

Charge More Sell More

— BLUEPRINT —

HOW TO GET 3 NEW CLIENTS THIS MONTH

Clients come and go. That is just an inevitable part of coaching life—and if your clients don't graduate, you know you're doing something wrong. But in a business where the average stable of coaching clients often doesn't exceed more than five or six a month (and sometimes less), seeing a client leave can create anxiety because of the monthly gap you now have to fill.

What's more, you don't want to fill that gap with the first prospect that comes along. Taking on a client for the sole reason of filling a hole in your monthly income can be risky business. What if you land the sort of client that drains your energy or doesn't take action on your suggestions? That sort of client can do your coaching practice more harm than good: You won't get glowing referrals from an overly-needy client, and she may even end up bad-mouthing you—blaming you for her own inability to follow through on your coaching.

Now imagine a business where you have clients on a waiting list: Where your focus is to help each client graduate as quickly and happily as possible, so you can help the next client waiting in line.

Imagine a business where every client leaves you feeling energized and inspired, your confidence soaring and your bank account always solvent.

Wouldn't it be a relief to be able to fill any gap in your practice, at any given time? No more stress. No more anxiety over gaps in your income: And most of all, no more hits to your confidence or reputation because you felt you had to take on a client you secretly suspected was going to be trouble.

It's a real dilemma that almost every coach faces, especially when just starting out in practice: Balancing attracting the best type of client with the overwhelming need to fill income gaps when an existing client leaves. But today I'm going to share seven strategies that will set you up to not only fill that gap, but also attract quality clients.

Step One: Ask for Personal Referrals

The simplest way to land a new client quickly: Just ask your existing clients to recommend you.

The most natural way is also the least stressful. Just keep alert for praises or expressions of gratitude from your current clients. These types of comments often occur at the end of sessions, and they set you up perfectly to say something like: "I'm really glad I could help you. It's easy when I have someone as ready to take action on things we decide as you are. I love helping clients like you: In fact, if you

know anyone who you think might benefit from my coaching, I'd love it if you would recommend me."

If you are coaching your client in person, add: "In fact, may I give you a couple of my business cards? I'd appreciate it if you could pass them on to any of your friends who are as rewarding to work with as you!"

If you haven't been asking for referrals, ask yourself if you're falling prey to these two common hang-ups:

- You feel uncomfortable asking, as if you are pressuring your client
- You don't know how to ask without feeling greedy, needy or gauche

But asking current clients for referrals is an opportunity too good to miss. Chances are their family, friends or business peers have noticed a change for the better: In the way they communicate, their confidence levels and all those other areas that benefit from positive, effective coaching. Because of this, your own chances of getting a referral that converts to a client are much higher than normal. So don't blow this opportunity: Counsel yourself just as you would counsel a client, and don't let those negative self-messages intimidate you!

By all means, wait until your client has at least three or four sessions under her belt. Sometimes, we feel awkward because we ask too soon: For example, at the end of an introductory strategy session or after the client's first regular session, when she is enthusiastic but may still not trust you one hundred percent.

That's not to say that you should never ask early: Especially if the introductory call was part of a closed forum offer, where people understand that referrals may be asked for. But do gauge your client. A good way to know: If she is specific in what she is enthusiastic about after an introductory strategy session or first session. If she's just making happy noises but isn't sure what she's happy about in your coaching, it's probably not the right time yet.

Another great time to ask: When a client reports a concrete, measurable achievement—the sort that her peers are likely to notice. First congratulate your client and compliment her on the steps she took to get such great results. Then ask for that referral.

It's important to find a way to ask for referrals that feels comfortable for you. Okay, so it's maybe not going to feel natural the first few times, but stick with it! Practice makes perfect—as a coach, you know this yourself. You can't ask your clients to stretch out of their comfort zones and still cling to yours, right?

Each time you ask, you'll subconsciously tweak and refine what you say; and how and when you ask. It will become easier and easier.

If you're still not convinced, remember there are thousands of coaches who do ask—and do so comfortably. What do we usually call these types of coaches? Successful!

