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Must-Do Tips No 60 – Ramp Up Your Referrals

Life is tough...business development budgets are squeezed; sources of new clients are drying up. Trying to do more business with or through existing clients and contacts makes more sense than ever because of the economic crisis, and because taking risks with totally new suppliers is not very high on many clients' agendas. So why are so many professionals so meek when it comes to developing and asking for referrals?

Well, in our experience, some people just don't 'get it'. What they don't get is that they can and indeed should be asking their contacts for introductions to others who they can help. Other professionals associate 'it' with the conduct of networking and other outgoing business development pursuits - from which they habitually run a mile. In these much-straitened times, both attitudes could be career-threatening. This month, we offer three tips to help make the most of your referrals.

We are also publishing **Business development in recession** - a series of six articles focused on the downturn and how to survive it. These articles (there are five so far) are available **free** to Must-Do Tips readers. If you would like a copy, just hit 'Reply' and type either **Recognise the impact of recession (Part 1)**, **Re-orientating you and the firm (Part 2)**, **The blueprint for existing clients (Part 3)**, **The blueprint for prospective clients (Part 4)** or **Leadership's role (Part 5)**. If you wish to receive **all** of these and the final article when it is published, press 'Reply' and type **Business development in recession series**.

Tip 1 – recognise the potential

"Who could I possibly ask?" are the first words on some people's lips, as if the universe of potential referrers was but a small table of reluctant speed-daters. When you analyse it, the potential number of referrers for most professionals is extremely large when you consider that it consists of: existing client contacts - both specialist (e.g. Finance Directors, Heads of Legal) and in other disciplines (Sales, Marketing, HR etc.); similar client contacts who we have worked for (but may not be currently); as well as a bewildering array of third parties (e.g. intermediaries, other professional providers, relevant people in associations and other industry/sector entities). Get reluctant referral-gatherers to tot up just who they do know. Of course, not all of them are going to be 'live' referring prospects so..

Tip 2 - select the best

Prioritisation of referrers is a matter of applied common sense. So here's an applied common sense quiz. In our selection should we target a) new clients or contacts? Or b) those with whom we have an established track record?

Do we give priority to a) clients who are happy with the service that we provide? Or b) those who have a gripe or for whom the last transaction did not go so well? Finally, should we direct our efforts to a) those who are well connected both within and without their organisations? Or b) the organisational equivalents of Billy or Bertha No Mates? Answers on a postcard please.

Tip 3 - when to ask?

When and in what circumstances to pop the dreaded question? Make it easy for yourself by doing it at the end of a meeting (the business having been successfully concluded); over lunch or coffee (making best use of informality); or even at a post-transaction or relationship review meeting (using as a platform the wider discussion about the client or contact's current/planned business activities). Of course, how the question is popped is another matter..

Need to pep up the efforts of your business developing professionals? We work with professional firms in training and coaching to help improve performance. For more information, hit 'Reply' and type BD pep - or call us.

Of course you could always.....go to our website at www.peoplescope.com.

We welcome feedback on what you think about "Must-Do Tips". If you like it hit 'Reply' and tell us specifically what you have enjoyed. If there is a topic or issue that you would like us to cover what is it? And if there is something that annoys, tell us too! We want to improve.

Finally, if you do NOT wish to receive "Must-Do Tips", click on this link [\[unsubscribe\]click here to unsubscribe\[/unsubscribe\]](#). Or press 'Reply' and type 'Unsubscribe': we will do exactly that.

Best regards.

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