someone to record an interview with you. High quality digital audio and video recording and editing equipment is now so inexpensive, this is feasible for most businesses. Create audio and video files to upload to your website and other sites or mail them out on a CD or DVD disc. It creates a sense of who you are. Give copies to interested clients. Encourage your customers/fans to hand them out to their contacts. Keep them supplied with discs.
- Identify who already speaks well of you, who speaks poorly of you and who doesn't talk about you at all.
- Identify the most influential individuals within your target markets. Who do your prospective customers listen to and trust?
- What customers and prospects say about you or your company "*Behind Your Back*", will have a massive impact on your success at attracting referral business. You **MUST** know. Ask friends, colleagues and customers what people say about your company. Convince them that you really want to know – good, bad and indifferent. Build up a picture of how others perceive you. Request negative comments especially because these can seriously undermine your efforts to increase referrals.
- Plan and execute a "*Behind Your Back*" campaign. (See Chapter 6) Your aim is to motivate the maximum number of people to speak positively about you and/or your business to everyone they know, as often as possible, in order to generate new sales. Valuable referrals will come from individuals who do not know you personally or have never actually conducted business with you. They will refer their contacts to you if they hear enough positive reports about you from high credibility sources. These include; local, regional and national newspapers, magazines, newsletters, books, websites,

radio and TV programmes. Positive messages can be BY you, or ABOUT you.

- By you; send letters to editors or write articles in selected newspapers and general or industry specific magazines. This includes existing client newsletters.

- About you; be featured as an interviewee in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, websites, radio and TV programmes. Ask delighted customers and clients to contribute written, audio or video testimonials from your most satisfied clients. How to ask for testimonials is covered in Chapter 6.

- During an in-house seminar, I encouraged staff to share what they believed was said behind their back. It was like pulling teeth. No one wanted to say anything, until one brave soul said *"We have a reputation for being bad payers. We take forever to pay our suppliers' invoices. This makes it difficult to attract the best contractors who in turn influence the perception our clients have of the quality of our work."* Progress! But it was short-lived. A company director jumped in to say *"That is not a problem."* End of subject. A couple of weeks later I spoke at a conference. During coffee I got into conversation with two delegates - both were consultants in the same industry as my client. I told them that I'd just worked with a really nice bunch of people and named the company. With no prompting from me they both said *"I wouldn't touch them. They don't pay."* I fed this back but was not hopeful it would make a difference. The finance department was obviously doing a great job managing the companies' cash flow. But at what price to the business? What people say behind your back is VERY powerful. (Footnote: since this was originally written in 2002, that company went bankrupt.)

- Be clear about what you would like people to say about you 'behind your back'. What elements of your company service and behaviour do you and your colleagues need to improve in order to deserve such plaudits? Ask your clients for this information.

- Circulate case studies and stories so others speak positively about you and your business ‘behind your back’. To increase the likelihood of this happening – consistently deliver outstanding products and services. Nothing will replace this.
- Bad news can travel quickly. You need to be aware of any negativity that is being circulated about you. Develop your own unofficial intelligence network to keep their ear to the ground for you. Perhaps competitors are spreading malicious rumours about you. You need to know as early as possible so you can counter them. Offer to do the same for your contacts too.
- This approach provides the perfect opportunity for you to include something about how important it is for you to hear bad news as early as possible. Then you can do something about maintaining your high levels of quality.
- Make any necessary changes. Communicate improvements back to your customers by explaining that you had heard about the problems/issues and how they have been rectified. For anything that needs additional time, offer an idea of how long it will take before they notice an improvement. Make sure you fulfil your promise.
- To reach those who don’t talk about you because they don’t know you yet, there are a number of strategies open to you. Being written about in the trade press of your target market is more straight-forward than you may believe – but only if you understand how it really works. You don’t need a large PR budget to get results, although it has to be said that Rapid Results they are not. It takes time, but is worth it.
- Invest your time and energy getting to know industry journalists. They have enormous power. They can help you, if you deserve to be helped.
- Publish your own newsletter or magazine and include a “Thank you” page or column. Briefly describe the circumstances surrounding each referral and credit the person you

made it all possible. Public thanks in this way serves a number of purposes; it sends a signal to other customers that you reward referrals with recognition. The person who offered the referral will feel appreciated. And you are providing much needed 'news' for your publication. Check beforehand that the person does not mind being identified in this way. Once he/she has given the go ahead ask for a photo. Or better still, commission a photographer to visit the customer at their place of work or take the shot yourself. It's a perfect opportunity to re-connect. Offer to send multiple copies of the publication to the referrer if they wish to circulate it to their contacts.

