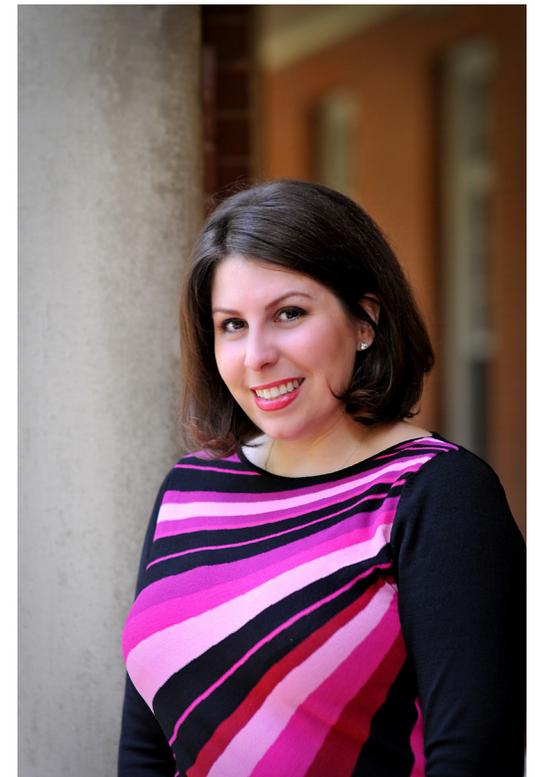


# REYAMPING YOUR REFERRALS

THE **SCIENCE** OF WORD-  
OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING

**Networking can be hard,** especially if the idea of talking to a bunch of strangers seems scary. Getting referrals can be even harder, as it generally involves not only talking to total strangers, but asking them to introduce you to others. Take the fear out of the referral process with my seven easy steps to generating incredible amounts of referrals.

**Never worry about networking again!**



## REVAMPING YOUR REFERRALS THE SCIENCE OF WORD-OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING

### Dress for the job you want!

Be Professional - Be Memorable

You should **dress professionally** for every networking event that you attend. This may seem like a no brainer, but dressing well can take some time and effort. Sure, you own a suit, but is it pressed? Are you wearing sneakers with it? Is your tie straight? The time and attention to detail that you put into your clothing choices directly reflect the time and attitude that you put into your business. Crisp, sharp, and professional clothing means that you run a successful, detail oriented business. It makes people confident to not only hire you, but refer you.

Now, dressing professionally doesn't mean that you have to go down to your local generic suit store and buy the most boring thing there. In fact, your clothing choice can be used as an

extension of your brand! Obviously, this is a natural augmentation of your advertising if you own a clothing retail business: showing your clothing in motion is a great way to bring in clients. However, this trick can be used by any kind of business owner. The second key to dressing for success is to **be memorable**. Think about who you really are, and what impression you want to give people. Do you love vintage clothes, or even sell them? Buy a vintage suit and wear it proudly. I wear bright red shoes to every Tweetup, meetup, and networking event that I attend. Professional red shoes, mind you, but still bright red. Everyone who comes to a networking event now knows how to spot me, and I have a trademark that furthers my brand!

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The third piece of dressing well is mental rather than physical. **Get comfortable** in your clothes. If you are a casual person, the idea of getting all dressed up to meet a bunch of strangers is pretty intimidating to start with. Make sure you practice wearing your suit before you go to the event. As a professional, you don't want to be worried about adjusting your suit jacket, or tripping over your own feet in your high heels while you try and worry about networking. Make sure that you try out your outfit and feel at home in it before you go to the event. You'll look great, feel relaxed, and put other people at ease.

### Visibility!

#### How to Start the Referral Process

Feel like your business is slow? Are you constantly hunting for customers or clients? Maybe you aren't networking enough. Think back to how many networking events you've been to over the last six months. For many of you, the answer may be zero. That's okay! **Many referrals come about simply by putting yourself out in the public eye.** If you're not sure how to get started, try looking at some sites like meet-up.com, or find some like minded people on Twitter. There is a good chance that some kind of networking event is going on in your local area soon!

If you're already going to networking events, look back at how many you've been to. If you want to be more visible, try bumping your event attendance up to one event per two weeks.

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When you become a regular event attendee, **people know** where to find you to introduce you to others, and to hire you themselves. If you can't find enough events, and have some good business connections, you can even put together your own.

