

Generate Leads with Ease

By Caterina Rando

There is a Chinese proverb that says “If you keep going in the same direction, you are going to end up where you started.” You have probably heard it said in a different way in the often-used adage: “If you keep on doing things the way you have been doing them, you will keep getting the same results.”

With that in mind, I am always looking for innovative ways to get better results – faster, and with less energy and resource output. One of the most challenging areas for people in business is generating qualified leads: finding potential clients for your products or services. Some traditional ways of generating leads include buying lists; this is expensive, and usually yields a small return. There is also the method of going to networking meetings, which costs you time and money. Then there is everyone’s least favorite, cold calling – which can be useless, unless you are highly skilled at it; if not, it can be demoralizing.

Looking for an effortless option and using research and technology, I have come up with a brilliant solution that will get you more leads in less time for pennies a day. This idea is innovative because it works for anyone, anywhere, on any budget.

In the “The Tipping Point” by Malcolm Gladwell, he cites studies that show that we easily remember seven things. For example, if I stood ten different people in front of you and then took them away, you would be able to easily recall seven of them. Additionally, I heard a researcher whose study showed that people in leads-exchange groups usually have seven people they are consistently exchanging reciprocal leads with. Therefore, working with seven other people is a time-tested principle.

Create a Circle of 8

Here’s how to do it: Identify companies or individuals providing a different kind of product or service from your business, who are seeking the same type of customer. For example, an interior designer who specializes in office design might invite into her Circle of 8 an architect, a painting contractor, a office-furniture dealer, an electrical contractor, a floor-covering firm, a landscape architect, and a lighting-fixtures company.

They would discuss what projects they are aware of in the new construction sector, as well as renovations of existing office buildings. They will share referrals to their current and past clients who might be interested in the other services provided by those in the circle. They will generate leads for each other.

Leads Are Organized and Instant

Send leads electronically as soon as you have them. This allows your Circle of 8 member to act immediately on any projects. Because everything is on your computer, you will stay much more organized than trying to find a business card someone handed you.

Meetings Are Virtual

Hold meetings over the phone on a conference or bridge line. Schedule a half-hour session every two or three weeks to stay connected, ask questions and exchange ideas. You can network with people from all over the country without leaving your office. In my Circle of 8, I have assembled eight experts/speakers from different regions around the country and Canada.

Pick the Best of the Best

You can partner with firms anywhere. Rather than partnering with a firm because they are close enough to meet you for lunch, you can seek out the best firm anywhere. You get to identify you would like in your Circle of 8.

Keep Up with the Latest

Your Circle of 8 will discuss innovations in your industry, provide each other with resources for the best new vendors, share cost-cutting and technology ideas, and let each other know about trade shows and other events of interest.

Share Marketing Expenses

After you get to know and trust each other, you may even want to do some cooperative marketing together in the form of a mailing or an ad in a publication that would be cost-prohibitive for each individual firm.

A Circle of Friends

Soon you and your seven new friends will seek each other out for advice and share resources with ease. You will find yourself coming up with innovative ideas for the other circle members. In essence, you and your business will have more support with the addition of your largely expanded sales force.

After only three months, a few of our members have closed large business projects; and we have all filled up our sales pipeline while also learning about resources that have our businesses running more effectively.

As a result of a referral from my Circle of 8, I will be speaking next month at a meetings-industry convention in Holland. Another Circle of 8 member sent me a valuable association directory because she had two copies of it. I have been given leads for media and bookstore contacts in cities I am traveling to, to promote my new book "Learn to Power Think." I have gotten recommendations for everything from printers to publicists. Also, I have some great new friends and mentors who are keeping me motivated and supporting me in my success.

With your Circle of 8, you have seven other people looking for opportunities that will advance you and your firm. You also have your official "grapevine" with seven other people listening out for what you might want to know that would affect you and your business. Start your Circle of 8 today, and tomorrow you will surely be generating leads with ease.

Caterina Rando, MA, MCC, is a success speaker, coach and author of "Learn to Power Think." She helps clients to create the results they want with ease. To find out about her book and other resources, visit <http://www.caterinar.com>. Caterina can be reached at 415-668-4535 or by email at cpr@caterinar.com.