

The Village Connector Community Marketing System



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effective relationship marketing!**

MEMBER HANDBOOK

The Village Connector Community Marketing System

Welcome to the Village Connector Community Marketing System. You are now a member of one of the most complete and powerful marketing systems available anywhere. We can say this with confidence because we created this program after exploring what was available to local business professionals elsewhere. We then created this system to fill in gaps left by other solutions we saw, to offer a complete, turnkey way for you to market your business.

One of the things that makes our system so powerful is that we are continually refining and expanding its capabilities to keep you on the cutting edge in your marketing. For that reason, you will want to refer frequently to our online Learning Center which is described in detail later in this handbook. Updates to the system will be regularly posted there for your convenience.

Organizational Philosophy

The Village Connector Community Marketing System is founded on principles that enhance human interaction and effectiveness. We believe business should be built on a firm foundation of relationships with other business professionals and with customers. We believe in celebrating the relationships in our lives by making them the focus and priority, rather than simply “making a sale.”

People do business with people they know, like, and trust, and we help you focus on letting people get to know you in a way that makes them want to do business with you. Conducting business with this philosophy as your guide will turn every customer and colleague into a missionary for you.

Membership Levels

We have three membership levels for participating merchants. Our members are not merely advertisers, but actual members of the Village Connector organization. Our marketing system is included in your membership. All of our members have full access to the tools and benefits described in the Membership Benefits section below. Additional benefits and privileges are available based on your membership level as noted in the membership descriptions below:

1) **Charter Members** – Charter Members are “lifetime” members who were one of the first twenty in their county to sign up for the one time fee membership level. Charter members, in addition to paying a one time flat fee to join our program receive these additional benefits:

- Detailed Charter Member bio on the front page of the newspaper for their county:
- Lifetime banner (\$50 graphics fee to create the banner – paid to third party graphic artist)

- Charter Member designation in the Consumers Win! Savings Club with priority placement of directory listing ahead of other listings in their category

We limit Charter Members to no more than 20 in each county, so these memberships are very exclusive. They get great additional visibility and attract much attention since no other marketing program has a similar membership status.

2) **Lifetime Members** – Lifetime members also pay a one time fee to join our program. We limit the number of Lifetime Members in each county to 40. The one time fee entitles members at this level to lifetime access and use of the member benefits below without paying recurring fees. Lifetime Members may also upgrade to a lifetime banner for a one time fee.

3) **Basic Members** – Basic members enjoy all the benefits listed below and pay a one time setup fee and a small monthly fee ongoing to participate in the program. The fee is very affordable when compared to other services that offer benefits similar to ours. Participation as a basic member is month-to-month, and you do not have to make a long term commitment to participate.

4) **Complimentary Memberships** – From time-to-time, we offer special promotions that allow certain industries in certain communities to participate in our Basic Membership free of charge, provided that they agree to honor the Consumers Win! Savings Club card. Members at this level can have what amounts to a perpetual Basic Membership for as long as they accept and honor the 10% discount for Consumers Win! Savings Club members.

These memberships are limited in number and are usually made available when we are launching the program in a new community.

If you have questions about your membership level, or if you have an interest in upgrading to a higher level please contact us immediately.

Membership Benefits

The Village Connector Community Marketing System

Our system includes many benefits from a variety of features. Don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed by all the things you can do. You may not use every tool we provide immediately, but there will be some that you will want to devote your attention to pretty quickly. We will alert you to those later. Let's take a quick look at the components of the system and then review them in greater detail. Your new community marketing system includes:

- Merchant Network, Learning Center and coaching program
- Village Connector Community News
- Consumers Win! Savings Club

- Charitable giving program
- Internet radio show
- Referral University relationship building follow up system
- Village Connector Community social network
- Affiliate program

We promote you and the newspaper using a variety of marketing outlets including:

- Social Media Marketing on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube and other popular social networks
- TV ads
- Direct mail
- Community outreach
- Mobile signage

Below we will cover each component in the system in greater detail and suggest some action items for your consideration.

Village Connector Merchant Network

My experience with business networking events and organizations has led me to believe that the vast majority of business professionals receive no formal training in maximizing the value of their people network. The Village Connector Merchant Network is designed to make sure you do not miss opportunities to get the most out of the relationships you enjoy with other professionals and with your customers.

We have adopted a social networking platform as our communications system for the Merchant Network because it provides the most flexibility with respect to communications and content distribution to aid you in your marketing and relationship building efforts. The social network itself features:

- Your own personal profile designed specifically to allow people to get to know you and your business;
- Internal communications tools including messaging, group chat, and instant messaging;
- Multi-media Learning Center featuring training and resources on topics related to relationship marketing;
- Marketing coaching program
- Community forums for active discussion and brainstorming with other members
- Groups feature for collaboration with strategic alliance partners

ACTION ITEMS:

1) Be sure to set up and complete your profile in detail. You can access the sign up by visiting any edition of the newspaper, including the main Village Connector page, and

selecting “Merchant Network” from the “Member Login” dropdown button on the menu bar.

