Referral Engine Pro

Session Two Transcript

John Jantsch: Welcome to session number two in Referral Engine Pro. We're going to talk about educating referral sources. We'll spend a little time in review, first. Here is our five components of the referral system. We're moving into targeting and educating. Last session we talked a lot about this idea of being more referable. How did you do with your marketing hourglass? Were you able to fill it out - start coming up with some new ways you can create a better experience?

We had also asked you to interview your clients, and maybe you didn't have the time to get to that, over the course of the time between sessions. I know it's tough to get with people sometimes, to get your customers to sit down. I will tell you, I will urge you, if you did nothing else in this program, do this step. I don't want to let you off the hook that easy, but one of the things that I have found is this could be very exciting, actually, for folks. And this can actually be something that can help them change their business dramatically, or the way that they view their marketing, dramatically. So, make sure you take the step to do this.

Do you have a better idea of your competition now? This is a great way, again, for you to get a sense of what you're doing, what they're doing. Are there things that you should be implementing? Are there things that you should be studying, or moving towards, or seizing opportunities, because nobody else is doing them? So, what did your customers say your unique point of differentiation is? Did you find one? Is it something that you can explore and that you can simplify, and really make the cornerstone of your core message, your core marketing?

Were you able to identify a list of any trigger phrases, that your customers, that you typically hear them say? I will tell you the one that we in the marketing, coaching, working with small businesses - typically businesses that want to take their business to the next level, and are frustrated with the lack of a system. I can tell you that I've heard, and have heard over the years, that phrase quite often with someone that immediately turned into a very, very good customer for a Duct Tape Marketing coach.

Did you make any headway with your listening station, with the Google Alerts? With using some other tools, like Google Reader, to follow blogs? Searching, maybe through Twitter? And there are some other supplemental videos that could give you a little more information about diving deeper into that subject.

So, we're going to move now on to the primary lesson for this week, and that is your partner network. When I talk about strategic partners, I'm talking primarily about other businesses, who also could be motivated to refer business to you. Who also have your primary ideal customer in mind.

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Now, I find that a lot of businesses have a couple of these relationships, but they typically tend to be very ordinary, or very complementary businesses. So, like the hardware business has a software partner or two. And I really want to urge you to push this out further. And here's how you need to start thinking about this idea of partnering. It's not simply a matter of partnering with other businesses, so they can send you referrals. In fact, I would suggest that you start by looking at it just the opposite.

And that is that if you can build up a network of trusted resources for everything that your clients need in their business, maybe in their lives, that you can have kind of this Rolodex, if you will, of sources that you feel comfortable sending them to, you will immediately make yourself more valuable to your customers. And that's how, I think, you should look at this. Now, the side benefit of approaching it that way, is that you are going to generate lots and lots of referrals from people, if you keep that mindset.

So in terms of identifying who's going to be in your network? There are some certainly logical places. The next in line - if you sell a product that typically people will go on and buy something else. A bride, for instance, that comes in and talks to a florist, is probably going to go and buy a cake next, and so, those are some very logical progressions. But also, think outside your industry. Think outside the box a little bit. And that's why I asked you to talk to your customers, and ask them who they think best of class is, because this is really where you want to start building up these folks.

Because your partner network really should consist of people that you would send, and you would feel very comfortable about sending your customers to. So don't think in terms of, "Gosh. Who can I get on this list who can send me business?" Make sure that you want them on your list, because you would refer them. And there's kind of two categories that this list can take, as well. In many cases, the list will have what I would call your A-list, and these are folks that are true strategic partners. They can refer business to you, they will. They're looking for a relationship with somebody like you, you want to send your customers. It is very much a give and take.

But there's also another list, and this list is kind of what I call your resource library. These are folks that may never be in a position, because they don't have the customers. They may never be in a position to refer business to you, but you actually, are in a very good position to refer business to them, but primarily as a way to help your customers get what they need.

