

8 Steps to Finding More Referrals

by Stephen Fairley

Attorneys are often surprised when I tell them that Referrals is one of the best ways to find new clients. The best source of new referrals comes from Strategic Referral Partners (SRPs).

SRPs are people who already have a relationship with or already do business with the people you want to reach.

For example, if your legal practice targets small business owners a few potential SRPs are: accountants, financial planners, Insurance brokers, commercial real estate agents, community bankers, payroll processing agents, chambers of commerce, industry-specific trade associations, temporary staffing agencies, management consultants, business coaches, recruiters, angel investors, commercial lenders, CEO clubs, property management companies, etc.

By building a large network of people who already have relationships with small business owners, you can reap the benefits of with more referrals.

There are 8 easy steps you can use to create a network of Strategic Referral Partners:

1. **Identify 2-3 professions or industries where you can find SRPs.** Which specific places you look depends on your practice area and your ideal target market. It's better to target just a couple of professions rather than several at once.
2. **Create a database of at least 200-300 people in these fields who work in your local area.** This is simply a numbers game at this point. For example, if you start out with 300 people in your database, you will not be able to connect with about half of them—so you're down to 150. Out of these 150 you call them and briefly tell them about your practice. Perhaps half of them will agree to meet with you— you're down to 75. Out of these 75 people, about 1 out of 10 who agree to be a referral source for you will actually send you a referral in the next 6-9 months. That leaves you with about 7 or 8 new referral sources out of a list of 300. You can either purchase a list of names or go to <http://www.superpages.com>.
3. **Write up a letter of introduction to serve as a template.** This letter introduces who you are, briefly describes your ideal target market and requests that they contact you if they are interested in getting together to determine if the possibility exists for cross-referrals.

4. **Call several people in these fields to identify their challenges.** Before you meet with a prospective SRP, be sure to contact some people you already know in these fields to discover common industry trends and challenges so you can talk intelligently about the field when you meet with the potential SRP.
5. **Send out 10-20 letters per week.** Do not send all 300 letters at once. Pace yourself. For each letter you send out, plan on making 6-8 calls to try and reach the person you sent the letter to. So 10-20 letters represents 60 to 160 calls a week—that's a lot of dialing.
6. **Create a spreadsheet to track your efforts.** Include information like: when you sent the letter out, date of first call, date of 2nd call, date when you actually spoke to them, whether they agreed to meet with you in person, when the meeting took place, if they agreed to be a referral source for you, date of first referral, etc.
7. **Follow up on your letters with a call within 3-4 days to set up a face to face meeting.** The goal is to set up 1-2 in-person meetings per week. The in-person meeting is critical because it allows you to start the process of building a relationship with the person and educating them about what kind of referrals you are looking for. During this meeting you should only talk about 25% of the time and listen/ask powerful questions 75% of the time. Be clear about your goal and ask them if they would be willing to be a referral partner for you. Be clear about what you can and cannot offer them in return.
8. **Immediately follow up each meeting with a thank you letter or email.** This will set you apart as someone who is professional and caring. Create a plan to stay in touch with each person at least every 6-8 weeks via email, telephone, letter, or newsletter. In your follow up remind them of the exact kind of referral you are looking for and how you can help them in their business as well. For this system to work you must approach it as a 'win-win'.

We have taught this easy step-by-step system to thousands of legal professionals and they have used this exact process to quickly build networks of 50-60 new referral sources every year. What would happen to your legal practice if you could have 20, 40, or even 60 new referral sources every single year who consistently send you new clients?

Stephen Fairley is an international best-selling author of 9 books and 5 audio programs, including Practice Made Perfect for Lawyers (2005) and Becoming a Rainmaker: Business Building Strategies for Lawyers. Stephen has spoken to thousands of attorneys at state and local bar associations on topics related to marketing strategies for solo practitioners and small law firms. Sign up to receive Stephen's report "Top 10 Mistakes Attorneys Make and How to Avoid Them" at www.rainmakerretreat.com

