

Saying The Wrong Thing Louder Doesn't Make It Right

(or How NOT Marketing Will Generate New Clients!)



A No-Nonsense Guide To What Works And What Doesn't
When Marketing Professional Services

**Please feel free to post this on your blog or email it to whomever
you believe would benefit from reading it.**

Thank you.

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Table of Contents

Stop Marketing, Really??!	5
One Accountant's Story	6
The Phone Call	7
Alan Tries Marketing	7
Disappointing Results	8
The Real Problem	8
The Solution	8
Why referrals, networking, and face to face meetings work	9
Why the other stuff doesn't work	10
Elements of a Successful Referral Marketing System	11
Referral Network	11
Strategic Referral Partners	11
Strategy for getting introductions	11
Target Market Description	11
Core Message	11
Marketing Material	11
Referral Offer	12
Written Plan	12
Do I Need The Other Stuff?	13
Applying What Works With Referrals To The Other Stuff	14
Advertising	14
Public Relations	14

Being Consistent – Use A Marketing Calendar	15
Wrapping Up.....	16
About Bill Brelsford.....	17
Ways To Contact	17

Stop Marketing, Really??!

All right, Bill, what's the deal?

You are a marketing coach, so you don't **really** want me to stop marketing, do you? Isn't this just some kind of marketing hype?

Well, yes. And no.

Yes, I do want to grab your attention.

No, I don't want you to stop marketing, per se.

I want you to stop the stuff you and others are calling "marketing."

Many accountants, dentists, and lawyers, are comfortable with the idea of meeting face-to-face with potential clients. Some will even ask for referrals on a consistent basis. They may attend networking events. But they **HATE** marketing.

They **HATE** marketing because it doesn't work.

They **HATE** it because it's expensive.

Referrals are great, but all that "other stuff", just doesn't work.

Or does it?

The "other stuff" can work; we just need to do it differently. We need to understand why referral marketing works, make sure we are doing that well, and then apply what works for referrals to the "other stuff."

Let's start with a little story about one boy's marketing efforts. I'm sure your story is different from this one, but see if you can identify with any of the elements of this story.

To effectively market your professional services:

1. Understand why referrals are effective.
2. Create a system for generating referrals.
3. Apply what works for referrals to the "other marketing stuff"

One Accountant's Story

Alan is a CPA with his own practice. Alan started his career working for a regional public accounting firm. Six months ago, Alan decided that he was not very interested in doing audit work. What he really enjoyed doing was working with small business owners. He enjoyed helping them with tax planning and advising them on how to manage their business.

Alan got off to a good start with his practice. Two of his clients from his previous firm, followed him to his new practice. Both the previous firm and the clients agreed that the regional CPA firm was not the best fit for the client, and agreed that the best thing for all parties involved was for Alan to take care of these new clients.

Alan also had a brother-in-law who owned his own business. He became a Alan's third client.

Alan was lucky enough to come from a large family, so when tax time rolled around, many of his family, their friends, and his friends became clients as well.

Because Alan did a great job for his clients, he picked a new client every two or three months from referrals.

Pretty soon, Alan had a nice little practice and was staying fairly busy. He was working hard, and putting in lots of hours, but it seemed like the efforts were paying off.

The Phone Call

Alan was staying busy. He began missing networking meetings. After all, it was more important to take care of his existing ones than to look for new ones.

Late Friday afternoon, Alan received a phone call from Joe, his first and best client. Joe had decided to sell his business. He would need a little help finalizing the sale, but after that, the new owner's accountant would be handling the accounting duties. While Alan was happy for his friend Joe, he had great reason to be concerned, because Joe's account provided for 30% of his revenue.

Alan reviewed his prospect database. Because he had been so busy taking care of his current clients, he had stopped going to networking events. As a result, his pipeline was empty.

Alan called his clients and asked them for referrals. All of his clients wanted to help, but they had already giving Alan the names of people they knew.

Alan Tries Marketing

Alan needed to find some new clients. He needed marketing. Alan knew a marketing guy, Mike, from his early days at the Chamber. Alan worked with Mike to develop a three-panel brochure. He also purchased an ad in the back of a local business magazine.

Alan already had a website, but he hired a graphic designer to match the look and feel of his website to his new brochure.

Alan bought a mailing list of local business owners. He wrote a nice letter of introduction and mailed it, along with one of his new brochures.

Alan felt good about his marketing plan. He had hesitated to spend money on marketing, but after all, he thought, you have to spend money to make money.



Disappointing Results

A couple of weeks later, Alan wasn't feeling so good about his marketing plan. No one had called him as a result of his direct mail campaign. He wasn't even sure if more people were visiting his website or not. Alan did pick up a small project from a connection he met at the Chamber, but it wasn't nearly big enough to replace the business he used to get from Joe.