- Master of the art of public speaking. Initially, join Toastmasters International or enrol on a Dale Carnegie speaking course. You'll find the nearest ones in the phone book. Speaking in public is the second biggest fear after death itself for the majority of the population. But it's a skill that can be learned. These organisations will show you how to structure a talk, help you appear more confident (even if you're not) and engage an audience with a higher degree of skill. Professional speakers will tell you that everyone gets butterflies in the stomach – competent speakers have merely found a way to get them to fly in formation! (see Stand and Deliver Chapter 7)
- Conduct a survey. Use this as a reason to contact your customers and then re-visit them with the findings. Publish the information to gain media exposure.
- How can you give your clients and contacts free publicity? So long as it's good publicity, they will almost certainly appreciate it – but check first.
- Mention your contacts in the articles you write and where ever possible include their contact details in a "breakout box" at the end.
- Develop talkability. What stands you out from your competitors? What makes you worth being talked about? Become a pace-setter. Be newsworthy.

Get Connected

- Join a referral club. People either love or hate them. BNI (Business Network International) is one of the better-known and has become global in nature. Each chapter only allows one representative company from each industry to ensure that members don't end up fighting for the same business opportunities. Meetings are run using a format developed by its founder Ivan Misner PhD in 1985. Feedback from a small number of British people who have attended a BNI meeting includes the comment "*The format is inflexible. It doesn't work in this country.*" But for most attendees it does deliver new business. One more point – meetings take place at 7am. Therefore only the most motivated tend to go! Every referral given and received is logged and quantified. Visit www.BNI.com for details of your nearest chapter.
- If more conventional referral (or leads) clubs do not exist in your area – start your own, or a new BNI Chapter.
- Other unofficial referral clubs include the secretive Masonic Lodges. To join, you have to be referred!
- Join and actively learn how to use www.Linkedin.com. Join or even create your own groups. At the very least, upload your address book as a .csv file to see who is already LinkedIn. If you can't do this yourself - find any tech-savvy teenager to help you!
- Which customers would be prepared to take you along to their trade association meetings for the purpose of introducing and endorsing you to their colleagues and peers?
- Get involved in local community organisations and charitable projects. Generally speaking, highly successful people join them as their way of 'giving something back'. Contribute. Don't join just to use the members for your own selfish purposes. You **will** be found out. Choose to be more than a name on their notepaper.
- As part of this 'contribution marketing', in every locality there

are a huge range of meetings covering every interest imaginable. There are business, political, hobby, health, voluntary and charity meetings. Knowing who meets where and when can be invaluable for identifying groups of potential customers. As part of this research, develop a comprehensive list of every business and social group that meets locally and regionally. Don't forget ethnic and women/male groups. Ask people you already know for their ideas. When you've finished compiling the list (together with contact names and phone numbers), circulate a copy or post it on your website and inform those who helped you put it together. Position it as a service to the community. Include the phrase at the bottom "*If you know of any other group that has been omitted from this list, please contact me.*" If space and time permits, contact and invite the organisers of each group to provide you with details of who they would welcome as future members/attendees as well as the times and venues for their meetings. Include this information on your website. It personalises a site and demonstrates to non-local visitors that your organisation has a sense of community.

- Get out more. A simple tip – yet too many people these days think they are 'too busy' to get 'belly to belly' with existing customers and new contacts. Make it a priority by building at least one networking event or lunch appointment into your weekly calendar – and go. For more networking tips and ideas read my pocket book "Meet Greet and Prosper". Available in printed or eBook form. Visit www.RoySpeaks.com/Books for more information.

