

Increase Your Bottom Line Through Referrals

By Susan Dunn

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INTRO: Why It Works  
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There's a therapist in my hometown who bills 55 hours a week and has a waiting list of several months of clients trying to get in to see him.

He owns a business card. That's the extent of his marketing. He doesn't even have a sign on his door. He couldn't really market, he doesn't have the time. He's in his office 10 hours a day making money hand over fist.

I asked him how he got his practice going. It was a mid- life career change for him - he was a business major in college and had owned several businesses, but found helping people to be his calling. He made the change when he had a wife and three kids, a big house payment and a brand new student loan, and couldn't afford to mess around.

He started out as a child therapist, and said whenever he had a client, he would get in the car and go out to the school and visit with the child's teacher and the principal.

Guess who the principal or teachers recommended to parents when they felt a child needed counseling?

The man who had been out there hanging around the school showing his concern for the children.

MARKETING?

Getting referrals is not about MARKETING. It's about NEVER HAVING TO MARKET AGAIN.

Isn't that your dream?

- *Clients and customers coming to YOU
- *People telling other people about YOU
- *The phone ringing or the email dinging with people

wanting YOU

*You working away billing those hours and never placing an ad, mailing a flyer, sending an ezine, or spending a cent on a banner ad.

What we're talking about here is WORD OF MOUTH advertising, and it applies to your bottom line whether you're offering a professional service or a widget.

WHY WORD-OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING WORKS BEST

The reason referrals and word-of-mouth advertising work best is because it's NOT COMING FROM YOU.

Let me explain.

What if I told you I was a great coach and could help you increase your bottom line?

What if I told you I had a great widget that outperformed every other widget on the market and cost half as much.

What if I ... are you even listening to me?

Why should you be? I'm TALKING LIKE AN AD.

I OWN the practice or business. I AM the coach. I MAKE the widget. I make money if you give me your business, so you can hardly expect me to be impartial or objective.

What would you EXPECT me to say -- that my widgets stink or I'm a marginal accountant?

SINCE YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY, YOU TUNE OUT! You're no dummy. You know an ad when you see and hear one.

CREDIBILITY

Now what if you're sitting in your office tomorrow morning and your colleague walks in, pulls a widget out of his pocket and says, "Hey, you gotta see this. You won't believe how well this thing works, and when I tell you what I paid for it, you're gonna fall outa your chair."

And furthermore, you've worked with this colleague for years. You know he's a smart guy. You know you can trust his judgment. He's helped you before.

Did you expect him to tell you this when you came in? No, absolutely not.

So ARE YOU LISTENING? You bet you're listening.

Now consider that you're at a cocktail party and you meet an old friend. Last time you saw her, she was down in the dumps,

discouraged about her career, involved in another bad relationship, and trying to borrow \$500 from you to pay the rent.

Now you see her across the room and she's absolutely radiant. She's full of life, she has on a smashing Rolex, and is draped on the arm of a man who obviously adores her.

"What happened to YOU?" you ask her.

"I got a coach," she says.

ARE YOU LISTENING?

You bet you're listening. And at the same time you're pulling out your daytimer and getting ready to write down the name, URL and phone number just as soon as you can get it.

Whatever happened to this friend of yours, you want it to happen to you. You've got the living example right there in front of you of this coach's work.

REAL TIME, REAL LIFE, NO MONEY CHANGES HANDS

Now picture you're at a large benefit and the couple across the table get into an argument. The person across from you, a therapist, intervenes, calms them down, solves the problem and shows real caring. And she ISN'T EVEN GETTING PAID FOR IT!

Who will you call when you need a therapist?

This person you saw walking the walk as well as talking the talk.

The guy who gets in the car and goes out to the school to advocate for a child. The woman who shows two people how to get along.

A COMMON MISTAKE

Of course you want these referrals, this word-of-mouth advertising. You KNOW it works. You KNOW it's the easy and most effective way to get business, sell products, get clients.

So you go out and ASK FOR IT, right?

WRONG.

There's a real finesse to getting referrals. It happens to involve a lot of EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

And what does that mean? It means Intuition, Interpersonal Skills, Creativity, Authenticity, Intentionality.

It means setting up the process to let it happen, but not asking. Asking for it is advertising -- it's the tune-out zone.

You don't call someone you've met once at a Chamber meeting, take them to lunch, and then pop the question -- "Hey, would you refer some of your chiropractic patients to me for coaching on stress relief?"

You might as well mail a flyer which, too, will be tossed in the wastebasket along with the 10 others in the snail mail that day.

"A referral isn't something that you ask for," says Jeffrey Gitomer in The Rochester Business Journal. "A referral is something you earn. Oh sure, you can ask for them, but it makes everyone feel awkward and will oftentimes destroy a budding relationship."

Making someone feel awkward is exactly what you DON'T DO when you're using your EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

NIPPED IN THE BUD

Why doesn't this direct solicitation work?

Back to square one -- IT'S LIKE AN ADVERTISEMENT. It assaults the person, it causes them to tune out, it asks them to do something really personal, on which their reputation hangs when they hardly know you, your service, your abilities or your practice.

It makes you sound DESPERATE.

Referrals and word-of-mouth are built on direct experience and trust. It comes from seeing the person in action, or using the product yourself, or seeing someone else use it, or experiencing it yourself.

I mentor coaches. They always want to know what to say when someone says "What do coaches do?" My reply is -- don't answer the question, START DOING IT. Show them what coaches do. It's a whole lot easier, and it works a whole lot better.

It BLOSSOMS.

Let it blossom; don't nip it in the bud.

Use your EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE skills to set up the process that will attract the referral naturally.

I don't know about you, but when I find something new, cheap, effective, or irresistible, I CAN'T WAIT to tell other people about it. It makes me look cool, you know? I want the reputation of being the one in the know, the early-adopter.

And because I want that reputation, I NEVER recommend something I don't believe in 100%.

USE YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO GET REFERRALS AND INCREASE YOUR BOTTOM LINE

Whether you're selling yourself, your product or your services, use your EQ to encourage this natural and very effective means of increasing the bottom line.

Whether your "virtual" or "real," dealing with people in person or LD, global or local, selling widgets or offering financial consulting, the same rules apply.

Let them taste it, touch it, feel it.

Then you won't have to market at all!

Get the competitive edge. Take the powerful Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Internet course and start learning the concepts in this article TODAY to get the competitive edge: [">http://www.susandunn.cc/courses.htm](http://www.susandunn.cc/courses.htm). For dynamic EQ coaching [">mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc](mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc) .

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