



Getting Your Customers to Work for You!

By Lori Colborne

Most companies report that referrals are their number one source of new business. Surprisingly, many companies do not have a formal referral incentive program. It is imperative that you reward behavior that you want to continue. Get your customers working for you by implementing a referral incentive plan.

Such a plan is different from simply thanking your customers after a referral. Promoting an incentive program will motivate your clients to seek out referrals for you because your clients will know what's in it for them. If your clients know about your program and they value the reward, it becomes an incentive to put their energy and time into talking about you. To promote your program, send a letter to existing clientele and outline the program in your newsletter.

I strongly recommend using gift certificates or gifts that do not die, are not edible or disposable. You want to use something that leaves a lasting impression and something your client will truly value. Include a few of your business cards with the gift certificate so that your referral source can pass them on to more prospective clients. A referral incentive program is an opportunity that should be presented to all clients, business connections, friends and family.

Don't forget to educate your staff; they need to be aware of the program so that they can explain it to your customers. The program will only work if it is handled properly internally. Your staff must be diligent about asking all new clients how they heard about your company, recording the name of the referral, and sending out the gift & thank you card immediately.

A suggested verse for the card is: *"Thank you for your recent referral. Your trust is sincerely appreciated!"* Handwrite these cards and have your entire team sign them.

For some companies, a formal referral program is not appropriate; however, sending a thank you for a referral is always good business practice.

Rewarding referrals does not need to be complicated or expensive to be effective. Give your customers a personal reason to talk about you. Implement your referral incentive program today!

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