

5 Easy Ways to Gain Referrals from Existing Clients

If you stay abreast of trends in the legal industry, you know that companies continue to look for ways to keep more of their legal work in-house. [A recent *Legal Productivity* article](#) reports that the shift of balance in total spend between outside and in-house counsel is approaching 20 percent and 80 percent of the budget, respectively. This trend is expected to continue.



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This presents many challenges for law firms, not the least is how to keep their revenue streams healthy despite the increased competition for fewer fees. Firms are looking for ways to improve their business development success through tactics such as strategic planning, coaching programs, improving responses to RFPs and making changes in compensation systems to encourage business development activities.

As law firms continue to address this long-neglected area of their business model, attorneys should not neglect the ripest of the low-hanging fruit in their business development pipeline – referrals from existing clients.

Here are five tips for making it easier for existing clients to refer others to you.

- **Take a personal approach.** Ask your clients, in person, to refer business to you. Your clients will not be offended by your request. Everyone in business understands the need we all share to develop new business. The successful conclusion of an engagement provides an opportunity to discuss referrals with your clients. Be sure you do not tell a client how busy you are, since that may make them wary of sending more work to you.
- **Be specific.** The best thing you can do to help clients refer more work to you is to be specific in describing the nature of the business you are trying to develop. Even if it is the same as the work you've handled for the client, provide a succinct description of the problems you solve.
- **Hit the "easy" button.** Make it easy for clients to send work your way. Do things like provide a branded one-page flyer/bio that highlights your experience in the specific area and industry in which they are likely to encounter similar prospects. Be sure to include your website address and contact information. Give them a supply of your business cards, as well.
- **Show appreciation.** For *every* referral sent your way, tell the referring client how much their endorsement of you and their effort to send work your way is appreciated. From time to time, as the referrals continue, send a token of your appreciation, such as tickets to an event they can attend with their family or a gift card to a popular restaurant.
- **Reciprocate.** Keep your referral network contacts at the top of your list of people to whom you regularly refer business. When you can make a referral, be sure you let the client know, in the event the person to whom you made the referral neglects to mention it.

If you are reluctant to ask clients for referrals, keep in mind that there is something in it for the client. Providing a solution to one of their clients or contacts by referring them to you helps them with their own networking.

Need help in developing a plan to cultivate your network? Contact Terry M. Isner at tisner@jaffepr.com.