

The Business Connector

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The Shelf Life Of A Referral

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For most any entrepreneur, sales representative or professional, referrals are the lifeblood of networking. That is, referrals are the primary reason why one of these business types, pulls themselves away doing what they do.

Referrals are the primary reason why entrepreneurs, sales representatives and professionals become and stay involved with the networking process. It is the prospect of these exchanges of opportunities and contacts that fill them with excitement and energy.

If you are any student of the networking process, you by now understand that the key to getting referrals is to create a steady flow of referrals for others. In short, givers get.

Giving referrals, however, is not always an easy task. Some days, finding these opportunities to give can be a downright daunting task.

This is why you need to maximize the impact of each referral. While we may or may not have the opportunity to give referrals every day, you can continually create energy surrounding your referrals – the ones you will give, the ones you are giving and the those you have given.

To this end, remember that each of your referrals has a potential shelf life of at least three contacts with the recipient. In other words, can present or discuss a referral with someone at least three different times in the process – once before the referral is given, once when

the referral is given, and once as a follow up to giving the referral.

Each time you discuss a referral, you are adding energy and excitement to your network. Mind you, this carries over into greater enthusiasm to further the process. Here is a breakdown of the three touch points:

No. 1 – Build Up: Generally, you have a reasonable notion when you might have a referral for someone in your network. That is, often in the course of working with customers and clients, you are working on the production of referrals well before the opportunity is truly ripe.

When you discuss this effort it creates energy and excitement. For example, you could say to a potential recipient, “I don’t have a referral for you just yet, but I am meeting with a client later this week. If things goes as planned, I am hopeful of having a referral for you then.”

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In creating this build up, certainly you run the risk that the referral might not happen, resulting a let down. Chances are, if you know the situation well, this will not happen.

If it does, remember and remind people, like the holiday season, it is the thought that counts. Moreover, you can spin this into more positive

energy. For example, you can handle it by saying: “That referral opportunity I mentioned last week did not work out. I am sorry. But I am going to continue to try to find you something.”

No. 2 – Presentation: Eventually, the opportunity comes to fruition and you have a referral to give. You can certainly use this to infuse energy and excitement into your network.

As an example: “A week or so ago, I indicated that I had a potential opportunity for you looming on the horizon – here it is. Give them a call ... they are expecting it.”

No. 3 – Follow Up: You know (or should know) the results of your referrals and these are generally these results are positive. Sharing these successes within your network provides you a third occasion to create energy and excitement.

An example of how we might do this could be: “I don’t have any referrals for you today, but I want to share with you that my client followed up with me on the referral I gave you a week or so ago. They cannot stop raving about the service you provided. Thank you. You made me look like a superstar.”

Again, referrals are the lifeblood of any business network. Thus you need to not only give them, but also maximize the impact they have. Whether or not you have referrals to share each month, week or day, you can still create ongoing excitement and enthusiasm regarding the ones you have to share by drawing attention to the prospects of future referrals as well as reviewing the results of the ones you have given. ❖