

Use Surveys to Build Referrals



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✖ I continually draw inspiration from other companies about how to improve my lawn care business. Here's what I learned from a recent experience with a business outside of the green industry, and I am hopeful what I learned will be valuable to you, as well.

Late this summer, my family and I used a livery service to take us to the airport to start our vacation. I have used this service for years and have watched it grow. It never seems to lose focus on what is most important: its customers.

One of the ways the company works to improve its clients' satisfaction is by asking customers what it can do better. Soon after it serves them, the company sends out a simple email or postcard survey to clients.

A week after the livery service took us to the airport, I received an email survey seeking my feedback. The survey I got asked two simple questions:

1. From a scale of 1-10, how would you rate our service? Why?
2. From a scale from 1-10, how likely would you refer us to someone you know? Please provide the name and contact information of someone that might appreciate our service.

This might sound a bit forward, but I think it shows how confident the owner is in his commitment to customer service. Not only is the company able to gather valuable information from its customers, the surveys also offer a brilliant sales opportunity by gathering referrals. After you return the survey, someone from the company calls you. Despite the rating you give them, the company representative thanks you and asks if you know anyone else that would appreciate their service.



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I also regularly survey my lawn care clients. But, unlike the livery service, I had not thought about asking for referrals. While this company sets out to improve its service it is also boosting its sales by asking for referrals.

The middle of autumn is the ideal time to draw some inspiration from this story I have shared, and survey your customers. If they are experiencing issues with your service, you still have time to address and correct the issues. Additionally, if you survey your customers and ask for referrals as the season ends, you have the opportunity to lock in those new sales for the 2016 season.

So let's recap in order to highlight the important stuff.

- **Send surveys:** Make the time as the season comes to an end to send out simple, concise client surveys. You can send them out via email, accompanying your monthly billing statements or you can leave them at your customers' doors after you provide services.
- **Read the surveys:** It is not enough to just send out surveys to your customers. The most important part is to read them when you get them back. Whether the feedback is positive or negative, take it seriously. Share this information with the rest of your team.
- **Respond to your customers:** Once you read the surveys, promptly respond by calling your customers and thanking them for taking the time to fill out the surveys and provide their comments. We dedicate a CSR rep at our company to do this. That way it gets done regularly. If the review is negative, create an action plan on how you can resolve the issue your client is having and communicate to them what you plan to do to make good on the issue. The fall is a great time to do this because, weather permitting, you still have time to correct the problem before the season ends.
- **Ask for referrals:** This is a great way to follow up on positive reviews. When you call your clients, thank them for their positive feedback and ask them if they know anyone who could benefit from your services. Even if they don't provide names then, you have planted seeds in their minds, and you have sent them a strong message that you are open for business and ready to take on additional clients.