When Alan talked to Mike about his lack of results. Mike told him that he needed to be patient. "You need to keep doing mailings" Mike told him, "It takes five to seven touches before someone will do business with you."

Alan couldn't see how doing more of the same thing was going to help. "I just don't think marketing works for my type of business," Alan concluded.

The Real Problem

"Marketing just doesn't work for my type of business".

The problem isn't that marketing doesn't work. The problem is that traditional marketing, or what passes for marketing, is an ineffective way to grow a professional services practice.

It's ineffective because it **fails to focus on the right person** – the **CLIENT**

The Solution

The solution to this problem is to

1. Learn the right way to "do referral marketing"
2. Apply what works in referrals to the "other stuff"
3. Automate and systematize as much as possible so that things happen reliably, consistently, so that you know what's working and what isn't.

Why referrals, networking, and face to face meetings work

“When I can get in front of the right person, then 99% of the time they will become a client”.
Sound familiar? I must hear that two or three times a week.

Have you ever thought about why this is?. I believe it has to do with HOW we talk to people.
When we meet one-on-one:

- We are specific about who we help
- We are specific about the types of problems we solve
- We talk in plain English – not in corporate marketing mumbo-jumbo
- We tell our story – People remember and connect with people through stories

The reason we love referrals is because not only do we meet face to face, we also borrow Know, Like, and Trust from the person who made the referral.

Consistency is a key ingredient to successful marketing. You must show up to networking events consistently. You must ask for referrals on a consistent basis.

If you’ve heard these recommendations before, it’s because they have been shown time and time again to work. Don’t just think, “Oh, that same old stuff.” Skipping or ignoring these pointers causes most of the frustrations related to professional services marketing.



Why the other stuff doesn't work

Imagine I came to your local Chamber of Commerce breakfast, and we have never met. I walk up to you, big smile on my face, stick out my hand and say "Hi, my name is Bill. Nice to meet you. Want to buy some of my stuff?". How fast would you try to get away from me? Could it be fast enough?

Now, look at your marketing materials. Do they allow people to get to Know, Like, and Trust you before they are ready to buy? Or do they jump right from the introduction to closing the sale?

Many of the frustrations professionals have with traditional marketing stem from doing the opposite of what works for referrals

- We create marketing materials that are too general. When we try to create marketing materials that appeal to everyone, they end up being special to no one
- We create materials that are filled with jargon, buzzwords, nonsense, and fluff
- Rather than telling our story, we talk about "fair pricing", "good customer service", and "quality work" – just like everyone else
- We are not consistent. We do one mailing and stop. We don't follow up. We fail to continue to market to our existing clients

Traditional marketing materials are very "we-centric" materials – "We have 20 years of experience", "We have advanced degrees", "We have the latest and greatest, machines, software, etc." Blah, blah, blah.

You can stand out from the crowd by creating "you-centric" materials. Materials that focus on the customers you serve, the problems you help them with, and what life looks like for them after they work with you.

Remember, your prospects don't care about you. They want to know what's playing on station WIIFM – **What's In It For Me?** So focus on them.

Elements of a Successful Referral Marketing System



Deserve Referrals – hopefully, this goes without saying, but you must deserve referrals. Do you create a **Remarkable Difference** in the lives of your customers? If you are not sure, stop everything else and work on that first.

Referral Network - Identify the people who *can and are willing* to refer you to others. Start with your best customers. Since “birds of a feather flock together”, getting referrals from your best customers is a great way to grow your business.

Strategic Referral Partners are a vital part of our referral network. Referral partners have similar ideal customers, but solve a different problem. An attorney who focuses on small business issues may make a good Strategic Referral Partner for a CPA serving similar clients.

Strategy for getting introductions – Once you identify referral sources, how will you approach them and get them to give you referrals. Why does it make sense for them to refer people to you? Remember channel WIIFM?

Target Market Description– Can you paint a crystal clear picture of what your ideal client looks like?

Core Message – What is the beneficial difference you make in the life of your customer? Forget the “elevator speech” or “30 second commercial”, work on developing what my friend Bill Doerr (www.sellmoremarketing.com) calls your “One Breath Commercial”. You should be able to describe clearly who you help and the beneficial difference you make in their life in one breath. If you can’t, how could your referral sources possibly do it?

Marketing Material – throw away the glossy brochures and share specific stories about the people you have worked with, the challenges they were facing, and how life is better for them

after they worked with you. The more specific you can be, the more likely your referral sources can identify who they know that they should be introducing to you.

Referral Offer – what can you offer to people who are referred to you that will begin the process of them building Know, Like, and Trust with you? The fastest way to ruin a good referral is to jump into selling mode before the relationship even begins.

Written Plan – To be effective, you must commit to a plan. Write it down, review it often, and share it with others in your firm.

Do I Need The Other Stuff?

For some firms, a highly effective referral system may be the only type of marketing that is needed. However, many professional firms will need to expand their marketing efforts in order to meet the goals they have for their business.

