

REALTORS® have many opportunities to ask clients to spread the word about their services, from the listing interview to the moment a sale closes. While referrals accounted for 21 percent of all business in 2013 according to the 2014 National Association of REALTORS® Member Profile, that number is much higher for some agents. Certainly, you shouldn't do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. CRSs who count on word-of-mouth advertising say they begin the process by building trust and offering exceptional service, but they also develop a referral-generating system based on instincts, timing and techniques that work for them.

HOW TO ASK

Sven Andersen, CRS, a RE/MAX Leading Edge Team Leader in Winchester, Massachusetts, stays in touch with hundreds of past clients and community members by hosting various annual social events. Despite his 15 years of experience, he shied away from asking for referrals until last year. What changed was a call he made to a former client to invite her to his annual client appreciation party. At the end of the call he asked her if she would mind referring him to others.

She did, and as a result of that call Andersen listed an \$850,000 house in Winchester and another in Arlington. "It was an aha moment," he says. "When I ask for the business, people actually give it to me."

Knowing that customers can be put off by direct requests to plug their business, CRSs often find subtler ways to encourage their contacts to achieve the same effect. Also a Broker Associate, Given, for instance, keeps a list of his top 50 business-producing contacts and places several calls a week to foster friendly relationships with them. Without directly asking, he allows his contacts to bring up referral possibilities and start the conversation for him.

Sometimes he's more direct. Based on advice from a successful CRS colleague, Given began inserting language into buyer and seller agreements, provided that they had previously worked together. It asks: "At least once if not twice, while we are working together, someone will mention in conversation that they need or will need the kind of service I provide. When that happens, and if you feel comfortable with it, would you recommend me, give them one of my cards and then give me a call to let me know that you recommended me?"

He leaves them business cards to enable the process. But Given also cautions agents to run any new contractual language by their company owner to ensure that it is both legal and appropriate.

BEST MEDIUMS

When it comes to newer media, CRSs are finding client video testimonials effective as a means of building trust among strangers. Katie Hesse, CRS, with Coldwell Banker West Shell, was working in Cedar Falls, Iowa, in 2011. Inspired by a Web developer she met at a CRS convention, she uploaded four videos to her website containing buyers tips and numerous client endorsements. After moving to Cincinnati in 2014, Hesse started receiving calls from buyers in her new location who had seen her videos online.

As consumers increasingly base purchasing choices on online reviews, CRS agents have also found various ways to nudge clients to post positive reviews on sites like Yelp or Zillow. Carl Medford, CRS, with Prudential California Realty in Castro Valley, California, says his team sends out emails to let clients know that a review would be appreciated; the email also describes steps to guide them through the review process. Once a transaction closes, they send multiple requests and often follow up with a call.

Sometimes they also have an independent third party call and ask for testimonials over the phone. "We get a lot of clients off Trulia because of the testimonials," he says.

Still, Medford's most successful tool is a monthly newsletter that he mails to about 1,100 families, which he says generates a quarter of his referrals. Also a real estate industry columnist, Medford includes inspiring stories about his family in the newsletter so that recipients can refer someone they feel they know.

REFERRAL GENERATING SYSTEM

- ➔ Be proactive
- ➔ Ask for referrals!
- ➔ Build trust
- ➔ Stay in touch with past clients
- ➔ Host social events
- ➔ Foster friendly relationships
- ➔ Show client appreciation
- ➔ Produce a newsletter
- ➔ Offer services

There are independent third party companies that can call and ask for testimonials.

Types of Referrals:

“It’s amazing how the universe works,” says Given. “When you plan and then you act, things happen. If you don’t ever create a system — then it’s just luck.” 

- ➔ Client video testimonials.
- ➔ Online reviews on sites like Yelp and Zillow
- ➔ Word of mouth

Clare Curley is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

 Learn more by taking the **Building an Exceptional Customer Service Referral Business** (<https://crs.com/education/courses/building-exceptional-customer-service-referral-business-crs-210>) course (CRS 210).



Now You Can Subscribe to The Residential Specialist E-Newsletter

STAY INFORMED
The Residential Specialist delivers the latest industry trends, success stories and proven strategies to grow your business.

Subscribe to *The Residential Specialist* e-newsletter for yourself or a colleague.

Note: Members of the Council of Residential Specialists receive the magazine and e-newsletter as part of their member benefits.

The advertisement features a preview of the magazine cover for March/June 2015. The cover includes the title 'The Residential Specialist' and several article teasers: 'Family Reunion', 'The Kids Are All Right', and 'Open-Door Policy'.

(<http://clicks.skem1.com/signup/?c=1aAcqh>)



GAINING THE EDGE

 **SELL-A-BRATION 2015**

FEBRUARY 16 - 17, 2015
PARIS LAS VEGAS • LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

The advertisement features a dark blue background with a stylized 'E' in the word 'EDGE' that has a yellow and blue gradient. The CRS logo is a shield with the letters 'CRS' inside.

(</component/banners/click/4.html>)

NEW CRS WEBINAR BUNDLES



[\(/component/banners/click/3.html\)](/component/banners/click/3.html)

[HOME \(/\)](#)

[FEATURES](#)

[DEPARTMENTS](#)

[INSIDE CRS](#)

[ABOUT US \(/ABOUT-US.HTML\)](/ABOUT-US.HTML)

[ARCHIVES \(/ARCHIVES.HTML\)](/ARCHIVES.HTML)

[CONTACT \(/CONTACT.HTML\)](/CONTACT.HTML)



[\(https://crs.com/\)](https://crs.com/)