



Rainmaking 101: Top 20 Influencers

By: Mark Powers and Shawn McNalis



Top 20 Influencers

In an ideal world all referral sources would be created equal. They would send you nothing but the best and brightest clients and cases – a steady stream of high quality work and loyal clients. Wouldn't life be grand? Unfortunately, in the real world, there is a great deal of difference in the quality of your referral sources and the sooner that you realize the difference, the better. Your existing group of referral sources is far from equal in terms of the amount and quality of work that they refer to you. In this lesson we are going to help you tell the difference by introducing the concept of your "Top Twenty" influencers.

Your Top 20 Influencers

Your Top Twenty Influencers are those referral sources that send you your highest quality business. They send you the kind of matters you specialize in, and the kind of clients you most enjoy. These are the influencers who consistently send quality "A" client referrals your way. Most attorneys who have practiced for five or more years will have a small group of referrers that fit into this category – even if they don't yet have twenty of them.

This is an extremely important group of names to identify for yourself. These referral sources have probably kept you in business over the years because their good referrals have resulted in money in your pocket. Often, very substantial money. Calculated, or uncalculated, you have done something to impress this group and they demonstrate their trust and confidence in your abilities by continually sending you new clients.

Why Do They Refer To You?

As you work through the attached Top Twenty exercise think about what you have done to cultivate the relationship you have with each referral source. Do they like you because you have a lot in common as people? Do they send you work because of your quick turn-around time? Do you possess a certain expertise that they have come to rely upon? Does your work make them look good to their superiors, their clients or end-users?

This group of referral sources often has the potential to send you even more business than they send you now. As you start studying them and paying attention to their referral habits, it may become clear that they have more work to give out. They could be spreading it around to other attorneys.

Acknowledgment

Never let this group of people, whether they are business professionals, fellow attorneys or your next door neighbor, wonder whether or not their referrals came to you. Always express your appreciation as quickly as you can – even if the client did not ultimately engage your services. You want to continually reinforce the fact that they thought of you so that the next time they have an opportunity to refer someone – your name is the first one on their mind. Immediately let them know that you appreciate their ongoing faith in you. Send them thank you notes and take them out to lunch every so often to thank them for their "trust and confidence" in you. Their referrals have added substantially to your income. Never take them for granted.

Cultivation

Invite them to join you in non-work related activities to further the bonds between you. Have fun with them if it is appropriate for the relationship. Include them in important practice changes and decisions – solicit their feedback. Keep them up-to-date on any new directions or services you incorporate.

The Next Step

Make a list of your Top 20 Influencers in the left-hand column under "Name." Next, list the type of influencer that the person is, such as "attorney" or "CPA" under "type." Then, in the columns marked "high rapport" and "low rapport," put a checkmark in the appropriate box. In the far right column, list the amount of money that their referrals amount to on a yearly basis. When this is complete you will have a matrix that clearly illustrates your most valuable relationships. Upon further study you might notice you have the basis for a marketing plan. Here's why: those influencers with whom you have high rapport should be put into a maintenance rotation – that is, you should contact them at a comfortable rate for the relationship. For some relationships, this will be two or three times a month, for others, once or twice a quarter. For those relationships marked "low rapport," cultivate them a little more aggressively, based on their receptivity, their availability and their ability to send you more work. Use this matrix to plan your marketing activities, follow your plan faithfully, and you should see a surge of new business.

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Name	Type	High Rapport	Low Rapport	Annual \$ Worth
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

In Lesson 4

The first three issues of this course have focused on who to talk to in your word-of-mouth marketing campaign. In the next issue we'll discuss strategic conversations – what to say when you are face-to-face with them.

Mark Powers, President of Atticus, Inc. and Shawn McNalis, co-authored "The Making of a Rainmaker: An Ethical Approach to Marketing for Solo and Small Firm Practitioners," and are featured writers for Lawyers, USA and a number of other publications. To learn more about the work that Atticus does with attorneys or the Atticus Rainmakers™ program, please visit www.atticsonline.com or call 352-383-0490 or 888-644-0022.