



# What Can Brand Advocates Do For You?

## *A Closer look at Referrals*

**Consumers talk.** Technology and social media sites facilitate their desire to talk more. **Every company has brand advocates out there who they need to know and leverage.** One of the simplest, quickest routes to building a Brand Advocacy Program that delivers almost instantaneous ROI, is a **Referral Management Program.**

There seems to be a consensus that referrals are the best form of leads. Whether you are an individual sales rep, a small business, a non-profit or a large Fortune 500 corporation, referrals can and should be an important mainstay of your business. It seems logical to figure out a systematic and proactive way to increase referrals. In order to do that, you must understand the process of how referrals happen.

I went to work for IBM in 1976 and have been in sales for different technology businesses and ventures since. I have been fortunate to learn from and know some of the best sales and marketing people in the world from companies like IBM, Oracle, Intel, Proctor and Gamble and many, many others. Almost all of them have something in common – they were and are VERY good at generating referrals. I have long been a student of the referral process and would like to share some thoughts on how they do it.

**1. They network.** Building a large network of people who know of you and what you do is very important to the referral process. It is important because not only does the network become potential buyers of your product and services, they also become potential Brand Advocates. Whether meeting

people at Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce or at the local pub, these people are very good at telling everyone about what they were doing – their friends, family, customers and even strangers. They know that the more people who know what they do, the better the chance of this network telling others about them. They know it is a numbers game and the larger the network, the greater the chance of success.

**2. They motivate their network to tell their friends about their products and services.** Very simply put, they asked their network for referrals. Most great reps never leave a meeting, business or personal, without asking for a referral. One of the most staggering statistics that I have heard is that between 80% - 90% are willing to refer leads if asked, yet less than 20% of people and companies ask for them. The great ones ask and ask often. Guess what – it works! There are others that take it to the next level; they actually compensate for leads. Compensation is a great motivator (just ask a majority of the 17 million commissioned sales reps in the US), and many of the great ones build professional referral networks where they compensate people and companies for leads referred to them that turn into business.

If we all agree that referrals are one of the best forms of leads, then why doesn't every organization have systems in place to generate more of them? And the answer is quite simple. Until recently, it was just too hard to do.

But today, there are companies that offer technology infrastructures that empower customers and employees to reach out to their friends. You can now reach 500

“friends” with the click of a mouse. We have systems to entice them, to nurture them (games, contests, rewards) and we have systems to track and manage the process. We can now measure success and we can now see how powerful this channel really is for driving new business and acquiring new customers.

***This is one thing that hasn't changed since 1976: Referrals still work. Well.***

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*Dick Beedon has spent over 30 years in the technology arena. During that time, Dick acted as the principal financial and strategic architect in the successful formation, funding, growth and sale/IPO of 3 companies. Dick is the Founder of Amplifinity, a technology company that automates the process of promoting and managing brand advocacy and word-of-mouth. Dick's vision is for Amplifinity to help enterprise clients engineer viral growth by mobilizing their customers, partners and employees into a powerful sales and marketing channel.*

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