

be a pipe NOT A bucket

Written by Gary Abram

“You can't start a fire, you can't start a fire without a spark. This gun's for hire...” -*Bruce Springsteen*

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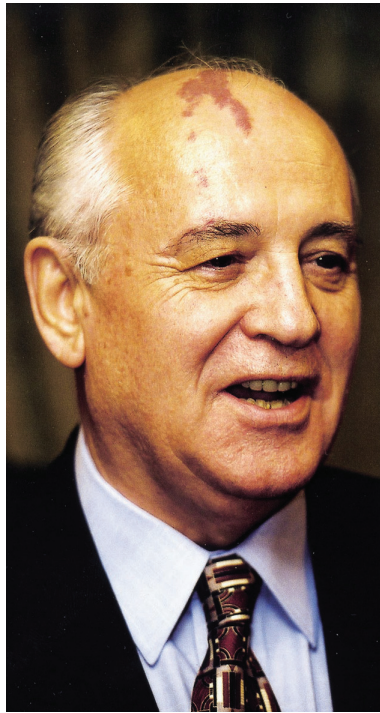
CHAPTER ZERO

The title of this short book, “Be a pipe, not a bucket,” comes from an expression that my mentor, Robert D. O’Byrne taught me 20 years ago. Bob always told me that if I behaved like a bucket I would soon fill my bucket up and have no room for new opportunities and relationships. He would say, “Gary, my boy, be a pipe. If you let that sludge build up in the bottom of the bucket, you’ll be stuck.” I wrote about this bromide and many others in the book Bob and I co-authored, “Distance to the Green.”

Without a doubt, you can’t have enough friends and relationships to drive business development but many sales persons make the mistake of plowing the same relationships over and over. They become buckets, not pipes. This book is about creating many, many pipes.

These pipes are the process, and the network we utilize to fully leverage our relational capital to gain access to:





Friends, acquaintances and total strangers can take you to amazing places. Mine have been so generous:

- One allowed me to spend two hours interviewing Mikhail Gorbachev in the cabin of his Citation X.
- One provided a round of golf with renowned golf players Zach Johnson and Lee Janzen at Isleworth.
- One suggested that we play three on three with the Missouri governor, later U.S. Attorney General, in the Mizzou basketball arena.
- One introduced me to a college president with whom we started a unique public-private joint venture.

- Others introduced me to decision makers resulting in millions of dollars of contracts for my colleagues, my clients and me.

- And most importantly, they introduced me to the most precious commodity—thousands of new friends.

This short book is a journey to understand how friends can best help friends in the business world. It explores in depth a kind of fear or reluctance I dubbed Referral Reluctance. I've also created a system called "The Piper" with the antidote to this harmful condition.

I know that most of you are like me—in a hurry. This book can be consumed from wheels up to wheels down of a very short flight. It's a pipe, not a bucket.

CHAPTER ONE

In April of 1979 at nearly 27 years old, I endured my first cold call.

Nothing can prepare one for the sheer terror of picking up the phone for the first time and asking the unsuspecting recipient to do us a favor.

For me, the panic was swift and complete. There's no way that Jack (who caught that first call) couldn't hear the quaver in the voice, the pounding of the heart or the foot tapping of the jimmy leg that overcame my extremities.

I convinced myself I could sell, and now I was face-to-face with the cold-call monster—and he was eating my lunch. My rationale for being able to sell: fierce competitor, former professional athlete, glib know-it-all was crushed within seconds:

- *What if they hang up?*
- *What if they laugh?*
- *What if they ask a question I don't have an answer for?*

- *What if they see this as a selfish action designed to benefit mostly me?*

- *What the heck was I thinking? I'm not a sales person!*

Fortunately, none of those ego-destroying fears cropped up during the call and the second call was slightly easier and the third easier and the fourth, even easier and, at 6 p.m., I headed humbly home.

Fortunately, my fear of failure and hatred of losing was stronger than any of my irrational fears about the selling process and I quickly set out to defeat once and for all the dreaded cold-call monster. I had to or face my biggest fear—striking out.

How would I do that? By grappling my own fears, I perfected a cure for referral reluctance. I was able to avoid the cold call monster whenever possible and rely on a referral system and the law of reciprocity—offering something of value in return for something of value.



CALL RELUCTANCE VS. REFERRAL RELUCTANCE

Most sales training programs address call reluctance, but discuss little about the specific troubles created by referral reluctance.

