

Your Value Proposition and Its Impact on Refer-ability

How Your Sense of Purpose Makes You Referable

by Duncan MacPherson

As a business development consultant, I am often asked to critique a business owner's value proposition, mission statement or elevator speech. More often than not, my first observation is that the individual's attempts seem pretty much like everyone else. Even though they use words like "unique" and "differentiate", ultimately the communication is interchangeable, bland and easy to dismiss. Furthermore, the focus tends to be more on "What I do" and "How I do it", with very little emphasis on "Why I do it".

Don't get me wrong, your process and professionalism are key components to being attractive to high quality clients. But your purpose is just as important as your process. In other words, when the WHY is clear, the HOW and WHAT become that much more powerful. This is especially important when it comes to refer-ability. In order to increase the volume and quality of endorsements you receive, it doesn't really matter what you believe, what matters is that your clients and partners believe what you believe. Unless, and until they do, their ability to relay your value persuasively to someone else will be hampered.



Do you stand out?

There is an old saying in marketing, "facts tell, stories sell." This has never been more applicable than today as the commoditization of this industry continues to accelerate. Your value-proposition has to be interesting and engaging. To achieve that, when you are communicating your value, you have to put as much emphasis on you the messenger as you do the message. The services and solutions you provide are the message but you are the messenger. That's what people really lock into, and what differentiates you from the pack.

In my travels, I've noticed a trend that supports all of this undeniably. When it comes to referrals, there are really only two camps: the advisors who effortlessly attract referrals and build a business with 2nd, 3rd and even 4th generation clients. The other consists of advisors who hit a plateau and can't seem to get off the client-acquisition treadmill. Naturally my goal has been to determine what distinguishes these two groups of advisors. And while there are several distinctions and commonalities, the common thread I see is that the most refer-able financial advisors have a clearly defined sense of purpose and they communicate it consistently to their clients and strategic partners.

The question is, do your clients know why they should refer someone to you? Have you communicated why you will make yourself available to speak to a friend or family member of theirs? Are you clear as to why your clients aren't referring people to you now?

Again, **drive the concept of a referral with your sense of purpose.** Use a personalized variation of this scripting:

"Let me tell you why I make myself available to be a sounding board for a friend or family member of a client. I became a financial advisor to help people make informed decisions with their financial affairs. Financial success is a matter of choice, not chance. I like helping people make informed choices. Frankly this is the most fulfilling part of my job. Bottom line is this, if they are important to you, they are important to me. And you can hold me accountable that they will view this process as a tremendous investment of their time. And as you know, a friend or family member does not need become a client to take advantage of this service".



When you position the concept of a referral as a service you are providing rather than as a favor you are seeking and then drive it home with your sense of purpose, refer-ability is amplified. You don't look needy and your value is easy to describe to others.

Richard Branson, the legendary founder of the Virgin Group of Companies has provided us with many memorable quotes. But the one that supports the power of purpose best is this:

"Business has to enhance people's lives or it's simply not worth doing."

You enrich lives based on your philosophy and process. It's meaningful and it matters. When you communicate the fulfillment you get from delivering value to someone, you stand out from the pack, you are memorable, and you are more refer-able.

But I caution you, not everyone will get it. As Oscar Wilde said, "A cynic is someone who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing." Don't let the cynics dictate your approach. Find the people who share and value your approach and have an alignment of interests. These are the people who embrace you so completely that they feel they are doing a friend a disservice by not introducing them to you.