



IS YOUR BUSINESS 'REFERRAL' WORTHY?

In a [companion website](#) for the new book "[Referral Engine](#)" by John Jantsch, there's an interesting list of tips and suggestions about how you can make your business "more referable," i.e., worthy of more referrals from friends, customers and network partners.

The list is in the form of a "mind map," open to the public and editable. It is growing daily. Check it out at <http://www.mindmeister.com/23949165>

Here's a summary of what people have already added to the site to date:

MAKE IT EASY TO GET REFERRALS

- Put your phone # and email address on every web page, not just the "contact us" page.
- Be sure you have prominent links to your "Contact Me" web form.
- Be sure you add links to your favorite social hubs (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) as well as Social Bookmarking services (Furl, Digg, del.icio.us, et. al.).

ADD VALUE BEYOND PRICE

- Publish results, reviews or case histories on your site; offer hard copy (one pager) case studies for conventional mailings.
- Offer free training sessions on how to use your product.
- Ask customers to serve as your "mentor" or on your advisory board.
- Refer your customers to partners to save money or add value in other areas of business.

KEEP PROMISES

- Offer a delivery date guarantee.
- Return all phone calls within five hours.
- Show up on time for appointments.

EDUCATE INSTEAD OF SELL

- Create and publish an e-book that summarizes an area of your expertise.
- Offer free or paid courses that showcase your authority on a topic.
- Offer free lessons / tutorials or a webinar.
- Be sure your website has an extensive and constantly refreshed FAQ section.

DO SOMETHING "TALKABLE" – no one gives references for a boring, unremarkable business.

- Be sure you promote true product innovation on your web site, in company literature and with PR. If you have a real differentiator, make sure people know what it is and why it is superior to competitors! If not, make one.
- Referrals happen to good people. Relate a personal story about your business, or (better) how your business helped an individual.

MAKE PEOPLE LOOK AND FEEL GOOD

- Send a personalized “Thank-You” card.
- Always keep referral sources in the loop – give feedback on what happened after you followed up on a lead.
- Thank referral sources publicly, either on your website or (better) in person at a group meeting.

CREATE A SUPERIOR ‘NEW CUSTOMER’ EXPERIENCE – every new customer experience is an opportunity to secure a new referral. When you deliver 110% of what’s expected, a new customer will feel great about choosing you – and confident about recommending you to others. But when you deliver 90%, a new customer will be underwhelmed and will likely not refer you to others.

- Set proper expectations – then exceed them.
- Create surprises for customers, especially personal touches that confound even the most cynical customers.
- Create sample packs or free items that let customers feel special.

ALWAYS BE READY TO REFER – the essence of getting referrals is giving new referrals to others. Call it Karma or paying your dues, but businesses who get referrals often give more.

- Listen carefully when people explain what they want in a referral. If they don’t tell you, or they’re too vague, ask!
- Recruit a network of symbiotic, like-minded business owners who are respected, selfless and generally good talkers.
- One of the best ways to expand your referral network is with a professional networking group like BNI or LeTip, or a local chamber of commerce or business improvement district.



David S. Brooks is Vice President of [Manhattan Business Network](#), Manhattan’s longest-standing BNI networking chapter. In addition, he is partner in the [web marketing & strategy](#) firm Optimal Conversions, Inc.

Belinda Jackson is North American Partner of [Prosell](#), an international sales training and customer service consultancy with offices in London, Sydney and New York. Prosell clients include Dell Computer, HP, Ford Motor Company, McDonalds and other Fortune 100 corporations.