My good friend, Steve Kloyda (www.theprospectingexpert.com), says that only one in nine sales persons are adept at earning referrals. I'll add that referrals have the potential to be nine times more powerful than a cold call.



Here are the essential truths of Referral Reluctance. The Rule of Nines describes it:

- The reason only one in nine sales professionals consistently earn referrals is rooted in fear. The other eight are simply too scared to ask for referrals from acquaintances and friends.
- This fear can be tamed, mastered and overcome by gaining confidence in a process.
- The process can make you earn referrals by leveraging relational capital that is nine times more powerful than cold calls.

By making warm calls—calls where I had something to leverage—I didn't have to imply my supremacy. Instead, my contact on the other end of the phone realized what value I have for them. It was not only a huge timesaver, but a smarter, more efficient way to do business.

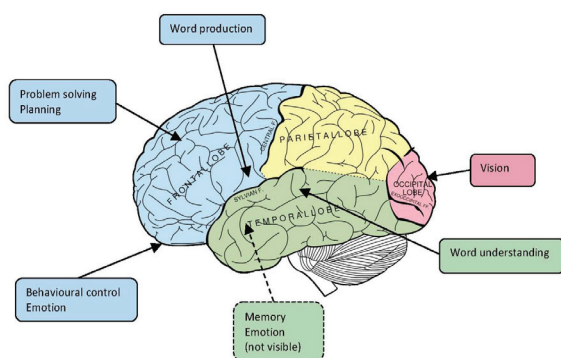
Referral:

The investment of reputation to initiate a new relationship on behalf of another, thereby enhancing or speeding the development of that new relationship.

ACTION CURES FEARS

At least 25 years ago, I ran across a long-forgotten title of management book with a truism that has stuck—action cures fears. Its value has been proven time after time. When you get stuck because of your fears, do something. Here’s a quick download on the organics of fear.

There’s some stuff going on in your brain when the heebie jeebies kick in. Take, for instance, the phobia of flying. What do we do? We can construct an elaborate “work around” like football broadcaster John Madden did. He drove across the country during the NFL season rather than flying. Or we could just not travel at all. This fear manifests itself in sales by just avoiding making calls (like eight of nine sales persons) or having someone else work the phones (the ever-popular telemarketing gambit).



But people do overcome their fear of flying and it starts with the frontal part of the brain, the executive center, quieting the limbic (emotional) part of the brain, specifically the little part called the

amygdala where emotional memories are stored. When we perceive a threat, our brain starts a series of reactions that cause the release of several chemicals. This includes cortisol from the adrenal gland so we can deal with stress. This is a good thing if being chased by a bear, but it can be pretty hard on the body if the stress is unrelenting. My limbic reaction during my first cold call was severe.



But what happens if our brain makes a mistake? If our brain sees a tree root but thinks it’s a snake, we react like it’s a snake until our front part of the brain figures out it’s only a tree root. But nevertheless, the emotional reaction is stored, and the more unpleasant the reaction, the longer and more vividly the memory is retained. And it’s the same for sales people. Here’s a quick rundown of common sales person fears:

- *They won’t like me*
- *I don’t want to be perceived as just a “sales” person*
- *I don’t know how, when, where or why*

- *They don't like my product*
- *My pricing is not competitive*
- *They won't need what I'm selling*
- *They like their current vendor more than me*
- *I'm not comfortable with my sales process*
- *I don't believe in my sales process*
- *I'm behind in my sales goals*
- *My boss doesn't like me*
- *My company doesn't support our product*
- *They don't have time for me*
- *I'll never be able to meet the right people in:*
 - *The community*
 - *My prospect's company*
 - *My company*
 - *Centers of influence*
 - *Social circles*
 - *Professional circles*



If one has experienced these unpleasant memories or emotions associated with certain parts of the selling process stored in our amygdala then we'll have the fear factor. But are these memories improperly stored tree roots or harmful snakes?

Having a process that quiets the fear reaction and replaces it with a pleasant one is the aim of our strategy. Keep in mind the amygdala stores all emotional memories so let it store a favorable, pleasant one that you can use to trigger your behaviors. Once you've mastered the referral process, you'll enjoy earning the referral. These positive emotions will push to the background. The old, fearful memories that would otherwise be paralyzing.

Referral reluctance manifests itself in different ways. Don't despair if you see yourself in one or more of these, The Piper (process) will help you defeat the monster. Here are three common cases.

