

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 101: How To Get More Consistent Referrals for Your Agency

Speakers: Audrey Joy Kwan

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Want More Referrals and Clients for Your Agency?

Getting consistent referrals doesn't have to be a mystery. If you've been following our "How to Get More Referrals" series, you're already on the path to leveraging a referral strategy that brings in consistent clients.

Referrals aren't just about asking for business—they're about creating a culture and ecosystem that naturally encourages and rewards the sharing of opportunities.

Remember, 84% of B2B decision-makers start the buying process with a referral. This episode will help you reach those decision-makers by sharing best practices for activating your clients and strategic partners for consistent referrals.

Tune in now!

Audrey Joy Kwan

Welcome to the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you're a marketer or consultant, or a creative on a journey of growth from solopreneur to agency owner, follow along because I pull back the curtains on the realities of growing and running a scalable, service-based business and building lean team. I'm your host, Audrey Joy Kwan, I know what it takes to build an agency, whether it's from solo to three, five or twenty. I've done it, including supporting an agency owner to sell and exit. I've coached and consulted over 120 marketers, creatives, and consultants. And I've been behind the scenes of seven figure businesses. I also have a master's degree in communications specializing in organizational development. All this to say, I know what it takes to grow lead and operate a multiple six, and seven figure small but mighty agency. And here on this podcast is where we'll dive right in.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey Friends, welcome back! When I opened my inbox this morning, I was greeted by one of my favourite types of emails. A referral email!

You know, the ones that go like this: “[Jane Smith] referred you and said you are the bees-knees (what a boomer might say) or the bomb (what a millennial might say). Here’s our challenge. Can you help us, too?”

Who doesn’t like to have an inbox full of those? Because More referrals. More clients. It’s a simple formula.

If you are a B2B service provider, that is, a business who serves other businesses, then 84% of your B2B decision-makers start the buying process with a referral.

If you’ve been following the series, I’ve shared the stat and a few more in part one and part two of our How to Get More Referrals series.

In part one, you’ve learned why top agencies make referrals strategic instead of leaving referrals on the side of the desk.

Then, in part two, we tapped into the top four referral channels to get more clients.

Links are in the show notes for both episodes.

If your goal is to get more clients in your business, don’t sleep on getting consistent referrals for your business and let’s consider all the referral channels and not rely on just one.

Today, we look at key things to consider when activating existing clients for referrals and creating partnership referrals.

Some low-hanging fruit you can implement today and others we want to help you simplify.

First, let’s look at Getting Consistent Referrals from Existing Clients

Internal processes and systems in the day-to-day operations of your business helps you get more consistent referrals from your clients

Part of that system is encouraging a culture that actively seeks and rewards referrals. That means training and motivating team members to recognize referral opportunities and take action when the opportunities arise.

Here are some key considerations:

Formalize referral incentives

We all know that existing clients are the first to be considered when deciding who can refer. So, how can we get more consistent referrals from clients?

When you have a formal referral program with meaningful incentives for your clients, you will have more opportunities to communicate the incentives to get more referrals.

Formalized referral programs aren't always financial incentives for your current clients—like a referral fee—but some of the more desirable incentives I've seen my clients offer include premium service upgrades that help their clients make more money in their business at no extra cost.

Integrate referrals into your customer journey.

Most people think the best time to ask for a referral is when a project is completed or after a customer expresses satisfaction.

However, a client is typically most eager and excited at the start of an engagement. If you are not asking for referrals during this time, you miss out on a key touchpoint.

By clearly identifying when you are asking for referrals along the customer journey and making it a regular part of customer interactions, you're more likely to see consistent results for getting referrals.

Recognize and thank people who refer.

This seems like a no-brainer, but I can tell you that more people don't close the thank-you loop than those who do.

I referred a past consulting agency client to an SEO Agency and only found out months later that the SEO Agency got the business but didn't send a note to let me know.

I referred a copywriter to a client who owns a CMO Agency and didn't get any notice from the copywriter that it worked out. I only know it worked out because my CMO Agency told me they hired her.

Why am I pointing this out?

It makes a difference when you take that extra step to thank someone. Who are you most likely to remember?

Hands down. I remember those who appreciate the connection and am way more likely to refer those who spend time closing the thank you loop.

As someone who refers others, I know that showing appreciation for referrals, regardless of outcomes, goes a long way to staying top of mind.

Now that we've covered 3 key considerations for Getting Consistent Referrals from Existing Clients. Let's shift gears and look at getting consistent Referrals from Partnership With Other Agencies

In part two, we separated partnership into two channels: Partnerships with Agencies and Strategic Partnerships with Complementary Services. Both these channels are deeply rooted in building and maintaining relationships.

Unlike getting referrals from existing clients, establishing partnerships with other agencies or service providers requires more facilitation and nurturing unless you find the right networks.

