

Things to consider.

Get more referrals to grow your business consistently.



Why is it so hard for advisors to attract more referrals?

The common wisdom is that referrals can be the most powerful, most effective, and most cost-efficient way to obtain new clients. And yet, most advisors are still challenged to attract enough referrals on a regular basis to enable them to hit their growth goals.

Being process-driven and having a strategy are the two best practices every firm should be using to increase their referability. Why?

Continue on to learn how to develop and activate your referral plan with our “Get more referrals” toolkit.

Getting started.



Referability scorecard

Do you have a referral process in place for your practice?

In our experience, the advisors getting the most referrals—25+ a year on average—are process-driven both on referrals and other aspects of their business, including:

- Communicating with their clients
- Working with centres of influence (COIs)
- Attracting referrals
- Capturing and managing referrals through their CRM
- Following up effectively
- Running an initial meeting with a prospect

Every action (or reaction) is intentional, thoughtful, and consistent. Think about your business and how you attract and manage prospects—especially referrals. How do you develop clients and professional partner relationships?

Score yourself on your current referral process so you can gauge what type of plan you may need in the future. We cannot emphasize enough the need to have a plan, write it down, share it with your team, and operationalize it with technology and workflows.



Design your referral seed

A referral seed is the go-to message that you and your team use to highlight what your audience needs to know. Communicating your ideal client and the unique value that you provide will help you increase referrals through current clients and COIs.

Always be planting referral seeds

We don't typically recommend asking for referrals. For many advisors, it can feel unnatural and uncomfortable, especially if you have clients with sensitive biases.

Instead, position yourself to be at the right place at the right time when a client or COI is asked to recommend a financial advisor like you. You increase your chances of being top of mind when you have an always-on referral planting seed habit. The most referable firms don't just rely on the advisors to do this. Their entire team and professional partners or COIs are also well-versed in their referral seed language and process.

A strong referral seed explains:

1. **Who** you ideally serve
2. **Why** you love to serve them
3. **How** you uniquely serve them
4. **When** they may need your help
5. **How** to make an introduction

Write something that clearly explains what you do, how you do it, and why. An example of a thoughtful referral seed could sound something like this:

"Our firm offers expertise in helping business owners navigate all financial aspects of selling their business, so they feel good about the process, outcomes, and their future. Most business owners go through this process once in their lifetime. We have assisted more than 50 clients over the past 10 years to value and sell their business as they prepare for the next chapter in their life. We can offer advice and answer important financial questions, or we can work side by side with our clients through the entire process of selling a business. It's their choice. We are typically brought in about one year before the transition begins—often through an email introduction."

Use the "Design your referral seed" worksheet to develop your own go-to referral seed message. Make sure your team is trained and comfortable with the message and process.

Role-playing works well. Most of all, you and your team should develop a habit of planting referral seeds daily so it becomes second nature. Also, don't forget to let your network know you are looking to grow.

Note: Using consistent messaging that articulates your value across all forms of communication is key. Our "Articulate your value" toolkit can help with this.



Define your referral plan

The most referable firms don't just get more referrals. They are intentional with their referral efforts.

They do this by using a referral seed and telling their clients and COIs how they would prefer to be introduced. They have a formal follow-up process with referrals and referrers using their CRM to capture relevant information, including the source. Remember, the most referable advisors are process-driven across their entire business.

Once they get an initial meeting, they follow a formal, predefined experience with prospects. Most even have set questions they always ask during a prospect meeting.

Leave almost nothing to chance. Have a plan and a process. And refine them until you figure out what works—and then do that over and over again.

Using the Referral Plan tool

Use best practices from the most referable firms by defining your referral strategy and tactics. Determine which tactics fit best for your practice and clients from the Referral Plan tool.

Start with your “why.”	Define the specific activities you will commit to in order to drive your desired outcomes.
Define your “who.”	What type of referrals do you want? Who do you want to get referrals from (e.g., clients and/or COIs)? You can choose one or multiple targets. Keep in mind that the more targets you choose, the more tactics you will need to manage.
Reiterate your “what.”	Now that you've defined your referral seed language, summarize the key messages in your plan so that everything can be found in one place.
Start your “how” by developing a process that will help you attract referrals and then manage them.	This is your game plan for identifying and documenting the tactics you want to employ with your clients, COIs, and team.
Make sure that your digital footprint and marketing support your referral goals and process.	This means that you have a website that makes it easy for referrals to find and connect with you. Ensure that your social media profiles are up to date and accurate. Include a current photo.
Create a formal, predefined process to manage referrals.	This is where you put your inputs together to form what we traditionally refer to as your “value proposition.” This one or two sentence statement summarizes what you do, for whom, and the impact. It should be comfortable to say, and it will be amplified by your beliefs.

Professional partners and COIs

The more your professional partners understand what you do and how you do it, the better advocates they can be. However, it's also important to reciprocate the value they provide. Get to know them and learn how you may be able to help. Have a plan to approach these relationships, including:

1. Working in conjunction with them on shared client relationships to reinforce value and stay top of mind.
2. Making it a habit to send referrals that would fit their business model.
3. Inviting them to your client and prospect events.

If you don't have existing COI relationships, then it's time to get to know your clients' other professional partners. Find someone you want to replicate or prioritize professional networking where your ideal client can be found (e.g., business organizations, philanthropy events).

You don't need a lot of COIs. Two to three strong relationships who refer is plenty. In our experience, accountants tend to be strong COI referral sources since they have an annual look into their clients' financial situation. Estate lawyers and insurance specialists may also be useful COIs to cultivate for referrals and to add value to your clients.

Be patient, stick to your plan, and keep planting referral seeds. The funny thing about referrals is that referrals beget referrals. Once you figure it out, there's no turning back.

For more information, contact your SEI team at 866-734-3388 or sales@seic.com.

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