

4 Myths Attorneys Believe About Referrals by Stephen Fairley

At The Rainmaker Institute, we specialize in helping small and solo legal practitioners generate more revenue and find new clients fast. One of the things we are most frequently asked is: "**How do I find more clients?**"

The answer to this question is deceptively simple, yet amazingly complex to resolve.

Referrals are near the top of the list when it comes to the best ways of finding new clients. But there are 4 common myths we would like to dispel about referrals:

1. Clients are the best source of referrals. This surprises a lot of legal professionals when I tell them this is a myth. Clients are simply the most obvious source of referrals, not the best source. There are simply too many variables you cannot control when trying to get more referrals from clients: Do they know all the different services you offer? Can they accurately explain who your ideal target market is? Will they remember you when they meet someone who needs your legal services? Did they just receive a large bill from you? Every legal practice should have a client education plan that positions your law firm, explains what you offer and keeps your current clients informed as to what's going on in your firm (we will show you how to do this in a future issue), but most legal professionals find referrals from current clients happens haphazardly, not consistently.

2. Most referrals come from other attorneys. According to industry research, 25% of an established attorneys practice comes from referrals from other legal professionals, so logically about 75% of your clients will come from other sources (this may vary greatly by practice area). A good tip is to set up an easy tracking system as part of your client intake file and then review on a quarterly basis where those leads came from.

3. Online legal directories produce a lot of referrals. There is some indication that white collar workers are starting to use online legal directories as a screening mechanism and they may even view attorneys who are listed in the directory as "more qualified" than attorneys who are not. Generally speaking, local and state bar directories are more effective, but most non-bar-affiliated online directories have become the equivalent of online yellow pages and do not offer any more benefits than advertising in a telephone book.

4. Formal networking is a great way to get more referrals. Over the years of helping legal professionals, we have found that formal networking events (like trade shows and chamber of commerce, etc) work exceptionally well for a select group of attorneys— and not at all for most attorneys. There are a couple

reasons why: (1) they attend the wrong kind of group—one filled with their peers not their prospects; (2) most people don't know how to network properly and so it becomes a game to see how many business cards you can pass out in 2 hours; and (3) there is no plan for following up in a timely manner. You have 48 hours to follow up with a "hot lead" or they will likely forget about you. If you are a small or solo law practitioner or just starting out, we do recommend trying out a formal leads groups, like Business Networking International (<http://www.BNI.com>), depending on your legal practice area.

Stephen Fairley is an international best-selling author of 10 books and 5 audio programs, including [Practice Made Perfect for Lawyers \(2005\)](#) and [Becoming a Rainmaker: Business Building Strategies for Lawyers](#). Stephen has spoken to thousands of attorneys at state and local bar associations on topics related to marketing strategies for solo practitioners and small law firms. Sign up to receive Stephen's report "Top 10 Mistakes Attorneys Make and How to Avoid Them" at www.rainmakerretreat.com