So how do you network if you're an introvert? For some people, the idea of spending a few hours talking to a bunch of strangers can be a terrifying prospect. If this describes you, start small. Sit down and figure out **one manageable goal** for your next event. It can be as small as planning to introduce yourself to five new people. Go your event, and try and complete your goal. Then, re-evaluate. Try a new event every two weeks, and make a new goal for each event. Eventually, you'll be networking with the best of them!

Like dressing professionally, being visible presents clients with a **positive image** of you and your business. Attending networking events regularly demonstrates a serious commitment to business growth that creates client confidence. To refer you, clients want to know that you are professional, hardworking, and trustworthy. After all, they're putting their reputation on the line!

## Marketing

### Making a Complete Impression

So you've got your perfect outfit and your networking goals. You're all set to make a great impression and snag your perfect client. But have you checked out all the details?

**Business cards** are essential to making a great impression on a potential client or referral. Make sure your cards reflect you and your business. Also, go through the nuts and bolts of your cards. Is your information up to date? Do they look old and beat up? Make sure that your cards are clean and professional, and contain all the relevant information for you and your business.

Remember, you are primarily spreading your message with your words, but that your secondary message (business cards, fliers, white pages) must verify that impression!

## Elevator Pitches

### You in a Nutshell

If you're a shy person, elevator pitches will be your best friend. In sixty to ninety seconds, you should be able to describe what you do, what your values are, and who you work with. This takes practice. To get the best results, get out a stopwatch and time yourself. **Remember, the more meaningful information you can pack in, the better.** In many cases, this will be all the time you have to make an impression and get a referral. If you have a jazzy tagline for your business, this can be a good time to throw it in. A good elevator speech can be the key to business success. The great thing about this skill is that you can practice in advance. That way, when you're faced with a big client that you'd love to land, you'll be a natural at talking yourself up!

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### Informing

#### The Art of the Referral

A successful referral has two parts. At its most basic, one business contact recommends you to another one. But who you are referred to is 50% of the formula for success. Make sure your referrals know who you'd like to work with, so neither of you are wasting your time. Feel free to **use other people's names** as a reference point: "I'd like to work with people like this other person." This not only gives a potential referral a specific idea of who you work with, but might get back to the well known person that you referenced!

If you find someone who knows someone whose work you love, make sure to **ask for a referral or an introduction**. This can be really intimidating, especially when you're dealing with

people who you consider to be role models. But asking never hurts. Sometimes, people may really surprise you. And often, people will admire your determination and attitude and really help you out.

### Following Up

#### The Finishing Touch

So, you've been referred to your perfect client. Congratulations! Now, what next? First of all, send a **thank-you note** to the person who provided you with the contact. Preferably handwritten, and definitely personalized. No form emails here, please. If you're really business savvy, do it on letterhead stationary so you remind the person of who you are while generously thanking them. Then, if you don't hear anything from the person to whom

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you were referred, send them a short reminder note. This note can be as simple as your name and the contact that you have in common, followed by, “I’d love to talk to you when you’re free!” Make sure to **leave the ball in their court** at the end of the note, but provide contact information for yourself and your business. And then, wait. This is the hard part of the process, but **resist the temptation** to bombard them with more notes. Nothing turns someone off faster than feeling harassed.

### Be Generous

#### Pay It Forward

Finally, make sure that you also refer people. Having a reputation as a **generous and positive person** will help your business immensely. In addition to the positive buzz you’ll generate, business contacts will be more likely to help you out by providing you with referrals in turn. As you help your business contacts grow, they will help you right back, and possibly even become clients of yours in the future!

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### QUICK REFERENCE SHEET!

#### Image:

- a. Find a Professional Outfit
- b. Perfect Your Outfit (dryclean, iron, accessorize)
- c. Practice Your Outfit

#### Visibility:

- a. Event frequency (one event per two weeks)
- b. Make Event Goals

#### Marketing:

- a. Find Your Message
- b. Examine Your Extras (business cards, fliers, etc)

#### Elevator Pitches:

- a. Create Your Pitch
- b. Time Yourself
- c. Revise for Message Value

#### Informing:

- a. Describe Your Ideal Client
- b. Ask For A Famous Referral

#### Following Up:

- a. Send A Personalized Thank You
- b. Send a Follow Up Note
- c. Be Patient

#### Generosity:

- a. Refer Five Others
- b. Say Thank You to People Who Help You

