

## Family Matters

### Get more referrals by enlisting family and friends.

True or false?

- 1) The best way to get new clients is from referrals.
- 2) The people most likely to refer clients to you are your friends and family, because they know you the best and want to help you the most.

Statement No. 1 is true. Nothing's better than having a client be referred to you by someone they trust. Statement No. 2 should also be true, right? After all, who's more loyal than your friends and family? Well, it's false. And loyalty's got nothing to do with it.

The people who are most likely to refer you are your satisfied clients. Why? Because they know exactly what you do, how good you are at it, and can very easily identify others who could also benefit from your services. So, logic tells us that your friends and family don't refer you enough because they don't know these things about you.

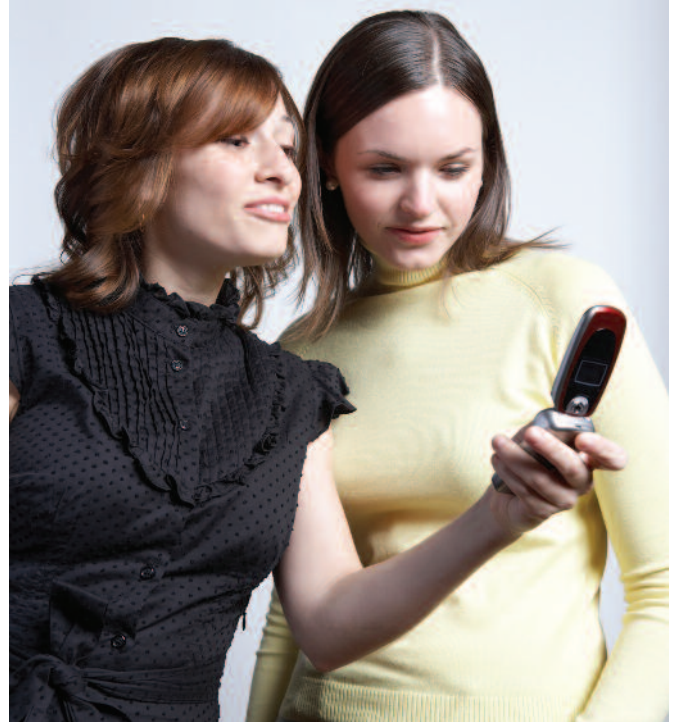
Of course, they *want* to help you. And perhaps they even *can* help you. You just have to give them a road map on how to do it. The first step is to have a conversation with them.

Let's say your Uncle Joe is a senior VP at a big software company. You know his company's got all kinds of events; you just don't know who's in charge, and it would be a big help to get an introduction from the inside. Plus, he's bound to know other people outside his company that he could introduce you to.

So you call him up and say, "Hey, Uncle Joe. This is your favorite niece calling. (Just because he's family doesn't mean you can't kiss up a little.) As you know I work for (or own) the ABC Event Business, and we're looking to grow. Most of our business comes from word of mouth, and I realize that some of my friends and relatives may not fully know what we do. So I thought maybe we could meet for coffee and I could give you a brief overview." Uncle Joe can't say no to this. You haven't asked him for anything, other than to take the time to learn what his niece does.

For your meeting with him, you've got to prepare the following:

- 1) Your elevator speech. That's a description of what you do in 30 seconds. And it has to be simple, not just simple enough for Joe to understand it, but simple enough for Joe to *remember* it, so he can repeat it to someone else.
- 2) Your bragging rights. That's another 30 seconds of factoids that prove to Joe you are good at your craft. Just because you're family doesn't mean he'll put his reputation on the line for you. But if Joe's convinced you're a stud, he'll go a lot further out of his way to recommend you. This can include awards you've won, recognizable clients you work with, articles you've been in and cool events you've done.
- 3) Job titles of your target client. It's not enough to say, "Introduce me to people who plan events," because Joe probably doesn't know who



they are. Make it easy for Joe, and tell him, "I see your firm does a sales conference; we service those events all the time. Our point person is typically the VP of sales. We also do training events, which are often handled by HR."

- 4) Visual aids. Events are very visual, and they help get people excited about what you do. I have videos and slideshows of my firm's event work on my iPhone so I can pull out photos any time.

If you do all of this you'll dramatically increase the odds that Uncle Joe will help you out. But the most likely response you'll get is, "Sounds fantastic, would love to help. If anyone asks me of course I would recommend you."

Do NOT settle for that. Why take Reactive Joe, if you can get Proactive Joe? If you want to double your odds of Joe making you an introduction, after rattling off the job titles of the people you want to meet, add, "So now that you have a better understanding of what I do, who do you think would be a good person for me to meet with?"

And then shut up. Do not open your mouth until Joe gives you a name. Joe will pause as he scratches his chin in thought, and the silence will kill you. But I pretty much guarantee you, when he opens his mouth he'll give you a lead.

I know it can seem awkward to pitch your friends and family like that. But look at it this way. (1) If your clients, who are really complete strangers, want to recommend you, why wouldn't your family? And if that doesn't motivate you, consider this. If you hesitate, one of your competitors may beat you to it. How'd you like to find out that your biggest rival just did a huge event for Uncle Joe's company? I'll tell you how it feels, it sucks. It happened to me once, and I felt like an idiot. So get out there and spread the good word, and make your friends and family happy; give them the ability to help someone they really care about. **es**

Howard Givner is a strategy and growth consultant to event business owners.

Email: [HowardGivner@gmail.com](mailto:HowardGivner@gmail.com).  
Blog: [www.HowardGivner.com](http://www.HowardGivner.com)

