

10 Steps to Rock Solid Referrals

By Kimberly Alford Rice

Kimberly Alford Rice is Principal of KLA Marketing Associates (www.klamarketing.net), a business development advisory firm focusing on legal services. As a law marketing authority, Kimberly helps law firms and lawyers develop practical business development and marketing strategies which lead directly to new clients and increased revenues. Additionally, Kimberly provides career management services to lawyers in transition. She may be reached at 609.458.0415 or via email at kimberly@klamarketing.net.



Positive endorsements, testimonials and referrals can be a very effective way to grow your practice. Some would argue that solid referrals are the most powerful. Make an investment in your practice by following the 10 steps below:

- 1. Create a clear vision of your ideal client.** Develop a prospective client profile which includes geographic location, industry type, number of years in business, gross annual revenues, number of employees, etc. It will be easier to describe what you are looking for to others if you have a clear picture yourself.
- 2. Be mindful to offer referrals to others in your network.** An effective referral network works best when referrals are reciprocal. When encountering those in your existing network, give pause to whom you can introduce them. For those “first-time” introductions, gain a clear understanding of a new contact’s area of focus and “ideal” client to run a mental check through your contact list for a possible match. If your practice does not lend itself to giving referrals, find other creative ways to help your contacts. Everyone has an unrealized need. Identify it and fill it.
- 3. Exceed existing clients expectations.** Delivering upon your value proposition and an exceptional work product will engender important goodwill with satisfied clients. These folks are typically the best sources for referrals. If handled properly, you can develop a solid “sales force” from existing client relationships.
- 4. Enhance your visibility** by becoming active in strategic business/trade/legal associations. Volunteer in a group/committee that aligns with your industry focus and target audience to develop relationships which can precipitate new business opportunities.
- 5. Make connections for others** as a way to deepen referral relationships. Learn as much as you can about your referral network's areas of focus to facilitate introductions.
- 6. Use technology** to maintain top of mind awareness with your clients, prospects, and sphere of influence. Social media tools such as LinkedIn and Twitter are designed exactly for this purpose.
- 7. Directly ask for referrals.** This may seem simple and straightforward but too many lawyers do not make it a habit and therefore sacrifice strategic opportunities to build their practice. Find a way to weave asking for referrals into your conversations. In general, most professionals expect to be asked for referrals. If you are genuine in your approach, you will be fine.

8. **Develop a formal referral marketing program** with your existing client base. Regularly send a letter out to your clients explaining that you would rather spend your resources enhancing your services than searching for new business. Send newsletters that can be forwarded and be up front that if clients are satisfied with your services they should recommend you.

9. **Circle back around** with a client update to the referring lawyer. Folks like to stay abreast of matters they referred and it reinforces the referral relationship.

10. **Remember to say thank you** preferably with a handwritten note for any referrals you receive regardless of whether they actually convert into paying clients. The referring lawyer should be acknowledged lest the referrals dry up.

While the list above is not exhaustive, it will help you kick start your referral cultivation. KLA Marketing Associates works with lawyers to provide a strategic approach to developing a profitable practice by leveraging time proven business development techniques to increase revenue and high quality clients. Contact us to learn how we can help you build a rock solid practice. The first solution is on us!