Nobody wants to make referrals to someone who doesn't take the time to put their best foot forward. A complete profile with details on your and your business shows people you are serious about your business and serious about working with them.

2) Listen to the audio trainings in the “Using Village Connector” section of the Learning Center. It will bring you up to speed quickly on how the system components can be used to maximize their effectiveness for you.

3) Reach out and introduce yourself to other members, especially the ones who are in the county(ies) where you participate in the program. Our other training modules in the Learning Center will equip you with ideas on working together with our members. Be sure to commit yourself to learning as much as you can as quickly as you can.

4) Post your marketing questions in the marketing coaching forum. We will answer those questions and post them in the Learning Center for you to listen to at your convenience.

The Village Connector Community News

Our “digital” newspaper is perhaps one of the most attractive components of our program, but remember you will get more out of it if you take the time to understand how all the parts work together to provide you a complete marketing solution. The main highlights of the system are:

- Ability to write articles on topics of interest to your ideal clients;
- Red Hot Deals (online coupon system)
- Village Connector Daily Deal
- Events calendar
- Village Connector Radio

Village Connector Community News - The attraction of online newspapers is growing at the same time as print newspapers are declining in popularity. You have the good fortune of being associated with one that offers you a value you simply cannot get elsewhere. Whether you choose to write your own column or just an article or two on a periodic basis you now have a compelling way to reach customers in your community and let them get to know you better.

Actively participating in the newspaper is a good use of your time because the more activity there is on the site the more traffic it draws and the more attention your bio, your ads and your articles get in the process. We believe the newspaper is the ultimate way to increase the size of your network, to strengthen relationships with people in your network and to increase the frequency of contact you have with those people, so you are always on their minds at a time when they can use your services.

The Red Hot Deals coupon system - Our coupon system is like a digital coupon circular, except that it's organized categorically so people can easily find exactly what they need. Unlike other coupon circulars, you are not limited in the number of coupon deals you can offer. We recommend that you offer three types of deals to get started.

First, offer a deal that is available only to first time customers to get new people to take a look at your products and services. Call it a new customer welcome so old customers don't feel slighted. Second, offer a deal that's only available to Consumers Win! Savings Club members. This can simply be an additional amount off an existing deal or a completely separate deal. Third, do a deal that is limited as to time and/or quantity.

Village Connector Daily Deal – The Daily Deal is similar to some of the group buying programs you see out here like Groupon, Living Social and Buy with Me. The difference is that you control the terms of your deal not us. As long as you offer at least 50% off the product or service you can set the available quantity, the length of the deal, and any other terms you wish to add. Your deal will be on the front page of the newspaper where it's featured for the day and then will be available in the Daily Deal archive for people to see until it expires.

Unlike other group buying sites, you do not have to split your earnings with us. Doing a Daily Deal is free (as of March 2011) and is available on a first come first served basis. At some point it will require a small flat fee to run your deal, but it will save you a bunch to not split your sales with us.

ACTION ITEMS:

1) Write an article on something related to your area of expertise, or write on a topic that would be of interest to people who use your product or service. Consider writing an article about one of your clients or a good referral source and make them "neighbor of the week". If you do not have the capacity to write articles due to time or talent, please contact us so we can recommend a qualified freelance writer who can assist you. We have negotiated special pricing for our clients which is typically about \$15 per article.

Submit your article to the email address specified in the "Article Submission Guidelines" section of the newspaper for your county. The guidelines are located under the "About" tab in the menu bar.

2) Submit a special promotion regularly for our Red Hot Deals program. You have the ability to do so daily if you like so take advantage of that tool. Red Hot Deals should be sent to the email address for your state's deals. That address is "redhotdeals@villageconnector.com", preceded by your state's two digit abbreviation. Example, Maryland Red Hot deals should be sent to:

"mdredhotdeals@villageconnector.com".

3) Use the events calendar to promote grand openings, open houses and other events you offer for the public. Events should be sent to the email address for your state's events. That address is "events@villageconnector.com", preceded by your state's two digit abbreviation. Example, Maryland events should be sent to "mdevents@villageconnector.com".

4) Submit a Daily Deal to be featured in the newspaper. Plan ahead and get us your deal at least 15 days before you want it to run. Village Connector Deals should be sent to the email address for your state's deals. That address is "dailydeal@villageconnector.com", preceded by your state's two digit abbreviation. Example, Maryland Daily Deals should be sent to "mddailydeal@villageconnector.com".

Consumers Win! Community Savings Program

Our Consumers Win! Savings Club connects you with consumers in your area who like belonging to a program that saves them money when they shop. We create a profile for you in a special shopping directory featuring only the merchants who participate in our program.

Links to the directory are prominently displayed throughout the newspaper site for your community, including a "shopping" link on the front page. Your business is also listed in our Village Connector smart phone application which allows Consumers Win! Savings Club members to locate participating merchants from a geo-locator map on their cell phones.

