

Maximizing Customer Referrals



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Most landscape maintenance and lawn care company owners will tell you that the best [marketing campaign](#) is word-of-mouth advertising. It's free and easy to obtain if you're giving your clients what they want and need for their properties.

Just Ask (Or Don't Ask)



Canopy Lawn Care coaches its crews to make customers' properties the best on the block—leading to referrals.
(Photo: Canopy Lawn Care)

There are many ways to ask for referrals, but three popular methods include:

- Incentivize your clients;
- Incentivize your field crews; and
- Giving excellent service, so you don't have to ask for referrals—they just come naturally.

But before you can ask for positive reviews, you need to provide excellent work. Jeff Scott, President of New Orleans, LA-based [Jeffrey Scott](#)

[Consulting, Inc.](#) says that if you give five-star service, then you shouldn't have to ask for any referrals. Your customers will be naturally motivated to send you new clients to grow your business.

"The best referrals are when the customer is bragging about you. They can't wait to talk to you," says [Scott](#).

Maria Pallotta of Canopy Lawn Care in Cary, NC, says it's easier for the company to ask for referrals because management encourages field crews to create the finest property on the street. And as Scott said, the referrals spontaneously come in.

"We coach our field teams to make customers' properties the best-looking ones on the street. It helps referrals come in more naturally," says Pallotta. "Otherwise, you won't see results from any marketing campaign if you're not meeting your customers' expectations."

Dennis Evans of Quiet Village Landscaping in St. Louis, MO, agrees with Pallotta and Scott when he states, "You have a lot more success with a thrilled client. The easiest thing to do is just ask for it. If you're a sales rep doing a walk-through with the client, just ask them if they have any neighbors or family needing landscaping services."

Exceeding your customers' expectations, paying attention to details, and going the extra mile for your clients make asking for Google reviews or asking for referrals come as a natural part of doing business.

Otherwise, Evans says, most people will assume that you're busy unless you ask.

Focusing On The Right Client

Paul Fraynd of Sun Valley Landscaping of Omaha, NE, only wants referrals that fit the type of clientele his company serves. So Fraynd and his team purposely network in groups where their ideal clients will be found. This type of specializing finds "good customers for us that will generate more referrals for us," he explains.



Jeffrey Scott, author of *The Referral Advantage*, champions relational customer service in his consulting work.

When Sun Valley Landscaping finishes a job, Fraynd's team asks what the customer thinks about how the job was done. And if it's a positive reaction, then Sun Valley will ask if the customer has anyone who needs the same type of work on his/her property.

Fraynd focuses referrals on the type of jobs that Sun Valley excels at and the service that they want their customer base to grow into. The key is to be good at landscaping to get those niche referrals.

Empowering Your Field Crews

Evans of Quiet Village Landscaping prefers to be more personal in his company's approach to getting referrals. He said that you can put a notice on invoices, but he prefers something relational.

Evans also incentivizes his customers for putting together a review beyond clicking five stars. He states, "We're asking our technicians to ask customers for Google Reviews. If the customer responds and mentions the technician by name, the customer gets \$50."

Pallotta of Canopy Lawn Care says the company trains its field crews to ask for online reviews too. She says it's more personal to ask each customer on a one-to-one basis: "We empower our team to ask for reviews from each customer. It's better than e-mail. We give incentives based on the customer's ratings."

Canopy Lawn Care has six promotions available for field crews that get the highest reviews and ratings.

Related to Scott's earlier comments, Canopy's customers love the company, so it's easy for crews to knock on the door after each service the business provides.



Canopy Lawn Care customers get a discount on their next service when they leave feedback on a web form, says Maria Pallotta.

Scott says it's vital for company owners to teach their crews relational customer service—especially if there is a crew member who's good at his/her job, but doesn't feel comfortable talking with customers.

"The best companies are more focused on providing five-star service than the typical company. Recessions will come, but the truly high-performing companies will continue to grow and enjoy better customer retention," Scott explains.

Relationship Building

Since Scott works with landscaping companies to help them grow and maintain their businesses, he's an expert in developing relational customer service. He even wrote a book, *The Referral Advantage*.

"A company should develop a great relationship with the client. Have a good system in place and standards internally within the company. A company gets a helpful five-star rating when customers are referring to a great experience with specific people in the company," Scott explains.

Canopy Lawn Care ensures its customers have a specific, accessible place to leave positive reviews. "We make it easy for our customers to leave feedback. We have a landing page on our website, and they (the customer) get a discount on their next service when they fill out the landing page," Pallotta explains.

"We [also] make it easy for customers to contact us. They can text us, call us, live chat with us. We empower our customers to give feedback. Our customers rate and review us on every service. The customers love the review system," Pallotta says.

Pallotta will contact the customers to ask for permission to use those positive comments on Canopy's website. "Customers respond very quickly," she states.

Pallotta says this customer review service not only makes it easy for the clients to provide feedback, but benefits company employees as well. She'll share the positive comments with the rest of the team as they come in.



Sun Valley Landscaping focuses its networking efforts on the type of clientele they want to serve. It allows them to specialize while reaching financial goals. (Photo: Sun Valley Landscaping)

Contributing or being active in a charity is another positive way to bring in new clients. Supporting a Little League team or donating time or services to make someone else's life better has its own rewards, but can also provide informal networking opportunities with clients who share the same interests.

Evans of Quiet Village Landscaping says, "The more you can get people in your organization to do positive work in the community, inherently people will ask 'Where do you work? What do you do?'"

"It helps build your reputation and goodwill. It will encourage more referrals, I believe," adds Evans.

On A Final Note

Fraynd recommends capitalizing on your excellent work and getting referrals for your company's sweet spot, whether that's fertilizing a lawn or building an outdoor kitchen. And Evans says that you need a customer relationship management (CRM) tool. Some of these can be found inexpensively online.

As your company grows, empower your crews and sales team to get those positive reviews, post them online, and watch your lawn care or landscaping maintenance company grow.

Komancheck has a passion for helping small- to medium-size companies succeed. She writes blogs, website content, and other digital marketing pieces for the lawn care and landscape industries. You can learn more about her at www.landscapewriter.com.

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