

Simplify Your Company's Story

By Ivan Misner

Learn how to communicate what you do in a way that's relatable to your referral sources.

Central to the referral-marketing process for any [entrepreneur](#) is teaching people how to send you referrals. To do so, people must know exactly what you do--what product or service you provide or make, how and under what conditions you provide it, how well you do it, and in what ways you're better at what you do than your competitors.

You're responsible for communicating this information to your referral sources. And to communicate effectively, you must know your information inside and out.

It may seem like a no-brainer--don't we all know what we do for a living? Of course, but can you communicate it clearly and simply to your potential sources? If you think about it, you may find you're not quite as clear on the facts as you thought. And if you can't tell your potential sources what you do or what you sell, how can they send you good referrals?

To ensure that your referral marketing campaign is as effective as possible, take a few minutes to get a clear picture of where your business stands today. You may think you know why you're in business, but perhaps it's been years since you've given it serious thought. Now is a good time to reexamine why you're doing what you're doing. Ask yourself these questions and write down your answers:

- Why are you in business (other than to make a living)? Why do you do what you do? How does your business serve others?
- What do you sell? Most important, what are the benefits--not the features--of your products or services?
- Who are your customers? What are your target markets? Be specific. Look at all segments of your business to determine the niche or niches you prefer to work with.
- What are your core competencies, and what do you do best?
- How well do you compete? How do you stand out from your competition?

Answering these questions will help you tell others what your business is all about. And it'll make you more effective at implementing a comprehensive referral system.

After you've written down your answers, think about how you can effectively communicate this information to your referral sources. How you communicate with others is very powerful.

"Your PVS (personal value statement) provides the opportunity for your clients, staff and [family](#) to market you effectively. You can build a distribution channel of people who can effectively communicate your value."

I bet you're so accustomed to the ubiquitous "What do you do?" question at mixers, [business events](#), seminars, etc. You hardly give a thought to how you're answering that question. It's not enough to simply tell your contacts your job description--for instance, "I own and operate a sporting goods

store.” In order to deepen the relationship, you must talk about what you do in a way that, as Lou says, “communicates the magic of your vision expressed through your words.”

Too many business professionals and companies try to be all things to all people. Don't do that! Focus on the things you do well, and document those things and your vision in a way that you can communicate to others. By clearly understanding what you do, you're better able to communicate this to your referral sources, and this helps teach your referral sources how they can refer you. And that's what networking is all about.

By the way, what do I tell people about whom I am and what I do? Well, one of the things I say is that I'm changing the way the world does business by teaching people that when it comes to referrals, givers gain.