The program helps local merchants compete with Internet merchants who can typically offer lower pricing because their overhead is lower. Our program helps keep local residents shopping where they live and recaptures business you are losing to the Internet.

As a member of the Village Connector Community Marketing System you participate in the Consumers Win! Savings Club free of charge. That entitles you to a comprehensive directory listing. Your profile is searchable by visitors who can look for you based on industry, location, and other criteria you select. All you have to do is agree to honor a 10% discount off your regular pricing when Consumers Win! Savings Club members present their membership cards at the time of purchase.

ACTION ITEM:

1) Make sure your employees know about the program and know to accept the membership card for the 10% discount. Never put the customer in the uncomfortable position of having to ask if you accept the card.

Charitable Giving Program

Our charitable giving program truly distinguishes us from every other marketing system out here. It is perhaps the most meaningful way for you to establish a relationship of trust

with consumers in your community. Charities, non-profits, and community organizations of all types are eligible to participate in this program.

Depending on your membership type you get to donate between 100 to 500 membership cards to the Consumers Win! Community Savings Program to a charity of your choice. The charity sells the membership cards at their \$20.00 face value and they keep all the proceeds. That keeps it simple and profitable for the organizations who participate and they'll be thinking of you the whole time.

We list the charities who participate in the fundraising program on the newspaper site so they get publicity just for working with us. Of course, consumers who purchase the card then search the directory to see where they can save money, so it's like having your favorite charity become part of your sales force. And, they are rewarded very well with the revenue raised for their organization!

Some charities are not equipped to sell the cards themselves, so we also allow community members to sell cards as an income opportunity provided that they donate \$5.00 of each sale to one of our participating charities. This way, you can designate a charity who cannot do a fundraiser, but who would like to benefit from the program.

ACTION ITEM:

- 1) Identify a charity or organization to receive your card donation. Contact them and introduce yourself. Explain that you'd like to donate the cards for a fundraiser for them and make sure they are willing to do a fundraiser with us. Contact us with their contact information and we will work with them to conduct the fundraiser.
- 2) Buy a Consumers Win! membership card from the charity you designate and use it when you shop!

Referral University

There is no better way to develop a relationship with other business professionals than to take a sincere interest in them. One way to do that in a hurry is to help them generate more business for themselves. Our Referral University relationship marketing training system is your way to get business relationships off to a flying start.

The program features most of the content that is located in the Learning Center for you, minus our coaching program recordings which we reserve exclusively for members. As a member of the program you have the ability to offer any of your business colleagues, clients, or referral sources a complimentary membership to Referral University so they can benefit from what you are learning in the members Learning Center.

We will create an account for them that includes over 25 hours of training on all aspects of relationship marketing, business networking, social media marketing and more. Being the

one to extend this gift will immediately distinguish you from every other business professional they will meet and that's what builds relationships.

Don't worry! We only use the information you submit to set them up with their membership. We will never sell, trade, share, or otherwise disclosure their information to anyone else.

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1) Make a list of colleagues or customers who you would like to extend a gift of the Referral University program and submit your list to us with their full name and email address.
- 2) Send an email to your colleagues to let them know to expect to see the gift in their inbox.

Questions and more?

As you will see over time, we continually update and enhance the program so don't be surprised to see new tools and strategies pop up from time to time. We also welcome your suggestions on ways we can improve upon the system. In fact, most of our enhancements come from the suggestions of our members, so please share your feedback so we can keep this program the most powerful marketing system available.

If you have questions or if you require more information about the Village Connector Community Marketing System please contact us directly:

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Very truly yours,

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VILLAGE CONNECTOR COMMUNITY MARKETING SYSTEM

ACTION ITEM CHECKLIST

The action items have been assembled in the order we recommend you do them, not necessarily the order they appear in this handbook. Please check them off as you complete them. Some of them make sense to work into a daily or weekly routine like giving away the Referral University gift account, posting a Red Hot Deal or writing articles for your newspaper column. The most important thing is to be consistent as that is what generates results.

- ___ Complete your merchant network profile in detail.
- ___ Listen to Learning Center audio trainings in “Using Village Connector”.
- ___ Set the Village Connector for your community as your home page in your browser
- ___ Reach out and introduce yourself to other members (don’t try to sell anything!).
- ___ Submit a special promotion regularly for our Red Hot Deals program.
- ___ Contact us to be featured on Village Connector Radio.
- ___ Contact and designate a charity or organization to receive your card donation.
- ___ Post your marketing questions in the marketing coaching forum.
- ___ Write a weekly article on a topic or about people you meet.
- ___ Connect with another member and edit each other’s articles before submission
- ___ Post events to the events calendar.
- ___ Give at least one person a day a complimentary membership to Referral University.
- ___ Attend the next Village Connector Mastermind meeting in your community to discuss ideas with other members.
- ___ Visit the Village Connector daily - re-tweet or re-post articles written by other members.
- ___ Meet in person or use the discussion forums to find out how others are using the system to build their businesses.