BOB



Advantages:

- Well-connected
- Family connections
- Extensive social network

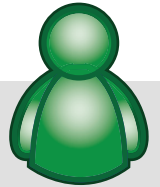
Pitfall:

- Fearful to use social connections for business

Bob is 42 years old, married with two kids. He and his wife of 15 years both come from families with deep ties in the community. Both their fathers were very successful businessmen who belonged to the same prestigious country club, and though Bob and his wife, Karen, went to different private schools, they knew each other from the club and started dating when they both went to the same famous liberal arts university. Bob is active as a legacy member in the country club. Karen is active in Junior League, and the kids are busy with school and sports. Bob is really connected to the movers and shakers in his community. His peers within his company are green with envy

when they've talked about Bob's social network. Yet, Bob does relatively little business within these marvelous centers of influence even though he would call most of them friends.

SAM



Advantages:

- Great personal knowledge of industry
- Attentive to customers

Pitfall:

- Reluctant to ask the customers who love him for a referral

Sam has great customers who love him. Sam's technical knowledge is superb and he stays on top of the best practices within his industry and passes that information along to customers. He's very attentive, dropping by his clients at least once a quarter to check on follow through and execution. He even remembers to send all his decision makers a birthday card each year. Sam never loses a client and when his company does client

satisfaction surveys, his territory gets the highest score. Yet, Sam is reluctant to ask any of his customers for a referral. Sam works long hours to fulfill his drive to be there for his customers. His sales have grown marginally over the past several years and during the recent downturn, his book of business had the highest persistency of any in the company.

NANCY



Advantages:

- Involved in industry organizations
- Willing to take on additional, often thankless, leadership tasks.

Pitfall:

- Afraid of being perceived as greedy

When Nancy began her sales career she was fortunate to have a mentor. The mentor suggested to her that she really invest in her career by being active in as many organizations as she had time. Nancy loved both the social and professional interaction and invariably became involved at the leadership level working her way to serving as chair of her trade group, but also the PTA, the Rotary and a Woman's Executive group. Sure, it was time consuming, but Nancy felt the work meaningful and worth the sacrifice. But once she overheard someone remark about a friend of hers, Joan. This friend thought Joan only belonged to try to get something for Joan. Nancy vowed that she would never have that said about her. Nancy's sales are always above average but never at the level she thought they should be.

I suspect most of us would consider Bob, Sam and Nancy fortunate in most respects but sadly held back from their best performances.

We're all complex and we're all a jumble of ego, self-delusion, healthy stuff and other stuff, but strongest blocker of an effective referral strategy is fear.

SO WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

Your list probably looks something like this:

1. Perception of greed
2. Perception of taking advantage of relationships and a desire to not do business with friends
3. Fear of losing a friendship
4. Secretly ashamed of being the sales guy.
5. Fear that the response will show how they feel about you as a friend



What the heck are you afraid of?

One of my most important sales coaches was never a sales person. In fact, he became the Chief Justice of the Missouri Supreme Court. But he discovered Nuero Linguistic Programming (NLP) years before it became basis of Tony Robbin's self-motivation stuff, including walking on hot coals. But one the most fascinating discoveries within NLP was the effective treatment of phobias. The secret sauce turns out to be a technique that causes the sufferer to get outside of himself and look at the absurdity of his fear. Once the rational mind is convinced the fear is ridiculous, it can quiet the emotional mind. So let's look at the phobias surrounding referral reluctance. You may have some additional ones that are equally silly.

1. PERCEPTION OF GREED

Well, this isn't silly; this is biblical. Here's a basic rundown:

The Seven Deadly Sins are a classification of objectionable vices that have been used since early Christian times to educate and instruct followers concerning fallen humanity's tendency to sin. The currently recognized version of the list is usually given as wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy and gluttony.

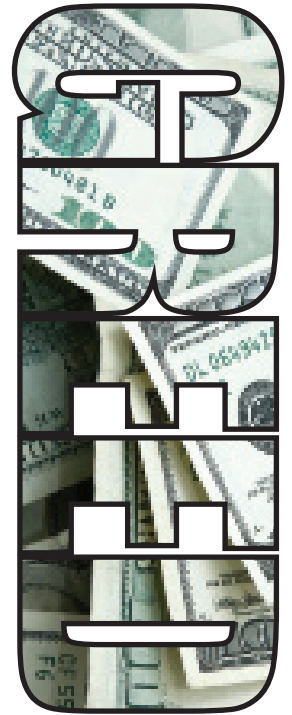
Regardless of our religious beliefs, most socialized humans have a code that causes them to pause before they sin. Of the seven deadliest, three would seem to be inhibitors when we consider asking for a referral: greed, sloth and pride. The foremost of these three deadly sins is greed.

