

# Customer-to-Customer Selling: 9 Ways to Leverage Your Client Base

The fastest way to grow your business is to leverage your current client base. By leverage, I mean that with some strategic planning your clients will introduce you to new opportunities to increase sales.

This article is the start of a series. It is your guide for 9 ways to leverage your client base. In subsequent articles we will look at each strategy more in depth.

## 1. Secure Internal Referrals

Internal referrals are referrals that happen within one business. For example, your current buyer, who is a client, could refer you to another executive, employee or department at his business who could also become a client.

You gain internal referrals by holding cross department meetings such as business reviews, or lunch and learn gatherings, and by asking for direct referrals from your original buyers. Start to develop an organizational chart now for any existing client. Map out the people, department or divisions you want to be introduced to and start asking to meet them.

## 2. Ask for External Referrals

External referrals are referrals that are obtained outside of your current client's organization. One of the most effective ways to secure an external referral is to call your client and ask *"I will be speaking to (name) at Company X. Can I tell them we do business together?"*

You can also ask your client base directly for introductions to expand your network of potential clients. The key is to always know who you want to be introduced to. Try: *"I would like to meet Bob Smith. Can you help me with an introduction?"* You will receive a more favorable response to this specific request for introduction rather than a general request such as *"Who do you know?"*

## 3. Ask for Testimonials

The third way to leverage your client base is to ask for testimonials. Produce video, audio or text testimonials that will influence sales leads and encourage them to become clients.

Sharing testimonials will showcase your brand as successful at helping others achieve great results. To do this effectively, all testimonials need to be current (with companies that are still operating successfully), credible (with buyers that have a good reputation in the marketplace), and compelling (showcasing objective performance improvements). Publishing testimonials will increase a prospects trust in you, leading to more sales.

## 4. Publish Case Studies

Case studies are a powerful way to illustrate what you can do for a potential client. A high-quality case study will show people what kind of results you can help them achieve and what you are capable of accomplishing. As an added bonus case studies, unlike testimonials can be effective

anonymously. If you have a highly successful client who wishes to keep their success a secret, a case study can be a great compromise.

The key to publishing effective case studies is to highlight the results your products create. They need to outline a problem, solution and the result of your work with the client.

## **5. Hold Client Conferences**

Client conferences, or events where you bring together key prospects, current clients, partners and vendors, are the perfect environment for solidifying relationships and opening new opportunities. When buyers and prospects talk to each other, network and get together, they create tight networks that help you grow your client base. Bringing clients together for a live event also increases loyalty because they create a sense of community.

## **6. Have a Power Lunch**

A power lunch is a lunch you orchestrate for two clients to meet, and where you facilitate client-to-client business. To do this, pick two clients who should meet each other, invite them out for lunch and facilitate the interest and introduction. Pay for this lunch, and let your clients talk about their businesses and expand their networks.

The goal of a power lunch isn't for you to reap immediate sales; it is to increase the intangible value your clients receive from you. When you do this, your clients will be more likely to invest more in your business and become bigger clients.

## **7. Host an Advisory Panel**

Hosting an advisory panel, where you invite multiple people from your company as well as some of your clients to discuss a specific topic, gives you the chance to hear what the client and industry wants and needs. Besides creating a future opportunity to sell your products to people who already know they need them, advisory panels improve loyalty because your clients feel that you are listening to them

## **8. Put Together an Educational Event**

Educational events can be internal or external and they can be live or virtual. Invite some current clients and some prospective clients and make sure they have a chance to interact with each other. The idea behind an educational event is to help keep you engaged with your clients, let your clients hear what other clients are doing and bolster your standing with new prospects.

Even better? Host an educational event that includes a case study!

## **9. Nominate Clients for Local Business Awards**

When you nominate your clients for local business awards, like "fastest growing business," "top managed business," "top CEO," or any of the dozens of other local business awards many cities have, you strengthen relationships between you and buyers.

Any buyer you nominate will invite you to the award event and introduce you to their friends and promote you to their connections, which are all prospective clients. They will invite you to their table

and promote as “the person” who “made this happen.” Everyone loves to feel appreciated and when you promote your client’s success publically and in a genuine manner you are rewarded with reciprocal genuine support. This is what creates leverage.

When you have achieved leverage, your client has been transformed into an advocate. They provide testimonials, references and case studies powerful enough to attract other prospects to you without you asking them to do it. In this way, they become your secret sales force. The leverage state can yield an incredible amount of power and so, in the coming articles we will detail how to make each of these strategies work for you profitably.