

Referrals – The Salesmaster’s Ace In The Hole

Pardon the reference to poker, but I am working on my skills getting ready for my foray into the 09 World Series Of Poker, but I digress. We all know that referrals are worth their weight in gold, but how and why do we get them (or not).

In the last two weeks I have been bombarded with referrals and I got to wondering why I get so many of them. Then I was chatting with my son and he reminded me that it is a matter of trust. Think about it. If I give you a referral I trust that you will not damage my reputation, that you will treat my referral with integrity, that you will deliver a quality service, and the referral will thank me for sending them to you. The risk/reward for giving referrals is lopsided. There is very little reward and a lot of risk.

So how do I get them and what can you do to get them? First and foremost, you must be trustworthy. **Covey**, in his wonderful book, “**The Speed Of Trust**”, says a lack of trust is either a problem with character or competence. I may trust that you will not lie (character) but not trust that you can perform to the level that I want (capability).

I will assume the first because I know readers of Ray’s Rules would not lie, so I will focus on competence. How good are you, really? I can not tell you how many times I could have recommended a friend that I like and have no issues with their character, but would not recommend them for a job because I was not confident in their competence. I was not willing to put my reputation at risk. Are you the best at what you do? Would someone risk their reputation on your ability to perform at a high level?

Let me share a secret that I learned a long time ago. *Under promise and over deliver.* Most salespeople do the opposite. The higher your sales skills, the less you have to promise to get the deal. Most organizations that hire me have dramatic results and audiences often say that my speech was the best they ever heard. I have one client that has increased their closing average from 14% to over 70%. I would be a fool to tell a prospective client that they could achieve those same results. I typically tell them that will get a 1-10% increase in sales, so that when I exceed their expectations they become my advocates.

Recently I conducted a program for Oracle, in Puerto Rico, which was a referral from someone that attended a class I conducted five years ago in Puerto Rico. Today, I am leaving for Dubai for a return engagement that was originally a referral. Last week, I had someone from the UK sit in on a class I was conducting, as a guest of one of my clients. Yesterday one of my clients asked me if was available to take on new clients. And so it goes.

Be the consummate pro. Always do more than they expect and do it better, and you will never have to worry about the economy again. Example, I noticed that a recent book order came in from a man that is in commercial real estate. I have done programs for CCIM in the past and sent him a customized WITY that I had developed specifically for that program. That one gesture may not generate a referral, but a hundred gestures will. Hone your sales skills. Give more than expected. Be trustworthy. And watch the referrals come in.

Till next time

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