

Law Firm Marketing: Dispelling the Most Common Myths About Referrals

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Attorneys know when it comes to law firm marketing, referrals are the best way of finding new clients, but there are 4 common myths I would like to dispel about referrals:

Myth 1. Clients are the best source of referrals. This surprises a lot of attorneys when I tell them this is a myth. Clients are simply the most *obvious* source of referrals, not often the *best* source.



There are simply too many variables you cannot control when trying to get more referrals from clients:

- Do clients know all the different services your law firm offers?
- Can they accurately explain who your ideal law firm clients are?
- Are they able to give a clear and compelling reason why someone should hire you?
- Will they remember you when they meet someone who needs your services?
- Did they just receive a large bill from you and don't feel especially "good" about your law firm at this moment?

Myth 2. Most legal referrals come from other attorneys. Actually, studies show that only about 25% of an established legal professional's practice comes from referrals from other attorneys, so logically about 75% of your law firm clients will come from other sources (this may vary greatly by practice area).

A simple marketing tip is to set up an easy tracking system as part of your client intake file and then review on a quarterly basis to identify where those leads came from. There are also some legal software products that can be customized to track that information automatically.

Myth 3. Online legal directories can produce a lot of referrals fast. There is some indication that consumers are starting to use online legal directories as a screening mechanism and they may even view attorneys who are listed in the directory as "more qualified" than attorneys who are not, but this is far from conclusive.

Generally speaking, local and state bar directories are more effective, but most non-bar-affiliated online directories have become the equivalent of online yellow pages and do not offer any more benefits than advertising in a telephone book.

Myth 4. Formal networking is a great way to get more referrals. Over the years of helping thousands of attorneys build million+ dollar practices, we have found that formal networking

events (like trade shows and chamber of commerce, etc.) work exceptionally well for a select group of attorneys— and not at all for most legal professionals. Here are a few reasons why:

(1) Attending the wrong kind of group—one filled with peers, not prospects. Unless your target market is another attorney, I can't recommend spending much of your valuable marketing time hanging around other lawyers. Go where your prospects are, especially the decision makers, not the gatekeepers.

(2) Going to a networking event to find new clients is like going to a bar looking for your soul mate. While it may happen, the odds are stacked against you. The best way to look at a formal networking event is to go there for two reasons: first, to build relationships with potential referral sources (people you have identified that have a direct connection with your target market) and second, to find out how you can be a referral source to other professional service providers.

(3) Lack of a follow-up plan. When you find a potential referral source, you have about 48 hours to follow up with them or they will likely forget about you. Have a plan for calling them, emailing them, or both the day after the event for the purpose of determining if they are interested in getting together face to face.

So what is the best source of referrals? **Strategic Referral Partners (SRPs) are the best source of new referrals.** SRPs are people who already have a relationship with or already do business with the people you want to reach.

How to cultivate those SRPs is something we teach at every [Rainmaker Retreat](#). Not just theories, but actionable strategies so you can start building your SRP network the minute you get home.

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Stephen Fairley is a nationally recognized law firm marketing expert and has helped more than 6,000 attorneys from hundreds of law firms across the country to discover the secrets of generating more referrals and filling their practice.

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