One coach I heard of even had it printed on his business card: “Your best thanks is a recommendation!”

And many coaches are even more up front about asking for referrals: They offer a commission or even provide forms—or links to referral forms in “thank you” emails.

If you do offer a cash commission, however, be aware that you do run a slight risk of having people recommended to you that are not ideal clients—particularly if the commission is a generous one.

And if you belong to a specific coaching organization, do make sure that offering commissions for referrals is not against that organization’s rules or code of ethics.

If you’re still balking at asking for referrals, perhaps it’s the word itself that is tripping you up: “Referral” may feel that you’re focusing on your own needs, and that may be the source of your discomfort.

Ask for an “introduction” instead. And introduction puts the focus on the person you’re being introduced to: The unspoken assumption there is that you are a person who can help them.

Finally, do remember that you can also simply run an affiliate program. This isn’t appropriate for every field, but more and more coaches are doing this nowadays: Especially those who work solely online.

But really, you don’t have to bribe or pay people for recommendations. You just have to look for opportunities and practice. Asking for referrals will become a habit if you persevere. Soon, you won’t think twice and you’ll recognize those opportunities to ask with infallible instinct.

Step Two: Follow Up with Former Clients

In addition to asking current clients for referrals, don’t neglect your former clients. Some of them may be timid about asking you for another set of coaching session; or may not even realize they want more—until you ask: That is, give them the opportunity.

You can be flexible with the way you do this. If you’re comfortable with telephoning, ring them up and do a progress check. If they are ecstatically happy with the results they’ve achieved under your coaching and don’t have any current problems, ask for that referral: But if they tell you they are struggling with something, this puts you in a perfect position to say something like: “As it happens, I do have some coaching slots free at the moment, if you’d like to book a session, we can deal with that little challenge.”

If you’re not comfortable with cold-calling, send a follow up email instead. This is the perfect chance to show your old client you are thinking about her; and that the relationship didn’t just end when her last batch of sessions did. (In fact, maintaining that relationship through email follow up should be something you are already doing.)

Don’t ask vague, open-ended questions, however: Give your old client a definite opportunity, time, method or place to contact you and receive further coaching.

For example:

- Send an email offering a “tune up” session. (You can even reward old clients by offering them a “special” price—you can finish off the special-price session with an invitation to sign up for regular coaching again, if you think they need it—or if they express the wish.)
- Create a new package; let your old clients know about it and include instructions on how to sign up.
- Create a short survey at a site such as SurveyMonkey, invite old clients to give you feedback through it—and finish off with an invitation to return for coaching, should they wish to.

(If you do use a site like SurveyMonkey, however, sign up for one of their paid plans, so you can collect email addresses, as well as brand your surveys with your own logo and colors.

Remember, too, you can also use app sites like Woobox if you want to embed a poll right in a web page (perhaps a hidden one that you can invite old clients by email to visit). Or create a poll for your Facebook page, or mobiles.

Whatever strategy you employ, make it crystal-clear to your former clients that your offer is meant to reward—and help—them. You’re doing something nice for them by inviting them to reconnect: Particularly if there’s a special deal they can enjoy.

And as with referrals, find the right moments for you to ask. In some cultures, bugging old clients is simply not done, and that’s okay: But do make sure you’re not asking for a legitimate reason like the example just mentioned—and not just because you’re uncomfortable asking.

Step Three: Offer Free Training

Host a free call or webinar offering training that leads straight to your coaching program.

There are all sorts of opportunities in every field or area of life to do this. For example, if you are a Social Media coach, the next time a social network is about to bring in a huge change, be ready with a simple online coaching session to show people how to easily adapt. Then finish off with an invitation to learn more about becoming a social media celebrity with your new coaching package or group coaching membership site or course.

Or if you are a Public Speaking coach, offer a webinar promising ten sure-fire tips on overcoming paralyzing fear; then introduce your new Speaking Naturally Webinar Course.

Or if you are a Publishing Coach, offer a webinar showing your ideal client how to solve a specific pain-point, like the Three Top Ways for Easy, Foolproof Formatting of Kindle Picture Books; then introduce or invite them to join your Kindle Mastermind Coaching Group at the end of the webinar.

