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# How to win clients and influence referrals

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(MoneyWatch) What's the difference between a customer and a client? A customer might be there for a transaction, but a client is there for a special relationship. The term dates back to ancient Rome when citizens would attach themselves to an aristocratic patron for protection and clout. Patrons took care of their clients and they were rewarded for it.

This column is for all of you out there who make your living selling to clients and want to attract more of them. To attract new clients, the best approach is to prove your expertise by giving away valuable information through writing and speaking. Actually, that isn't

technically true. You should sell the information if you want to win clients and influence referrals. Here's how.

**1. Follow Dale's lead.** Unfortunately, many sales and marketing people who learn this truth find the idea of writing and speaking too daunting and even mysterious. Most feel this is only for a select few, but that is a miscalculated view. First comes the problem, then comes research, and finally presentation. Dale Carnegie is the role model to emulate. He wrote the original self-improvement book and was the first superstar of the self-help genre.

**2. Do your homework.** Carnegie wrote that he had searched for years to discover a practical, working handbook on human relations. He started by reading every scholarly book and magazine article he could find to ascertain how the great men and women of all ages had dealt with people. Then he interviewed scores of successful people to discover the techniques they used in human relations.

**3. Speak up.** From all that material, he prepared a short talk. He called it "How to Win Friends and Influence People" and it soon became a 90-minute lecture. Then the teacher learned from the students. Carnegie asked attendees to share their stories of how the principles helped them. First, he put the rules down on a postcard, which grew into a leaflet, then a series of booklets, each one expanding in size and scope. After 15 years of experiment and research came the book by the same title in 1937 as that original short talk. Of course, it has been a best seller ever since (if you haven't read it, you really should). The first edition had a print run of a mere 5,000, but the last time I checked it had sold more than 15 million copies.

**4. Be the expert.** During those 15 years of research, Dale Carnegie became the go-to guy for human relations. Thousands attended his training each year and he prospered. This also resulted in many consulting contracts. He is long gone, but his training company has continued to this day.

**5. Make them pay.** Those who sell high end services can fill a pipeline with qualified prospects in as little as 30 days by offering advice to prospects on how to overcome their most pressing problems. But don't do it for free. Charge for your seminars and the

information will be valued more by your potential clients. The burden is also on you to research great information.

This strategy also helps those people who know, like and trust you enough to refer business to you. You can make these people a special deal: if they know someone who would value what you have to say, then your referral source can offer comp admission to your events on a space-available basis. Look what this does. You make the referral source feel special because they can hook people up. The prospects who attend still value the information more because there is a charge for it, and they feel even better because they didn't have to pay.

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