Lawyer Referral Marketing: A How-to Guide

Written by Sharon Miki

Law firms rely on referrals for new business, but getting referrals isn't always easy. Lawyer referral marketing is becoming increasingly difficult, especially with the obstacles and rapid legal industry changes brought about by the pandemic. Connecting with clients, building relationships, and asking for law firm referrals is more challenging than ever—but it's not impossible.

In the following guide, we'll review what you need to know to help your law firm get more referrals. In 2022, the key to growing your law firm comes down to putting yourself and your firm out there. While this requires some time and effort, building a solid lawyer referral marketing program at your firm is an effective way to get more law firm referrals. Ultimately, this means more business for your legal practice.

Top tips for lawyer referral marketing

Provide an excellent client experience

If you want more law firm referrals, you need to deliver a level of service that's worth referring to. As Jack Newton explores in his book, *The Client-Centered Law Firm*, today's customers have different expectations from businesses. Consumers now expect their experience with any business—including law firms—to be convenient, seamless, and client-focused.

Providing this kind of positive client experience is good for your legal clients. But it's also an important driver of law firm referrals. Excellent client experiences lead to more positive referrals because people naturally want to share good experiences with others. People also want to reward the providers of those good experiences. With this in mind, the best approach to referral marketing at your firm is to prioritize putting your clients first.

Share positive testimonials

Providing a great client experience is good for your clients. But it can also make a positive impact on the broader community. If you've provided a good experience and your clients are talking about it, share those testimonials whenever you can in an ethical way. For example, you may be able to share positive testimonials on your law firm website—just be sure to check the rules for your jurisdiction.

This is the foundation of effective referral marketing for lawyers: Seeing that others have had a good experience with you can help make people more confident in referring clients to you.

Make it easy to refer clients to you

Clients may want to refer you but aren't sure how or where to do it. Simple logistical issues like that could be preventing them from leaving you a valuable law firm referral.

Put yourself in your clients' shoes and think about how you can make the referral process as straightforward and painless as possible. gain, you want to provide a client-focused experience—even when it comes to them giving you a referral. This could be as simple as having a process that asks for referrals at the end of a case or adding a form on your website.

Ask clients for referrals

It also doesn't hurt to be proactive with your client relationships when you're seeking out law firm referrals—just ask.

As Abraham Hamra—a Reisman Award winner who grew his revenues from an initial investment of $250 to over $850,000—explains, being honest and open with clients when you want a referral can unlock new business.

"I would call clients and sometimes I'd ask them, 'Hey, I'd like a referral. I'm slow this month. Do you have any people you can refer me?' And it'd surprise you. Your clients like honesty. They'd say, 'Yeah, of course.' And they'll give you a referral," Abraham says.

Build relationships with other professionals

When it comes to finding law firm referrals, look for people and places—beyond other lawyers—where you might be able to help. Think about building relationships with other non-attorney professionals in your field who might be looking for a lawyer to refer to.

For example, if you're a family lawyer focused on divorce, counselors in your area could be looking for lawyers that they can refer families to. By just letting other professionals know who you are and what you do, you can unlock a steady stream of potential new business.

Share when others are referring clients to you

If you're getting a lot of business from referrals, that speaks to the good work that you do. When people see that other people are referring your firm, it can make them more comfortable doing the same.

Be visible as a lawyer in your community

Referral marketing for lawyers doesn't have to be complicated. Look for opportunities to put yourself out there as a lawyer in the community, and unexpected law firm referrals can follow.

Get in the practice of letting people in your day-to-day life know what you do. Do the people you interact with regularly know you're a lawyer? They should. Mention it—because if they don't know, they can't refer you.

This type of referral marketing via getting on people's radar, for example, works for Abraham Hamra. Abraham acquired one of his largest personal injury cases from his interactions with his local bodega's employee.

Being visible and active as a lawyer doesn't always mean face-to-face interaction, either. Maintain your professional profile on social networks like LinkedIn to help build your brand and put yourself out there as a legal professional.

Ask other lawyers for referrals

It may seem futile to ask other lawyers for referrals, but doing so can build up a lawyer referral network that can benefit you, other attorneys, and clients.

The key is to look to other lawyers that do great work in a practice area that complements —but doesn't compete with—yours. For example, if you work in immigration law, you could ask a family law attorney for referrals. The family lawyer benefits by knowing that they can refer people to someone they know does good work, and vice versa.

Check out our post on getting referrals from other lawyers for more discussion on this strategy.

Thank your referrers

A one-off referral is valuable right now, but nurturing good relationships with the people who refer you can make a big difference in the long term. A little positive reinforcement encourages others to keep coming back and referring more to you. Remembering a

simple thank you—whether via email or, even better, a hand-written note—goes a long way.

Lawyer referral marketing tools

Tech tools can make many processes easier and more efficient for lawyers—including referral marketing. Here are two key lawyer referral marketing tools to consider:

- **Case Status for easier client referrals.** By giving clients real-time updates regarding the status of their case, Case Status helps you provide a better client experience (which can lead to more positive referrals). Once you've delivered a great experience for your clients, the app also makes it easy for them to refer you by letting clients refer their lawyers to others with just a click.
- **Clio Grow for simplified lead tracking.** Tracking where leads come from is important for ensuring you're spending your time and energy on what's working. But manually monitoring referral sources can be a lot of work. Clio's cloud-based legal client relationship management (CRM) software makes it easy to pinpoint and track how your new client clients found you. This makes lawyer referral marketing easier and more effective.

Setting up attorney referral fee agreements

Leveraging your professional relationships with other lawyers can be a viable part of referral marketing for lawyers. You must know and follow any rules on how lawyers can earn and refer business between firms. This is especially if there is an element of referral compensation involved.

As our post on how to build attorney referral agreements outlines, the first step is to know the rules that apply to you. Learn all applicable ABA rules and check with your local regulators for your jurisdiction's rules for referrals. If your jurisdiction allows for referral fees, the next step is to create an ethical, formal attorney fee referral agreement that abides by the rules.

With a properly crafted, specific written agreement, you can set clear expectations and ensure transparency for all parties. This includes ensuring the referrer, the referred, and the client are clear on the fees, division of labor, responsibility between lawyers, and communication.

Keeping track of law firm referral sources

Getting law firm referrals is only half the battle. If you want to cultivate ongoing, sustainable growth, you need to know which referral relationships are working so that you can best focus your time and energy in the future. That's why it's key to track your referrals.

As we noted earlier, lead-tracking tech (like Clio Grow's CRM software) takes the hassle out of referral source tracking. This is important because the easier it is to track, the more likely you are to stay on top of it.

Invest in lawyer referral marketing

Lawyer referral marketing takes effort, but referrals can be one of the most effective, affordable, and sustainable ways to drive more clients to your firm.

Start by delivering a positive client experience that makes your customers want to refer you, then make it easy for them to do so. Make an effort to build relationships and put yourself out there. Be sure to keep track of what's working (and what isn't). When referrals start to come in, complete the cycle and keep it rolling by thanking people for referring you, then giving new clients an experience that they want to share, too.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.