The Duct Tape Marketing System tells us that every small business marketing system should contain a mix of advertising, referrals, and public relations. The exact mix that is right for your company will be determined by your **marketing strategy** – the combination of your **Ideal Customer** definition and your **Remarkable Difference**.

There are several reasons why you want to include tactics from all three lead generation categories in your marketing system.

Each customer and prospect has their preferred way of learning and making purchasing decisions. Some want to read lots of literature. Others will only do business by referral. By distributing our message through a variety of channels, we increase the chance that we will speak to our customers in the way they prefer.

Communicating your message in different ways also builds marketing momentum. One way to build marketing momentum is by coming at your audience from many different angles. Each exposure builds upon and strengthens the previous exposures – magnifying your message.

In order to get the biggest bang for our marketing buck, it is important to understand the 3 Cs of Lead Generation – **C**ost, **C**ontrol, and **C**redibility. As the diagram on the left shows, each member of the lead generation trio excels in different areas of the 3 Cs.

By using the right mix of lead generation tactics, we can reach the greatest number of potential purchasers, in the manner in which they prefer to be communicated with, without having to bust the budget.

	Advertising	Public Relations	Referrals
Cost	High	Low/ Medium	Low/ Medium
Control	High	Low/ Medium	Low
Credibility	Low	High	High

Applying What Works With Referrals To The Other Stuff

Advertising

Advertising is generally going to be our most expensive lead generation tactic. Therefore, it is important to follow rules of what works in referrals:

- You must be specific about who the offer is for
- You must be specific about the problem you are solving
- You must talk in plain English – you must make it very clear the value of what you are offering and do so in language that appeals to your prospect. You also need to be crystal clear about what you want the prospect to do next.
- You must be consistent. If you plan to run an ad once and then stop, save your money and don't run it at all.

Use a headline to grab attention and immediately communicate who this is for and what it will do for them. You must also include a call to action that clearly communicates what you want them to do next – bring in a coupon, visit our website and download a report, or call our toll free number. Having a specific call to action will also help you measure the response you are receiving from an advertisement.

Rather than trying to make a sale directly from your ad, try to get people into your marketing education program as quickly as possible so you can build Know, Like, and Trust.

Public Relations

Public relations isn't just for big companies. The important thing to remember is that it is still about building relationships. In just the same way that you have to be specific about what you provide your clients, you need to be specific about how you can help writers and reporters. Learn about them by following their writings and learn what is important to their readers. Rather than just trying to pitch your company, work to become a source for writers who are working on stories in your area of expertise.

Being Consistent – Use A Marketing Calendar

In order to be successful, our marketing needs to be consistent. Get in the habit of setting appointments with yourself to work on your marketing.

Treat these appointments just like appointments with your best customers – no rescheduling at the last moment, no interruptions from phone calls, e-mail, etc.

Consistent effort, whether once a week or once a month, is the most effective way to create and implement your marketing system.



Wrapping Up

Marketing does work for professional service firms – we just need to go about it the right way.

Yelling louder and interrupting more is **NOT** the right way.

The right way means that **You focus on THE CLIENT**, not on yourself.

The right way means your marketing materials are:

- Specific about who you help
- Specific about the types of problems you solve
- Written in plain English – not in corporate marketing speak
- Telling your story – People remember and connect with people through stories

You must also be consistent in your marketing efforts.

Marketing is **not** about finding the **Next Big Thing**.

Rather, it's about doing a

few things very well, and doing them consistently.

Who Is This Guy?

About Bill Brelsford

Bill Brelsford is the owner of Rebar Business Builders. Bill is a Duct Tape Marketing Authorized Coach located in Lenexa, KS (a suburb of Kansas City). He specializes in helping professional service firms create and implement marketing systems that allow them to spend less time chasing business and more time serving their clients.

Before starting Rebar, Bill spent over 18 years consulting with small business owners as a certified public accountant (CPA) and as a developer of custom software for small businesses.

Bill is a member of the QuickBooks “Ask The Expert” panel where he gives advice in both the Starting and Growing forum as well as the Marketing and Sales forum. He has also contributed several articles to the Kansas City Small Business Monthly.

Bill regularly gives presentations and leads seminars on topics related to small business marketing and social media. Recent speaking engagements include talks for the First Step Fund, the Miami County Economic Development Department, the American Massage Therapy Association, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE KCCN), the Small Home & Business Connection, Promotional Products Association of the Midwest, Manhattan KS Chamber of Commerce, and the American Club Association. Bill’s presentations consistently draw rave reviews for the practical information they contain and for his ability to present that information in a way that is relevant to his audience.



Ways To Contact

For more information and business building resources, visit Bill’s website at <http://www.RebarBusinessBuilders.com>

For lots of free marketing tips, check out Bill’s blog at <http://blog.rebarbusinessbuilders.com>

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