If you are a member of any groups related to your field, you can offer free training for group members. While this might not instantly generate a new client, what it does do is put you naturally and automatically in the position of being THE go-to person for your specialty in that group. After all, you’re

the one who showed them how to do something—not the peers who were ten steps ahead of you.

Next time they have a question, they'll ask you. Next time someone asks them who can help with a problem they don't service, they'll think of you.

These are just a few examples. For your own practice and field, remember the basic principle of focusing on the area your ideal potential client is feeling the most current discomfort with: Her real "pain-point". Then offer to solve a particular aspect of that—one that will provide real help immediately—in your free webinar or teleseminar.

Step Four: Make the Most of Live Events

Do you attend conferences and other live events? Know of several coming up in the following year? Offer to speak at a live event for free—or for a fee, if you are an experienced speaker.

At the conclusion of your presentation, offer free fifteen-minute, one-on-one sessions—and don't wait for emails: Pass around a sign-up sheet. (The most effective time to get those signatures is when your potential client is still all fired up from your presentation; not three days later, when she's home with jet lag or frantically trying to catch up her regular workload.)

If your need is more urgent, don't wait for a live event to happen: Put one on yourself! Offer a workshop in a church basement or library—you can often use these for free, or for a very low fee in many communities, particularly if you are offering something that specifically benefits a community group or cause.

Invite local prospects to your workshop. You can even open this up to a wider audience, while slanting the conclusion of your presentation to only your ideal potential clients. Plus, giving a live presentation for a wider audience can often present you with unexpected opportunities to reach a new ideal demographic you aren't even aware exists.

When you do give your fifteen-minute sessions, however, be sure to keep them tightly focused on achieving a single specific goal, rather than giving a generic "taste" of coaching. If you can show someone how to overcome something, give her a method or strategy she can implement or help her come up with a third alternative to an insoluble "either-or" problem, you will have her secretly clamoring to sign up for more results!

Don't neglect to attend—or even present—live events. These can often be the fastest, most instant source of new clients.

Step Five: Create Something Special Just for Your Email Subscriber List

If you have an active email subscriber list—and especially if you have many non-clients signed up for tips, updates or your newsletter—then email your list with an offer for a special three-call package or "taste of coaching" package.

Again, even if you do go with the “taste of coaching”, do make sure you brainstorm with your clients to come up with achievable small goals during this tasting session.

The key here lies in remembering who you are targeting. Does your list consist entirely or predominantly of old or current clients? Or does your list consist of those who can’t afford coaching or don’t have time, but do enjoy your tips or newsletter.

Slant your special towards your unique subscriber list’s own pain-points, as well as making it address objections—and weed out those who can’t afford your special package deal. (In fact, signing up for a three-call package will deter the “freebie seekers” and those not ready for coaching far better than a free strategy session.

Making people pay is the surest way to attract only clients who can afford you—and clients who can’t afford you are the ones who are going to be leaving you with gaps.

Remember to use keywords in your emails—especially in the subject lines—to attract the right sort of potential clients and repel the wrong ones. As a coach, what you don’t need are time-wasters, draining your energy and confidence.

Do it right, and your special offer will end up:

- Being less work
- Being more enjoyable
- Attracting desirable clients who are easily able—and willing—to pay

Step Six: Find a Partner

If you’re not in the internet marketing field, you may not be too aware of JV partnering, or “joint venture partnering”.

This is far less intimidating than a formal “partnership”. All it means is that you and another coach—not your direct rival but someone who complements what you do—get together and provide a special offer for both your client bases.

This can be a great opportunity to bring in an expert to help teach your specific client base something you don’t specialize in, but that they really want to learn. And vice versa, on your JV partner’s side.

You can have just one JV partner or several.

You can create live events—online or at a geographic location—that offer a round table or panel of experts: A coaching “summit”.

The beauty of partnering with multiple experts lies in the rich value each partner adds to the mix. (If one expert is good, six are better. Or even two.)

