

HOW TO ASK FOR REFERRALS

It's the most common way that buyers and sellers choose their real estate practitioner. So what's stopping you from asking for more referrals?

Even as the Web has become the preeminent home-search tool for consumers, referrals are still the No. 1 way buyers and sellers find their real estate practitioners.

When asked how they found their real estate agent, 43 percent of all buyers and 41 percent of all sellers said they were referred by a friend, neighbor, or relative, according to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® 2007 Profile of Home Buyers & Sellers.

Only 11 percent of all buyers and 22 percent of all sellers used their previous agent, which was the second most-popular response.

The numbers are compelling, but they don't make it any easier to ask family and friends to send business your way. That's why we consulted some top sales coaches to provide conversational direction for your referral dialogues. The next time you feel tongue-tied about asking for referrals, practice these simple scripts to up your confidence—and your business.

1. Ask for referrals from a current customer.

The situation: After you've had several positive business interactions with customers or clients, it's a great time to ask them to tell their friends and family about you.

You: "I have a favor to ask you, but only if you're comfortable with it."

Seller: "Sure, I guess so."

You: "It's been my experience that while we're working together on selling [or buying] a house, most of my clients discuss the experience with their friends, relatives, and people at work."

Seller: "Oh, I talk to people about it all the time."

You: "That's great. During those conversations, has anyone you're talking to mentioned that they are also thinking of buying or selling a property?"

Seller: "Yes, a couple of people have."

You: "When that happens, I would really appreciate it you would tell the person about me and why you chose me to be your sales associate. Also tell them to expect a call from me within the next 48 hours. Then, with their permission, I need you to call me with their name and number so I can make that call. OK? Are you comfortable doing that?"

Seller: "Sure, I'd be happy to do that."

You: "That's great. I really appreciate it."

2. Ask for referrals from family and friends.

The situation: You're at a family function or a gathering of friends—or maybe you've just run into an old buddy at the grocery store. When the topic turns to real estate or your job, it's a prime opportunity to remind that person you can provide top-notch service to people your friend knows.

You: "By the way, if anyone starts talking to you about an interest in buying, selling, or investing in a home, it would be really helpful to me if you'd tell them that you have a friend who's a great real estate salesperson and would love to help them. And you know I'll give them the extra attention that I give every one of my clients."

Family/Friend: "Sure, I'll do that."

You: "Thanks. I really appreciate it. And if they're interested, ask if it would be OK for me to give them a call to talk, will you?"

Family/Friend: "OK."

You: "By the way, what are your real estate goals for the next year?"

Family/Friend: "Well, I've always wanted to buy a house to fix up, rent, and get some money coming in for my retirement."

You: "That's a great idea. This is a great time to find some terrific buys. Have you done anything about making that dream come true?"

Family/Friend: "Nothing yet. It's just something I've been thinking about."

You: "Why don't you let me buy you breakfast on Saturday so I can tell you more about how market trends may work in your favor over the next year. You can also tell me more about what sort of property you want so that I can keep an eye out for a deal you might be interested in."

Family/Friend: "That sounds great. It's a date."

3. Plant the seed for a future referral.

The situation: You've just run into an old colleague or friend. Make small talk appropriate to the situation before you mention your business and ask for the referral.

You: "By the way, do you know I sell real estate? I've been doing it for [fill in the blank] years."

Acquaintance: Oh really.

You: "I was just wondering if you've talked with anyone recently who might be interested in buying or selling a home?"

Acquaintance: "Hmmm, I can't think of anybody off the top of my head."

You: "That's OK. But if you do hear of someone in the future, will you keep me in mind? I'd really like to get the chance to work with anyone you know who's looking to buy or sell. Please just give me a call or drop me an e-mail if you hear of anything."

Acquaintance: "Sure, I'll do that."

You: "Just to make it easier for you to share my contact info when the subject comes up, may I give you a couple of my business cards?"

Acquaintance: "Sure."

Source: Ed Hatch, CRB, CRS®, trainer and coach, Gambrills, Md.; Susan RoAne, president, The RoAne Group, Greenbrae, Calif.; Darryl Davis, speaker and sales trainer, Long Island, N.Y.