

# HOW TO CLOSE THE REFERRAL GAP

*The average lawyer is only receiving one-third of the referrals they could be getting.*



According to a marketing survey conducted by Texas Tech, 83% of satisfied customers are willing to refer products and services. But only 29% actually do.

In other words, the average business is only receiving one-third of the referrals they could be getting from their customers and clients. Apply this statistic to your law firm and you've got an opportunity to dramatically grow your business simply by increasing referrals from clients who are already willing to send work your way. We call this the "referral gap" and one of the primary ways we serve our clients is by helping them close this gap.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Don't dismiss this statistic simply because you already get a high percentage of your business from referrals. Most of the lawyers we speak

to get business primarily from referrals. So often, they are looking for new ways to generate business, without realizing that there's a whole lot more business to be had by maximizing referrals. Start with the low-hanging fruit - referrals!

Below are four strategies that will help you close your referral gap. Then, keep reading for five practical internet marketing systems you can apply to drive referrals.

**Your network needs to know two things in order to send you referrals: first, they need to know how you help your clients, aka what kind of work you do for them. And second, they need to know what type of clients you're looking for - who's a good referral?**

**Referral Strategy #1 – Educate your referral network.** Your network needs to know two things in order to send you referrals: first, they need to know how you help your clients, aka what kind of work you do for them. And second, they need to know what type of clients you're looking for – who's a good referral? Use communication channels like social media, your e-newsletter, and your website to accomplish this goal. And when you're out networking, be sure to clearly communicate these two points during your conversations. Make sure your staff understands how to articulate this information as well.

**Referral Strategy #2 – Narrow your focus.** Focusing in on a single practice area, or at least a group of related practice areas, is a good business move on many different levels. It's helpful when it comes to generating referrals for a few reasons, not the least of which is that **focusing on a single practice area makes it easy for your network to remember what you do and recognize opportunities to send you work.** Narrowing your focus also allows you to build a brand as an expert in that particular area of law – which is critical for referrals because people are much more likely to refer to a lawyer who is an expert in a particular area of need.

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One final note on this, because I know how resistant most lawyers are to narrow their practice areas: *You can start by simply narrowing the focus of your marketing – you don't have to turn down clients in other practice areas.* We all have bills to pay and you may not be ready to turn down paying clients. But with time, as you focus your marketing and build a brand as a leader in your area of practice, you'll attract more of that work, you'll be able to charge higher rates to do it, and you'll build a much more sustainable and enjoyable practice.



**Asking for referrals isn't about begging for someone to send work your way - it's about communicating the ways in which you improve the lives of your clients.**



**Referral Strategy #3 – ASK for referrals.** You'd think this would be obvious, but I exchanged emails with an attorney a few months back who stated that "I would never ask for a referral. That's not how I do business." That's an exact quote. In my opinion, that attitude demonstrates that he doesn't recognize the value of the work he provides for his clients. Asking for referrals isn't about begging for someone to send work your way — it's about communicating the ways in which you improve the lives of your clients. If you don't ask, you're going to miss out.

It can be as simple as saying something like "Mr. Client, it was a pleasure to serve you. I'm glad we got your matter resolved and I'm excited to see where you go from here. If you know anyone else who needs help in this area, I'd be honored to have a conversation with them."

Ask and you shall receive. Don't ask, and you won't!

**Referral Strategy #4 – Build systems to stay top-of-mind with your network.** This is probably the single biggest culprit when it comes to missed referrals. We are all busy and we're constantly bombarded with distractions. Text messages, email, Twitter, and so on. No offense, but there are a lot of people who you've met that have probably forgotten about you over time. Including potential referral sources!