You can then naturally and easily:

- Interview each other
- Provide recordings of each other's presentations
- Sell these recordings after the live event is over, creating on-demand resources that will bring you and your partners passive income
- Use each other's recordings as "bonuses" for each other's packages or offers

And best of all, you've just networked and cemented a relationship with a JV partner who will now automatically think of referring clients to you and teaming up for future special events—as a special guest at your next V.I.P Day, for example.

Step Seven: Network—Live!

Other types of live events that can provide you with instant, major cash boosts—and that you can plan at your convenience—are V.I.P Days or Mastermind Retreats.

Not only does this give you the perfect opportunity to invite old clients to attend, giving them the correct impression they are your elite—successful graduates of your inner circle—but they may welcome the top-level attention. And if your coaching has been successful, they will easily be able to afford these types of special events.

A V.I.P Day can take place online, with two or three calls spaced over the day and breaks or assignment time in between. Or it can take place offline, at your physical "bricks-and-mortar" office.

And while V.I.P Days are great—your clients will love them and you can charge a top-level fee—Mastermind Retreats can be even more stimulating and lucrative, since you will be focusing on a small, elite group rather than on one individual.

This creates far more opportunity for gaining "introductions" and referrals along with creating networking opportunities, particularly if you bring in guest experts.

In fact, you should be on the lookout for opportunities to network, 24/7. Any time someone asks you what you do, just have a specific, upbeat answer ready.

Keep it simple. Something like:

"I coach people who need/want to _____ to [achieve that goal] by _____."

Join local organizations whose members could benefit from your coaching.

Donate a free coaching session to a community business group or organization, the next time they hold an event or fundraiser. (And they will! Holding special events and asking for donations of goods or services is endemic to community organizations.)

Volunteer to speak at the next event. (And remember to offer your free fifteen-minute sessions and pass around that sign-up sheet!)

Finally, there's another powerful and effective way to network: This time with your own coaching peers.

- Create a Referral Group.

The way to do this ethically and successfully is to invite other coaches who share the same target market, but whose services are complementary or have a different focus and goal from yours.

It works like this: Perhaps you coach clients in spiritual healing through meditation, but a potential client comes to you actually wanting to learn a specific healing technique such as Reiki (or an existing client is ready to change directions and explore Reiki).

You don't want to have to learn Reiki, but Susan, a member of your referral group, is a Reiki master and lives to teach. You refer that particular potential client to her.

A month later, she is approached by someone who really wants to diffuse stress, rather than learn to be a Reiki practitioner. Susan recommends her to your Healing Meditation program.

The best way to approach running a referral group is to focus on the clients: On pooling your resources to help the maximum number of potential clients in the ways they most need it—as opposed to focusing on “helping each other make money”.

When your group's focus is on matching the right client with the right coach for their highest benefit, groups like this can be energizing, dynamic and highly effective.

And they naturally grow, as people hear about the group and its high referral rate.

There's one last networking strategy that's perhaps the most important of all: And that is avoiding the fatal mistake of ignoring the whole client renewal issue.

Think about it: You've already worked with this particular client. You've built up a rapport. You've gained her trust. You've helped her achieve measurable results. Why wouldn't she want to extend her coaching?

And this is where some coaches make a mistake:

- They don't demonstrate the value of continued coaching to existing clients

Oh, I didn't say they don't ask. But simply asking if a client wants to continue with a new coaching package is vastly different from letting her know exactly which new gains, achievements and benefits she can expect to reap from continuing her coaching.

(In other words, give her an irresistible reason to stay—or return.)

Always let your departing clients know what they are going to miss if they don't renew. Do consider offering special rates for a further commitment—a rate that will still create a “win” for you, as well as a reward for your client.

So that hits the highlights on our seven strategies, but I don't want you leaving the webinar thinking you have to go rush out and throw every single strategy at every single potential client. I want you to leave with a plan.