My first theory on referral reluctance is derivative of this idea of sin. Now your personal reaction to sin will be dependent on your upbringing and concept of the devil, but here goes my first theory:

It's your mom's fault. When I was young, my mom was really big on concepts like sharing and not appearing to be raised by wolves. So if we went over to Johnny's house and Johnny's mom offered cookies, we weren't supposed to pester Johnny's mom for a second helping.

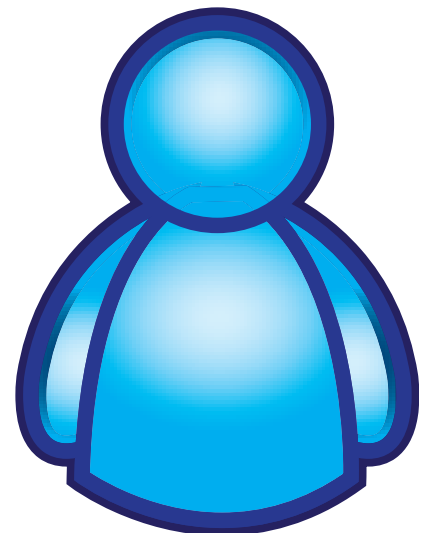
So what does that have to do with referral reluctance?

As you work toward building your referral process, you're going to run across our concept of two types of referrals: earned and favored. But in each case, there's a hold back caused by our reluctance to sin, to go for seconds and thirds and fourths.



2. PERCEPTION OF TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A RELATIONSHIP AND A DESIRE TO NOT DO BUSINESS WITH FRIENDS

Amazingly, one of the biggest fears I've witnessed is manifest in Bob's story (a man with great social ties and well-known family). I used Bob instead of the usual nicknames: Biff, Dub, Trey and Old Chum. But it isn't just blue bloods that fall victim to the fear. It creates blockage whenever we forget the old adage: That's what friends are for! This is the holdup that Nancy faces. Though she is well connected through her organizations, she fears it will seem she is only involved to further her personal gain. In reality, it is the opposite—one should not fear tapping into established, honest connections.



3. FEAR OF LOSING A FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are not lost over asking a favor. If I have this fear, then it's probably because I'm afraid that I'll learn I don't actually have that friendship or maybe I'm projecting. Projection is that psychological term that means I'm taking my own feelings and projecting them on to someone else. Hence, *don't ask me for a referral because I won't risk my reputation for you or anyone because I don't have a lot of confidence in my own reputation!*

4. THE SHAME OF IT ALL

Here's the saddest of the fear factors—shame:

- Secretly ashamed of being the sales guy. Constantly desiring to project the image of something other than a sales guy.

- Secretly ashamed that you might not be good enough or the product is not good enough.

- Don't want to be seen as “that” guy (see “Needle Nose” Ned Ryerson in *Groundhog Day*).

5. FEAR OF THE RESPONSES YOU WILL RECEIVE

Darrell Royal, the great Texas Longhorn coach famously said that three things can happen when you pass and two of them are bad. Same with asking:

- *The worst: They might flat say no, implying that they don't like or trust you.*
- *Distasteful: They might grimace and reluctantly give you a referral with qualifiers like, “let me contact them first.”*
- *The lone good option: “I'm happy to...why haven't you asked before?”*

Admit it. We've seen it in their eyes. *Oh. You're the sales guy.* But what we do is much, much harder than almost any career path. And without us, business is

stuck! Someone has to be out there on that wall. As Jack Nicholson famously said, “You want me on that wall. You need me on that wall!” What the Piper is all about is artfully being on that wall.

That's why I like to think of what we do as professionally asking. We have to be consultants, psychologists, competitors and rock stars all at the same time. It's a tough duty. As the great modern philosopher Woody Allen said, “Life is divided into the horrible and the miserable.”

Here's what we know. Going through life feeling like a victim or ashamed is really miserable. Having that attitude in the sales field is horrible. Established fear essentially equals a reluctance to act. However, this reluctance disease can be cured by a process.

AWARENESS IS CURATIVE

It's evident that having a referral process can have huge implications to our success but research shows that most people are not adept at earning referrals. Is it fear? Is it the lack of a process? Is it a combination? Action cures fears and an action plan to enhance referrals is a great way to drive out the demons.