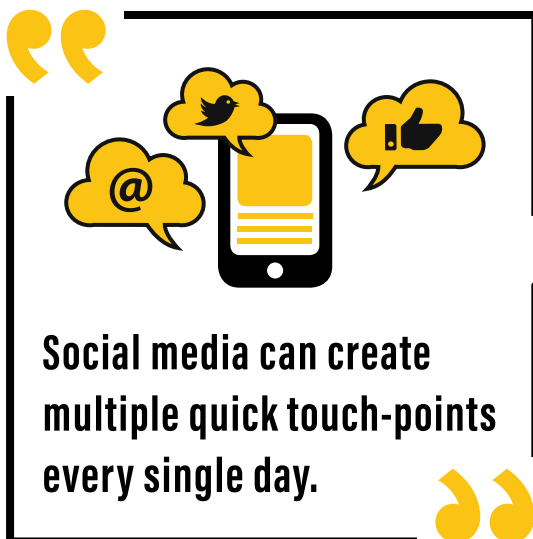
It's not enough to have lunch with somebody once or shake their hand at a networker — you need to create *ongoing systems* to maintain top-of-mind awareness. Obviously a personal phone call or a shared meal is great — but are you really going to personally connect with the hundreds of people in your network each month? Of course not — and that's why scalable methods of communication, such as an email newsletter and your social media presence, are so valuable.

The good news is that you can leverage the internet to make this happen predictably, effectively, and with a relatively small time commitment. Here are five ways to make it happen.

## Five Internet Marketing Systems to Drive Referrals

### 1. Send out a Monthly E-Newsletter

This is your secret weapon. Every single lawyer should have an email newsletter that goes out to their entire network, once per month at minimum. It's shocking to me how many lawyers don't do this. This strategy guarantees that everyone in your network will hear from you once per month, at least. Gather up those email addresses from business cards, past clients, wherever you can find them and start creating a monthly e-newsletter. Your goal is to create a newsletter that provides value for your readers - don't simply promote your business. Share industry updates, relevant advice, and a personal touch such as a quick introduction or update. Then, with a few clicks you can instantly reconnect with 100, 500, or even thousands of people in your network.



### 2. Connect with Clients & Colleagues on Social Media

While your email newsletter is ideal for a few significant "touch-points" each month, social media can create multiple quick touch-points every single day. An active presence on the major social media networks — particularly Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn — gives you the ability to quickly and easily connect with your network, remind them that you're still out there doing great work, and remind them exactly what it is that you do. Encourage your network to "Like" your Facebook Business Page, follow you on Twitter, and connect on LinkedIn.



### 3. Write & Publish Blogs Regularly

Blogging is a great way to increase your credibility and your visibility across your entire network. Focus your blog posts on practical questions and challenges that clients and potential clients are facing. If you get certain questions regularly during consultations, for example, chances are that would be a great topic for a blog post. A few examples... as a business attorney, you could write about the pros and cons of forming an LLC, or write about the first steps to take if you're served with a lawsuit. A family attorney could write about the process of determining child custody in their state, or a blog about what to expect during the divorce process. We recommend that you publish a new blog post at least once per month - but two or even four per month is even better.

### 4. Create a Video FAQ Library

Building trust is a critical marketing goal for every lawyer. And video is one of the best tools for making this happen. Other than a face-to-face conversation, video is the best way to build rapport and establish trust with prospective clients. Video allows prospective clients to hear your voice, read your body language, etc. When posted on your website, video becomes a powerful marketing tool working for you 24/7. There are a number of different approaches to using video, but we recommend starting with a Video FAQ Library. This is simply a collection of short videos in which you answer questions that your clients often ask. Then, encourage your referral network to share these videos with anyone who may find them helpful. You can think of this as creating tools that your referral network can use to more easily send business your way!



**Other than a face-to-face conversation, video is the best way to build rapport and establish trust with prospective clients.**



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## 5. Referral VIP Page

We suggest that all lawyers create a “Referral VIP Page” on their websites — a page that they can then share with their referral network. When somebody has a referral for you, they fill out the website form, which promises “White Glove VIP treatment” for the new client. This can include extended office hours, guaranteed call-back times, or whatever other “perks” they offer. This makes it easy and appealing for your network to send referrals your way.



**Referred clients are preconditioned to know, like, and trust you.**

Referrals are the best way to grow your law firm. Referred clients are preconditioned to know, like, and trust you. They already know what to expect. They’re typically easier to close, easier to work with, and less likely to argue about your rates.

**Are you maximizing your referrals?**



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## About the Author

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