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growth plan for the new year. While there are many ways to gain new clients, the most effective way is through customer referrals.

Taija Sparkman • Dec. 11, 2015



As you prepare for the end of the year, a business growth plan is surely in the cards for your payroll business. And, a key component of any growth plan is obtaining new clients. While there are many ways to gain new clients, the most effective way is through customer referrals.

Studies have shown that people are more likely to connect with a vendor that has been recommended by family or friends. The same is true for your payroll practice.

Small business owners are more likely to sign up for your services if they have been

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type of companies that you want to work with. If you operate within a certain niche, you'll want to make sure you communicate this to your clients when you ask for the referral.

A good time to approach clients may be at the end of a regular meeting. Ask if they know of any businesses that could benefit from your payroll services. Another way to ask for referrals is indirectly through your email signature. Including a line or two telling clients you value their business and would appreciate their referrals not only reminds them that your practice depends on their word-of-mouth to an extent, it also removes the pressure from them to make any promises to you on the spot.

Consider hosting an open house and inviting your current clients to bring along their friends and business partners. This will create an informal environment for others to get to know you and your practice and could serve as a great ice breaker and introduction prior to your first meeting with any referred clients.

Formal referral programs are a great way to incentivize your clients. Essentially, you offer clients a discount on payroll services for referring a friend, family member or business partner to your practice. You could offer a percentage off future services for every referral a client submits or a specific dollar amount. You might even consider extending the discount to the referred client as a way to get them to try out your practice.

Once you've asked your clients for referrals, be sure to acknowledge every time they send a new client your way. One simple way is to ask new clients how they heard about your payroll practice and send a quick "Thank You" note or gift to any clients that have referred new business to you.

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