So, I think, in terms of a remodeling contractor that I worked with years ago, built up a list of, what I would call handymen. So that when people needed a gutter fixed, or they needed a part of fencing replaced, they would call this remodeling contractor, and he would point people to this list of, or this resource library. So that he was actually able to help them, and so that homeowner who thought, when it was time to remodel their kitchen, they thought about the remodeling contractor that helped them with some of the little odd jobs as well.

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So, in terms of locating your partners, and the folks that you are going to target. And I can't stress this enough: we are talking about something that verges on being a formal, partnered network. So, a part of this starts with you targeting ideal partners.

So certainly, some of that can come by reputation. There are certain providers that you know you would like to partner with because maybe you've been a customer of theirs, but you know them by reputation. Certainly, I already talked about this idea of asking your customers, who they like to do business with.

Search engines can be a great place. Find who else is active on social sites. One of the great things about all of this Twitter and Facebook is that you can watch how people react and interact with their customers, and provide service in very public ways now.

So it's a great way for you to, not only locate people that seem to be very active, but you can tell a great deal about their reputation, and how they function by going onto some of these review sites, like Yelp.

And certainly, networking events, are a great place to meet new potential strategic partners. And again, you're looking for people that are a good fit. So you're not simply looking for anybody who agrees that they would come talk to you. You're looking for people that should be on your lists. But networking events are a great place sometimes for you to locate, or identify, or maybe have a first contact with somebody like that.

There again, using tools like LinkedIn and Facebook. Immediately start making connections with some of those people, so that you can start building a relationship, and find out if they really are somebody you want to partner with.

Now, your partner program, and it may not include every one of these elements, but this is, I think, a good way for you to start viewing what a partner program should look like. There is a process, that you will recruit and introduce yourself, and vice versa. Get to know your potential strategic partners.

And while I'm going to introduce this as somewhat of an event, right? You're in the middle of doing this program to build your referral system. So there is a sort of logical feeling that maybe you're going to go out and do this as one big ta-da and create this network.

But this is something that really never ends. I mean, this is something where you're constantly recruiting and bringing new people in. There may actually be an element to this where you will have kind of a start-up phase, but look at this as long-term ongoing.

You want to think in terms of, and we'll talk about some of these, how can you create content opportunities for your partners that can benefit you, that can benefit them? How can you acquire special products and services and discounts from your strategic partners? So that you can actually go out and...

One great way to introduce a strategic partner is to say "Oh, by the way, here's a $50 off coupon to my strategic partner that provides x, y, z service." So what are the types of

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things that maybe you could even bundle and make your products and services better, but certainly everybody wins?

Part of your partner network program is you are going to be active about making referrals yourself. And this has to be part of the process. There are countless books written on the topic alone of giving and making referrals.

But this needs to be something that's part of your process. Maybe it is something that you set aside one day a week or one day a month even, and create an opportunity for one of your partners.

Using the rating and review sites. In fact, if you can, this isn't always possible, but you should be a customer of all of your strategic partners. Not just because it's a good thing to do, but because it's a great way for you to experience what they do. It's a great way for you to perhaps maybe even teach them better ways to create their own referral network.

Certainly creating events, meeting as a group. In fact, one of the things that a number of you listening on this program and participating in this program with a Duct Tape Marketing coach, one of the first things that you probably should do is enroll your entire strategic network in a program with a Duct Tape Marketing coach, or conduct it yourself. But certainly that would be a great way... That would be a great formal launching of your own program, would be to participate in some type of training like this where you're all building your program together.

So I talked about this idea of creating content opportunities. It has become very simple, and we have a few supplemental tools in this session to address this. But it has become very simple for you to create a blog network. So all of your strategic partners, you can set up a blog and have all of them, multiple authors on that blog so you're all contributing content. It would be a great local community building, everybody benefits from it.

