

BUILDING A STRATEGIC PARTNER PLATFORM

A Duct Tape Marketing Consultant Network Training Resource



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One of the most overlooked sources of leads for any business is the rich pool of non-competing businesses that serve the same target market.

Identifying a group of “best of class” providers in your market and finding ways to gain access to their customer base is one of the quickest ways to flood your business with new opportunities.

Many businesses get this idea, and some even actively strike up the occasional strategic partner deal or lead swapping campaign, but few tap this approach to the full extent.

For the right business, a strategy devised to make your business irresistible to potential strategic partners may indeed produce that greatest ROI of any marketing activity.

The key to building a powerful referral network is to adopt the proper point of view—in this case, the point of view of your customer. As you identify and recruit members to be part of your team, you should always filter your list based on this question: “Would I feel 100 percent confident referring my best customer to this business?” If a potential strategic or referral partner can’t pass that test, then don’t even consider entering into a referral relationship.

If you adopt that mind-set you will never attempt to add a referral partner based simply on what you think they can do for you—and that distinction is huge. If you always ask yourself what a potential relationship might mean for your customer, you will most likely stay on the right track.

One of the most powerful things you can do to increase your value in the eyes of your customers is to become a wealth of information and resources related to all of your customer’s needs, even if they may be unrelated to what you sell or provide. If you or your business can become known as the go-to provider for any need under the sun, you can develop a very important place in the mind of your customer.

Below is a systematic approach for doing just that.



Step 1: Discover

The first step is to identify the partners you would like to attract. You may be able to find some of these potential matches from your own experience and research, but your customers can also be a great source of suggestions. Ask them about other businesses they like doing business with.

Think in terms of building an entire team of first-rate providers as though you were going to go to your best customers with a suggested list of partners for every need they have.

Step 2: Recruit

Now that you have your initial list of candidates, it's time to reach out and introduce yourself and your idea for partnering. This is an important step and one that many get wrong. Instead of simply cold calling these prospects and suggesting you could work together, (a step that others are probably pitching them) reach out and ask them to show you the best way to introduce them to your customers. If you are recruiting potential partners that your clients recommended make the common connection between your shared customers a starting point.

When you make this type of invitation you get their attention in a way that is potentially beneficial to them and that will make all the difference in helping you stand out.

Perfect Introduction in reverse process

The Perfect Introduction is a tool that we use as a way to properly educate referral sources. It gives the referral source a clear picture of the ideal target client, a way to communicate what you do and the comfort of knowing how you work with prospects. This is something that we have most of our clients (especially professional service providers) complete and use in their own business as part of their referral lead generation process.

The Perfect Introduction in Reverse uses this tool as a way to recruit referral network partners. It is a very low-key way to find good referral sources and introduce your business in a creative manner.



Here's why this works. You won't simply try to introduce your business to this potential partner – you are going to do a reverse introduction. In other words, you are going to reach out to them and ask them to introduce their business to you with the idea that you could refer them to your network.

This is why it's so important that no one is on your list unless you are serious about referring business to them.

Steps in the system

1. Create a list of 20-30 potential referral sources. Other businesses that work with small business owners and that you either know for a fact or feel operate in a way that would make you confident in referring them to your clients and network. (Think loan officers, insurance, financial planners, accountants, lawyers, print shops, graphic designers, web designers, software companies, computer consultants, leadership and HR trainers, sales trainers)
2. Send the Perfect Intro letter (sample follows), your Perfect Intro and the Blank Perfect Intro (sample) to each of the potential sources.
3. Keep track of the phone calls, returned forms and file for later use.
4. Follow-up with responsive prospects to learn more about their business and help them better understand what you have to offer

Step 3: Ignite

If you've completed steps one and two as stated above, you should have a handful of potential strategic partners interested in telling you more about their business and open to allowing the same from you.

This is the place where your plan is going to really stand out. Most potential strategic partnerships fall flat because neither partner takes the initiative to make partnering both easy and logical. Simply sending a letter to all your clients saying you are now partnering with ABC Corp. isn't going to benefit you, your partners or your customers.

If you want to ignite your strategic relationships then come to the table with a winning, prepackaged way for them to immediately benefit while introducing you to their



customers.