A couple of years ago I was fortunate to learn a valuable lesson about process from Masters champion Zach Johnson. I got a call the week before Christmas from a very close Orlando friend who started the conversation with, "You gotta get down here Monday. We're playing golf at Isleworth." Those of you who are golf nuts will recognize that club as one that has several dozen PGA members like Stuart Appleby, J.B. Holmes, Mark O'Meara and Tiger Woods.

My response was, "Great, Buddy, but it's Christmas week. I can't drop everything. I've got meetings scheduled."

His retort, "But we're playing with Zach Johnson and Lee Janzen." Johnson had just won the Masters and Janzen owns two U.S. Open Championships. "Yeah, we'll play with Johnson on the front nine and Janzen on the back." I responded with, "I guess these meetings can wait."

Zach is an incredibly nice guy. On the fifth tee box, I asked Zach about the mental aspect of the game. Here's the

advice that he gave and he follows:

1. Things are going to happen during a round, both good and not so good. It is human nature to react and that's okay.

2. As soon as you react, force yourself right back into your process. Don't get stuck in an emotional state, but rather think strategically about the next shot and only the next shot. Don't get ahead of yourself. Rely on your pre-shot routine to become grounded in the moment.

3. And most importantly, "Don't worry about outcomes. When the round is over and you add up your score. That's your outcome."

How universal is that thought? Too often, we get ahead of ourselves in sales situations. We get up or down. We skip steps. We ignore important signs. We start imagining the outcome prematurely which causes missteps and miscalculations.



The referral process is just like professional golf. Stuff happens. But just like championship golf, you can't consistently win if you don't have a professional game with a professional, polished process.

Rule of 9s Eight of nine sales persons rarely, if ever, ask for referrals and a referred lead is nine times more powerful than a cold one.

Fear is the leading source of referral reluctance.

Fear can be conquered if we recognize it and design a logical process to address our anxieties.

Time for a quick review:

The average non-daredevil human is willing to do lots of scary stuff when they're confident on the process keeping them safe. (I still can't believe I went up in the Red Baron bi-plane to do barrel rolls!)

I've attempted to create a referral reluctance "safe system" (process) to help me and you overcome our fear. It's called the Piper. Like most processes, the Piper comes with easy-to-follow steps.

CHAPTER SIX

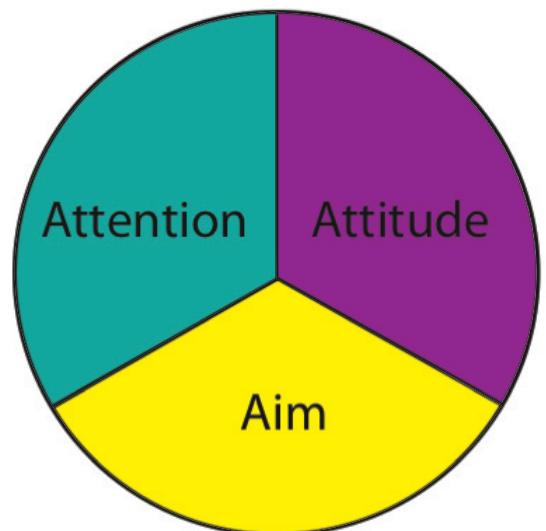


Confession time: All the elements of The Piper are about to be disclosed but in general terms. I've extracted some of the crunchy, granular tools and charts to make the reading easier. However, if you want to go much deeper my contact information is at the end.

THE PIPER PROCESS

Nine Steps to the artful referral:

1. Self-Talk
2. Value Creation Statement
3. Confirmation Equals Confidence
4. Referral Sourcing
5. Scripting the Artful Ask
6. Getting the Ask Meeting (or Call)
7. Scheduling and Confirming Asks
8. Being Artful and Likeable
9. Thanking and Following Up



STEP ONE: SELF-TALK

Many years ago, I managed a sales person who had a terrible case of reluctance. He'd been in real estate and I thought he had the right stuff for calling strangers. One day after lunch, I noticed something a little different in his mood and speech. He had fortified his lunch with some social lubrication, perhaps beer or something stronger. His career with us was pretty short. But in reflecting on his issues, it turned out that he just didn't have the self-esteem that I thought he had. He seemed confident and affable, but lacked the ingredient I came to understand to be crucial. His need to be liked was stronger than his hatred of losing. Calling strangers put him in a zone where he might not get the validation he needed to satisfy his need to be liked. He was a good guy in the wrong job.