Here are three key ingredients to getting more clients through partnerships:

Community

The purpose of community is to create an environment where trust, collaboration, and mutual support thrive. These qualities are needed for generating and sustaining partnership referrals.

I get it; you didn't start your business to spend all your time facilitating a group of people, it's why joining a community or network with like-minded people saves time.

In a community with aligned interests where members share common goals, values, and interests it makes getting and giving referrals more relevant and targeted.

The key to networks thriving is the presence of facilitation to help members achieve their goals. In my community, my purpose is to help others make the right connections and provide a space for people to get new clients with referrals or give referrals and make a referral fee.

That's why I started Agency Together. Agency Together is not just another networking community. You gain a curated referral network for agency owners who value getting more clients with strategic collaboration.

Reciprocity

Partnering with other agencies and service providers often means multiple partners, and you can be in stagnant partnerships. What keeps referral partnerships alive is when there is transparency about reciprocity.

Transparency encourages people in partnerships to refer business.

In a one-to-one partnership, you can tap out each other's networks, but in a community, there are incrementally more opportunities for reciprocity.

That's why networks thrive when referrals are visible. It showcases the power of giving and getting referrals from one to many.

For example, when you have a circle of people you refer, the act of seeing you refer is powerful for the whole circle even if they don't get the referral because it demonstrates that you can and will give, and they trust that given the right time you will be sharing with them too.

Referrals are not a direct exchange, meaning I give you one referral, and you give me one back. That's why getting consistent referrals is about being in community.

One more note about direct reciprocity, don't undervalue referral fees. In referral relationships there are two opportunities. You receive a referral and get a new client or you give a referral and make a referral fee.

In reciprocity, the win-win is multiplied when there are more opportunities together than there are individually.

Consistent Communication

How many people get on networking calls and at the end of the call, drop a line about referring to each other, and then never hear from each other again?

Raise your hand if this has happened to you.

A strong partnership is not about how many people you meet and suggest referring to each other but consistent communication to build motivation and reliability.

It doesn't always have to be one-to-one; it can be one-to-more where showing up consistently helps people be on the same page and is an opportunity to educate each other on their business and benefits.

Sometimes, partners don't refer because they don't know how. Consistent communication breaks that barrier by giving them more chances to learn about you.

Okay so last but not least let's move from getting consistent Referrals from Partnership With Other Agencies to Getting Consistent Referral Opportunities in Professional Associations

I shared this comment in part two of this series – don't spray and pray and respect the guidelines and boundaries of professional associations.

Instead, if you want to get more visible in professional associations – get creative.

For example, I helped my design agency owner client, who serves non-profits, provide value and stand out to his ideal professional association members by thinking about what he can give instead of what he can ask for.

It led us to create a design grant.

A grant is easy to share so people shared it. As the power of shareable things goes, a few days into introducing the grant, my agency owner client received an email from a prospect saying that so-and-so referred her to the grant, which they weren't eligible for due to their size. Still, nonetheless she was interested in working together. Long story short, the conversion is leading to a multiple five-figure project. And that's only a few days into a three-month campaign.

If you want to engage other people's associations or communities where your ideal clients frequent, these three principles apply.

Demonstrate Value by sharing your expertise, answering questions, or offering to contribute content to solve a real challenge.

Give Support by get involved by volunteering for committees or roles or sponsoring initiatives to demonstrate commitment.

Engage with Leaders: participate by attending events where they are likely to be present or highlight their work giving them credit and exposure or share opportunities for collaboration.

In the example with my client, we identified the most underserved in the niche and connected to a passion to serve. The creative idea not only gave the right support but it also provided value and engaged leaders in sharing. A triple win.

In summary, getting consistent referrals for your agency is about building a strategic approach leveraging internal and external channels.

Referrals are not just about asking for business but creating a culture and ecosystem that naturally encourages and rewards the sharing of opportunities.

Whether through formal programs or strategic partnerships, the key is to be proactive, appreciative, and consistent in your efforts.

For those looking to streamline and amplify your referral efforts, our community, Agency Together offers a unique community where agency owners can collaborate, share referrals, and get more clients together.

Join us to experience the growth that comes from strategic referrals and a supportive community of agency owners.

If you want to grow your agency and get more clients with consistent referrals, listen in:

Join me over at Agency Together.

Agency Together is not just another networking community. You gain a curated referral network for agency owners who value getting more clients with strategic collaborations.

I believe in helping each other grow; we are stronger together. Agency Together is not a program, course, or mastermind. We are a community focused on collaboration to get more referrals and grow your agency.

To find out more and secure your spot, go to audreyjoykwan.com/agencytogether. The link is also in the show notes.

Join the members who know they can reach more of the 84% of decision-makers who start their buying process with a referral by collaborating inside Agency Together

👉 go to audreyjoykwan.com/agencytogether

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey, there. Thanks for hanging out with me at the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you enjoyed this episode, it would mean the world to me if you hit the follow or subscribe button in your podcast app and share it with a friend and I'll see you in the next one.