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## HOW TO GET REFERRALS IN THE SALES PROCESS

First, getting referrals is as easy or as difficult as you make it. The main reason most sales people are not good at getting referrals is simply because they do not ask or do not ask with conviction. Asking a prospective customer or a customer for the names and contact information for a few of their friends or associates is really not a big issue. Think of it this way:

If you were sitting at the dining room table with Mr. and Mrs. Prospect and their next-door neighbor walked in the home, do you think Mr. and Mrs. Prospect would introduce you to the neighbor and tell the neighbor what you do for a living? Of course, they would. Well asking for referrals is nothing more than this. It is nothing more than asking for an introduction. That's all: just a simple introduction.

Second, for some reason most sales people believe there is only one appropriate time to ask for referrals. Most feel that the only time to ask for referrals is after the close of a successful sale in where the prospect bought the product. Other more astute sales people will also ask for referrals after the close from a no-sale visit, but still this is not enough. There are plenty of other opportunities to ask for referrals. First let's look at a few referrals tips and then examine all the additional opportunities to get referrals.

Think!

1. **Help people give you referrals:** Often people have a hard time coming up with names of people they believe are appropriate to introduce you to. You need to HELP them. Make suggestions on where they can find names: their cell phone, telephone book, appointment book, church members, club members, association members, bowling team, sports and recreation partners, dentist, doctor, school personnel, etc. You should have a ready list to supply people to help them think of referrals for you.
2. **People NOT Prospects:** Often people will begin to try to think of referrals of those who may be buyers or at least good prospects for you. You must stress that this is not the idea. One way to explain it is that referrals are a method to advertise and with advertising you do not think about who will buy or who will not. Your job is just to get the message to many people. Let the customer know that it is never a waste of your time to talk about your product. You just need people.
3. **Controls Costs:** Let the customer know that this form of advertising helps your company and others keep costs low. Let them know that word-of-mouth is an integral part of how you work. It is how your company operates.

### Many Opportunities

There are many opportunities to ask for referrals. Choose just three and use them consistently and you will have more referrals than you can handle!

**Prospecting –** When making cold or warm calls to set appointments what do you do when a prospect refuses an appointment? These are people to ask for referrals. Just because the person does not wish to accept an appointment, does not mean he or she will not direct you to others who will. If you are professional on the telephone, ask people whom you do not set appointments with for referrals of who you may call.

**Setting the appointment –** After you set an appointment, depending on what you sell, could be a good time to ask for a referral: especially if you are going to travel to an area that is out of the way. Ask the person if they know of someone else you might be able to visit while you are in the area.

**The Warm-Up –** Before you begin your sales presentation and you are warming up and getting to know the prospect, is a perfect time to ask for referrals. If you are smart, you can build this into your warm up talk. As you ask about friends, relatives and associates, you can easily lead to asking to meet those people.

**During the Presentation -** Depending on your product, you will have several opportunities during your presentation to make a connection to associates of the customer. Short periods of dead air are good times. For instance, when you have to calculate something or construct an offer. During that dead time, ask the product to fill out a referral form.

**Closing –** Closing the sale presents an excellent opportunity to ask for referrals, even before you get the answer. Also, you can use referrals as a great incentive to offer the customer extra benefits or a lower price. If your selling process includes a price drop, use the discount to buy the referrals.

**After the Sale or No Sale –** If the prospect bought—it is a good time to ask for referrals. However, if they did not buy, this is also a good time.

**Product Delivery –** Right after you deliver your new product or set up the new program or install the new software is a perfect time to ask for referrals. Your customer is happy and excited. Take advantage of this timing.

**Customer Service Calls –** Your customer had a problem that your company solved exactly in the manner that you said you would; you provided excellent customer service—this has to be one of the best times to get referrals.

**Continuing Relationship –** You can always call customers and ask for a referral. There really are no rules.