Maybe you've produced your own content. Your own white papers, your own audios, your own videos. Great way to let them put their names on it and send it out to their customers. Doing audio interviews or video interviews with your strategic partners and putting that on your site as content, and as a way to introduce your strategic partners to your customers and vice versa.

Creating events where you'll come in and educate their customers. And again, not as a veiled selling opportunity. But holding workshops and events that really can produce great value. In fact, a number of strategic partner networks get together and maybe hold a whole day. So everybody invites all of their customers and they have a whole day of training or a whole day of information that would be very, very valuable, but everybody also gets exposure to everybody's customers that way.

Using some of the online tools like meet-ups and a social network called Biznik, that really promotes the idea of having in person events. You can allow your partners to participate. You can create opportunities for really everyone to meet people in person and let these tools, let these systems actually do a lot of the marketing for you.

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Having some sort of opportunity that you create, be it in a co-marketing way, or be it in a one-to-one, face-to-face, over quarterly event or luncheon, where you're actually bringing your local business partners in and helping them meet and making introductions.

So you can see that there are many, many ways you can take this. You can take one element of this, you can take many, you can take all of these. But we're moving towards something that really would allow you to build what I believe is one of the greatest assets.

Certainly in a time when the economy takes a downturn, having your very strong foundation of partner network is a great way for you to build really kind of a buffer against any sort of downturn in a market.

One of the tools I want to introduce you to in this session is a tool that will really help you recruit these strategic partners. I talked about your network program and the content opportunities, and those are great parts to have in place for when you identify a strategic partner. You're actually able to go to them and say "Look at all of these things that we're doing, and do you want to be a part of this network?" In many cases that will be enough to get their attention.

The first step is to actually create some awareness about what you're doing, and we have this process called the perfect introduction. And this is actually something that you would use with your existing customers to. And it's just an education tool that can take the form of a piece of paper, it can take the form of a web page.

But the idea here is that you create a tool that you can quickly demonstrate to somebody how they would spot your ideal client. In other words here's who we're looking for. How to present your core message. Again, a very simple way to say here's how this company's different.

Some of those trigger statements that we worked on in the last session. Here's the types of things that people say that would suggest they would be a great referral. Here's our referral process. Here's our marketing process. Let people know exactly what you're going to do with that referral. This is a great tool to use with your...

The perfect introduction is also a great tool to use to recruit your strategic network. So the tool will look something like this, and you have an example in the course files. So it can be just a very, very basic document that has the items we discussed.

But the way to use it as a tool to recruit strategic partners, is to actually send it out with a letter of introduction. And this letter of introduction will actually say "We believe we have customers that can use your products or services." So this would be somebody in your target group of strategic partners.

And what you're going to do is ask them to teach you the best way to introduce their products or services to your customers. So in effect what you're saying is "Hey, we want to refer business to you, teach us how."

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And so you want to include a blank form in here that says we've included a form that you can fill out to make it easy for you to tell us the best way to refer your business, your process, what others are saying about you, how we'd spot your ideal customer. Then you want to include, of course in there, your filled out, completed one, as an example to show them how to complete this process.

This is a very, very powerful way. Once you've set up your content opportunities, once you've set up how your network is going to function, this is a very, very powerful way for you to start opening doors to some of those folks that have made it on your list through some recommendation of clients or otherwise.

So all of these tools are there on the site for you to grab and use in the creation of your mailing. And again, this is something that you may do in a big way to begin with, but it's something that you want to just keep. Anytime that you meet somebody at a networking event that you think would really be a great fit, fire this off to them.

So here's your action steps. Revisit or create your list of strategic partners. Look at the perfect introduction document and create yours that you're going to start using as an education tool for your customers. But then also create the blank version that you're going to start sending out to your strategic partner list with your letter of introduction. And there's a sample letter of that as well.

And if you really get ambitious, mail those up and start following up. In fact, I would suggest that you plan on a follow-up phone call to each of those after you mail them out. But don't be surprised if you get a few right back with people interested in meeting with you.

Transcription by CastingWords

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