Now sit down with your notepad, then:

1. Take a fresh page and make two headings, side by side: “Fun” and “Awkward”
2. Draw a vertical line down the middle of the page, separating these headings into two distinct columns
3. Write down all the ways of getting referrals that felt natural or less intimidating to you in the “Fun” column
4. Write down any way of getting referrals that made your stomach tighten as I talked about it. Put this under the “Awkward” column

Now comes the most important part of all: Recognize that we're not just talking about “techniques” here, for getting referrals. If you focus on techniques, I guarantee that you'll get minimal results.

Instead, focus on building and maintaining strong relationships... with:

- Subscribers
- Current clients
- Past clients
- Coaching Peers
- Industry professionals
- Fans
- Group members
- Local business organizations
- Even your local library!

Also be aware of which referral-gathering techniques offer the possibility of landing clients immediately... and which referral gathering techniques should be thought of as “long-term investments” resulting in potential future leads.

Make sure you practice both types of referral-seeding. Even if your focus is on filling open gaps in your practice right now, don't neglect longer-term strategies such as speaking at upcoming events.

That way, if you get into the habit of planting short-term and long-term seeds, you'll always have opportunities to easily acquire more clients... whenever you need them.

Make a plan for landing new clients quickly and/or actively soliciting referrals—but don't think of it as “getting new clients”. Think of it as “reaching the right people who need my help—now”.

Realize that unless you have actual systems set up that you can fall back on, you're likely to be floundering around with gaps in your schedule, feeling your confidence and competence slip further down and away, every day you're without work.

If you don't have at least a few strategies you recognize and use, you don't have a hope of quickly landing a new client.

And if you feel uncomfortable asking for referrals, or asking if people need your coaching, the people you are asking will almost certainly feel uncomfortable too.

Knowing your reasons for feeling uncomfortable constitutes a vital step in overcoming sticking points and actually landing valuable referrals.

For example, if you know you are just uncomfortable because your mother taught you never to ask for anything, that's one thing. That's when you should tough it out, and persevere, knowing that your unease will eventually disappear when you've practiced asking a few times more.

But knowing you are uncomfortable because your new client has just finished telling you something emotionally-charged and highly personal, and here you are, brightly asking her if she would share her trauma with the world and recommend your help (when she's only been talking to you for thirty minutes) is another thing altogether! Refraining from asking for a referral in a situation like this is called "being sensitive" and "putting your client's needs first".

And don't worry: You'll be rewarded. If you are really sensitive to her needs, you may be surprised to find out, before long, that she actually has enthusiastically recommended you to a potential client—and all because you respected her emotional state and gained her trust.

Getting comfortable with asking for referrals or offering people the chance to work with you is often simply a matter of reframing:

- Changing your focus—off your own financial need and back onto your clients
- Changing your words—losing words that make you feel pushy or sales-y or uncomfortable, and substituting words you can believe in (like "introduction" instead of "referral")
- Changing your approach—from avoiding asking to setting up a plan that feels good
- Changing old fears that you are "imposing" or otherwise "using" people by asking for recommendations or offering coaching into a healthier, more realistic belief system—that you have something valuable to offer

So it's time to look past our old inhibitions and misconceptions about getting new clients. Like you teach your own clients, don't focus on problems: Instead focus on the results you want—for yourself and your clients.

Realize it is all about the value you bring and the trust you create. When people depend on you, they regard it as a privilege to either recommend you or come back themselves for more coaching.

And be sure to give your peers, subscribers, fans and clients (past and present) a clear vision of exactly how and when to refer you by being very clear on:

- How you can help
- What you specialize in or are known for
- What makes you different

Don't be afraid to put words in their mouth by being specific and simply telling them again what you do.

It's not about the techniques, and there's no such thing as being completely "natural" (except for a lucky few). But when you combine deep respect with a little intelligent strategizing and planning, it will become easier to acquire new or recurring clients whenever you want them.

When you realize you can get past the dreaded "gap in clients" syndrome by very naturally increasing your opportunities to network, in ways that also automatically increase your visibility—and allow others to spontaneously sing your praises... When you realize you can get beyond this to a place where you actually have waiting lists; or clients all wanting you to create courses and programs faster than you can create them... That's the time you can raise your rates... and really enjoy referring your surplus backlog of clients to other coaches too.