

# Prospecting - Building an Advocate Army

By John Boe

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The single greatest concern facing all salespeople is prospecting for new business. As a commission salesperson, your livelihood is directly dependent on your ability to prospect effectively. Do you consistently ask for referrals? To be successful in the sales profession you need assistance from your clients in the form of referrals. Average salespeople do not invest their time nor spend their money developing clients into advocates. An advocate is a person that will go out of their way to recommend you to their friends and associates. Obviously the more people that are saying good things about you and your company in the marketplace, the more sales you will make! I have never seen a salesperson leave the profession because they had too many qualified prospects to work at one time. Building an advocate army doesn't happen over night, but the time, money and effort required to develop advocates is certainly worth it. Most clients are initially reluctant to provide referrals and need to be encouraged and trained. Cows don't give milk; you've got to work for every drop. To become effective, advocates need to be trained and motivated. Advocates aren't born they're developed!

How do I go about finding my advocates?

- Begin by creating a list of your existing advocates. Clients that have already referred prospects to you, automatically become part of your advocate army.
- Review your client list for potential advocates. Identify those clients that have purchased multiple orders or large single orders but have not yet referred a prospect to you.

After I've identified my list of advocates and potential advocates, what do I do next?

- Let your existing advocates assist you in training your potential advocates. Develop an action plan to contact your potential advocates and invite them to a breakfast or lunch along with one or two of your best advocates. This low-pressure approach is effective because you merely guide the discussion and allow your advocates to share their referral techniques.
- Stay in contact. Put your advocates on a suspense list to contact them quarterly. Consider calling or mailing them something of interest, such as an article or newsletter.

How do I train my advocates to prospect effectively?

- Teach your advocates how to approach a prospect. Be careful not to let them overeducate their referrals. Role-play the actual words you would like them to use when they introduce you. I suggest

that you coach them to say what it is that you do - not how you do it. Keep it simple and short.

- Prepare them for the standard objections that they may expect to encounter from a prospect. If they are not prepared to deal with the typical objections, they will be less effective and will potentially be discouraged from future prospecting attempts.

How do I reward my advocates after they have provided me with a referral?

- Send them a thank you card and or call them to thank them for referring a prospect to you. Keep them informed on the status of their referrals. You must have a system in place to provide feedback to your advocates or they will not feel appreciated and will loose interest.

- Consider giving them a small gift for their involvement, such as a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

John Boe, based in Monterey, CA, helps companies recruit, train and motivate top-quality people. To view his online Video Demo or to have John Boe speak at your next event, visit [www.johnboe.com](http://www.johnboe.com) or call (831) 375-3668.

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