Create content opportunities – Invite your partners to contribute to your newsletter, act as a guest on your podcast or blog. Giving your partners exposure by way of content gets them exposure and you content. Consider taking this up a notch and create a group blog optimized for all of the partners.

Co-brand content: Create a valuable report or ebook that provides lots of great information that you know your customers will gobble up. (You should be doing this routinely anyway) Take this field-tested free report and offer it to your partners as a tool they can provide to their customers and prospects. Allow them to co-brand the information and use it freely. They know they should be providing this kind of education to their customers and now you've just made them look good and gotten your name in front of their customers in a logical way.

Conduct video interviews – Set a meeting with your partners and use the opportunity to record an introduction video so you can have content to run on your website letting the world know about your partners. This will show you mean business.

Acquire special offers – Get your partners to contribute a product or service that you can use as a way to enhance your offering. Free business cards for every logo purchased or free flowers when you make a reservation for dinner, free tickets to give away in your marketing, or free HVAC check-up when you get some plumbing work. This is a great way to promote your partners while adding real appeal to what your marketing. Make sure you create real perceived value here.

Make referrals – Make it a habit to consciously go out of your way to refer business to your partners. Don't wait for people to ask, do it as part of your Monday routine. This is how you become someone that lots of great providers want to partner with, but you also increase your value to your customers by consistently helping get what they need in every aspect of their life.

Rate and review – If at all possible become of a customer of every one of your partners. This will make you a much more authentic referral sources (as a user) and allow you to test and filter the truly great experiences. Follow-up on this by actively writing reviews and ratings on Yelp and other online sites.

Create events – Figure out how to bring your partners together to network and create deeper engagement. Let each partner have a day where they educate everyone in the network. Create workshops and offer to conduct them for your partner's customers.



Develop a day devoted to topics that your partners can present useful information on and have everyone promote the event.

The win-win workshop: Take your same valuable information from the above example and turn it into a workshop. Now you can go to your partners and offer to provide this workshop, either in person or online, free of charge to their customers. No selling, just great information. Now, if you want to really get them excited, go to two potential partners and suggest they cohost the free workshop. This way they not only get to provide great information to their customers, they also get to meet and mingle with some potential prospects from the other partner's business.

Step 4: Promote

The last step is to find ways to promote your partners and make them glad they got on board with your program. Create opportunities for them to meet your customers, teach them how to create and promote content, provide a blog for all your partners and allow them to contribute posts related to their field, conduct video interviews and tours of their businesses and run these on your site, put together events and allow them to present and invite guests.

When you take this platform approach to partnering you go from being a nice idea they may get around to some day to an irresistible marketing partner they can't stop raving about.



Sample Letter of Introduction

[Perfect Introduction in Reverse]



Company Name

Date

What Is The Best Way To Recommend Your Business To My Clients?

Dear XXX,

It is very likely that I have clients and contacts that could benefit from knowing about what your business has to offer.

I have found that in addition to offering simple, effective and affordable marketing solutions, one of the most valuable things I can offer my network is the confident recommendation of other resources. And that is why I am sending you this letter today.

I believe, from what I have witnessed so far, that your firm and the services you offer align with the kind of business my clients should get to know better.

To make the process of understanding your business an easy one, I have enclosed a very simple device. One that I have used often in my own business and with my clients. With this document, completed by you, I will be more prepared to accurately present your business to anyone in need.

Please take a moment to complete the blank form I have enclosed, adding anything else you think I should know, and return it to me at the address below. I have enclosed a sample document that I use with my referral sources to act as a bit of a guide for you.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss mutual opportunities, please don't hesitate to to contact me directly.

Thanks for help with this.

Regards,

John Jantsch

Perfect Introduction Sample Form

How to Refer (your name)

Please complete this brief form so that I am better prepared to introduce your organization to my clients and prospects when the need arises. I appreciate you taking the time to share this information with me.

How Would I Spot Your Ideal Client?

- describe your ideal target client be as specific as possible

How Would I Best Communicate What You Do

- describe how you like your product or service to be explained – how you are unique

Your Client Referral Process

- tell me a little about how you introduce yourself and your company to prospects I might refer

What Others Are Saying (your name)

- any client testimonials you care to share with me?
