

The Easiest of Leads

Here's a piece of advice I've shared with a couple of clients recently and unsurprisingly, it has produced very lucrative results.

It's something which most think they do well but unfortunately don't and something so startlingly obvious that people tend to slap themselves on the forehead and say, '*why haven't I done this before?!*' when they see the results.

And here is that meteoric piece of advice. *Ask for referrals*. Seem obvious? Where most companies/sales people fall down is in their approach to this. They hint at their customer, '*if you know of anyone else who could benefit from our services, please do point them in our direction*'. Pleasant enough and the customer will always say, 'yeah, sure'.

The key is to be more *proactive*. Consider your questioning technique and get the result you want, rather than use a passive pleasantry. A line like this will usually suffice and will not prove a burden to an existing customer, '*Who else do you know that would be interested in speaking to us?*'. This may not sound like a massively different approach but re-read the wording and believe me, it produces results.

A client of mine has a large contract with a local authority in one area and was hoping to get into other areas. He asked me to make a few calls. Rather than make cold calls straight away I asked him to ask this question of his existing client. '*She'd happily give us a testimonial*' he said. This wasn't what I was getting at. I advised him to call her there and then and ask the above question; '*Who else do you know that would be interested in speaking to us?*'. He got five names of decision makers and direct numbers, from one client! These are red-hot leads! We could then use the client's name as a referee and she would back up the quality of my client's work. i.e. rather than making cold introductory calls, he came highly recommended direct to the decision maker from someone the decision maker knows! Appointments have been made and some other large contracts look likely.

This only works as well with people you have provided your service to and they are a happy repeat or long term customer. Do not attempt this on an initial sale or if you could be working towards more business from that one client. This comes later. This may also not be a strategy for you if your clients happen to be competitors! Though, in most businesses it works.

If you have clients that you haven't spoken to for a while, just picking up the phone to them can produce business. Proactively asking for referrals from happy customers can produce lots of business.

Happy Selling!