There are too many ideas listed in this chapter to try them all at once. Be selective. Choose the ones that are most likely to deliver rapid results for you. As you'll discover, if you experiment with just some of them, your confidence will increase. This will mean you will be more likely to adopt more in the future. So, try a few now and then make an appointment in

your diary to read this again in two or three month's time. Your confidence and mindset will have changed. What you may have skipped past during the first reading is more likely to jump out at you a second or third time around as a viable approach for your business.

About Roy Sheppard

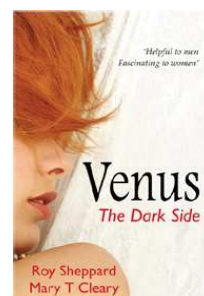
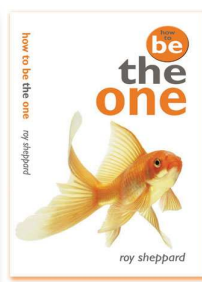
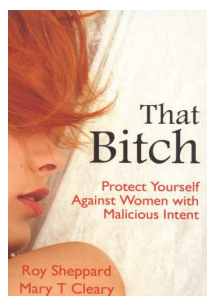
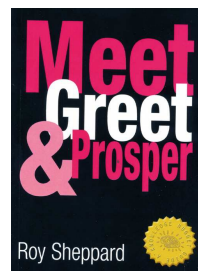
Roy is an expert at bringing people together. At work. And at home. He writes extensively about all aspects of relationships – including the taboos. Roy is a specialist conference moderator/facilitator and a professional speaker on the subject of building more profitable business relationships.

<http://www.RoySpeaks.com>

Visit <http://YouTube.com/RoySheppard> for a growing selection of videos.

Roy's Other Books

More information at www.RoySpeaks.com/Books



“Meet Greet and Prosper” is for those who want to learn the personal skills of ‘working a room’ at business and social events. It is also available as an eBook.

“That Bitch: Protect Yourself Against Women with Malicious Intent” and **“Venus: The Dark Side”** are EXACTLY the same book.

Much has been written in the past decades denouncing men for a multitude of actual and perceived shortcomings! Roy, together with Mary T Cleary, took the bold step to write a forensically researched book about dangerous and malicious women! It has helped thousands of innocent men and women who have been targeted by this small minority of women who wreak havoc on the lives they seek to destroy. Mary is a world authority on the subject of male victims of domestic abuse, a widespread societal problem that rarely receives publicity in the media. *“That Bitch”* is also available as an eBook.

The only people who have a problem with the book are the very women it is written about: because they know they have something to hide! Read their vitriolic and personal attacks at <http://www.YouTube.com/TheDangerousWomen>

“How to Be The One”, “How to Be The One Daily Reminders” and **“How to be LOVED”**

“How to Be The One” is Roy’s latest relationship book, turning his attention to what it takes to BE a special person in an intimate relationship. It’s for men AND women. It takes a unique approach to this complex topic. Because of this, it was chosen as a lead story on CNN.com’s LIVING website and was the subject of a two page spread in the UK’s largest circulation women’s magazine - YOU, part of the Mail on Sunday. To read what these and other publications have had

to say, visit www.BeTheOneBook.com. Part of this book was condensed into a handy Daily Reminders pocket book which is only available direct from the publishers. It is not available in any bookshop. It is FREE when you buy "How to Be The One". However, the Daily Reminders pocket book is now available as an eBook. It's new title is "How to be LOVED". Available from all online bookstores at full price.

For a discount voucher visit, www.RoySpeaks.com/Books

Roy is also the author of *Your Personal Survival Guide to the 21st Century* and *Press Pause on Your Life* (both now out of print.)

About this eBook

This is just one of the chapters from "Rapid Result Referrals". The printed book is available direct from the publishers at <http://www.CentrePublishing.com>. When you purchase this book, you can also receive a FREE copy of the pocket book "Meet Greet and Prosper". And there's free postage and packing.

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