One of the current senators from Minnesota (SNL's Stuart Smalley) used to say: "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me." It's this kind of personal motivation that will compel others to help you.

Put your fears away. Most people are willing to help if you make it easy for them to do so. Much more on how to do that shortly but first let's shine a light on fear and how to crush it.

Phobias are usually pretty ridiculous when you examine them for what they are—self-limiting fears based on perception. Let's get up close to several to see how false they really are.

- ▶ I'm not worthy
- *Hogwash. You are worthy. What you provide helps your clients succeed.*

- ▶ I don't want to be "that guy"
- *You are that guy. Embrace it. Very few people have the constitution to be the best in their field. Be that person!*

- ▶ They'll probably say they don't know anyone
- *Believe me. They know someone. Everyone wants to be connected and most wish to demonstrate that they've got connections. Tap into their ego! My brilliant mentor, Bob O'Byrne, always said "Ego trumps logic."*

- ▶ I'll seem desperate
- *You're right—desperate isn't attractive. But urgent is a sign of a person on a mission who won't let obstacles prevent his success. Go for it!*

- ▶ The timing isn't quite right
- *Do you know how many deals were missed because the timing wasn't right? Just think of the last time some competitor ached you out because you were waiting for the right moment.*

- ▶ It's been too long since I saw him and he'll think I'm taking advantage of him
- *Staying in touch is a 50/50 proposition. Be there for his benefit and not yours.*

Look if you haven't figured out that every big deal executive was once a rookie or that the big deal executive has landed on third and thought he hit a triple, let me advise you there's no reason to be intimidated if you have something valuable and worthy of their time.

Trust me—the people who do big deals aren't wired differently than you or me. They don't like to screw up, look bad nor have their egos bruised. But they are like you and me in that they don't want their time wasted. The next step is essential!

STEP TWO: VALUE CREATION STATEMENT

What's the most critical component to your referral strategy? It's got to be your deeply understood and seamlessly presented value creation statement. Some call it value proposition or elevator speech, but I think that sells it a bit short. Ram Charan said it so well in his important work, "What Your Customer Wants You to Know," when he profoundly suggested the contemporary sales person had to transform from "features and benefits" to truly understanding the business issues of their clients. So much has been made of consultative selling in recent years, but consulting for most sales people meant giving the following advice—buy my stuff.

Charan's key piece of wisdom was his suggestion that our goal should be to understand our customer's issues so we could create value by helping our clients win business regardless of our product or service. Now that's compelling! That's the essence of our value creation strategy: how can we so deeply understand our customer's needs that we become invaluable to their success? This isn't

always immediately evident, but always worth the effort. Once discovered, it becomes the nugget that we bring to every commercial conversation. Not only does it give us relevance, but the courage of our convictions.

So how does one nail his/her value creation statement? Without a doubt, it begins with a struggle to understand how what we do or provide becomes "useful" and hopefully indispensable.

Once you've gotten a good handle on your value creation statement, test it. Does it resonate with your own core values, company mission, brand and collateral material? Do you feel proud and that you've positioned yourself competitively in a category of one?

If those answers are affirmative, now you have something important to share with referral sources that will make them comfortable you're worthy of referring. Being able to effectively and succinctly explain why you are valuable is the key to making it possible for others to refer you.

STEP THREE: CONFIRMATION EQUALS CONFIDENCE

Movie fans may remember the hilarious scene in Wayne's World when Wayne and Garth meet Alice Cooper and chant, "We're not worthy. We're not worthy." Those famous words strike at the core of referral reluctance. Yet, when companies do surveys on behalf of their "worthiness," they frequently find that they have lots of raving fans willing to help them build their business.

One of my good friends whose national practice of coaching independent insurance agencies has an impressive dataset showing companies that measure

the strength of their client's feelings find overwhelmingly those feelings are positive to the extent that they would refer or recommend. However, of the 6,000 companies included in his survey, only 10 percent had an affirmative program to measure customer satisfaction! Crazy. Why wouldn't we want to know how your clients felt about us? Is it because we are scared to have those answers?

If you knew that 90 percent of your clients were willing to recommend you, would it change your mind about going for the referral? Let me rephrase that question:

If you had a powerful value creation statement that you owned and a high “referrability” metric that empirically supported your assumption of being liked, respected and trusted, would you be more aggressive in seeking referrals?

STEP FOUR: REFERRAL SOURCING

Catalytic Conversion

I’m continually struck by the difference between passive and active relationship development and the need to be a catalyst. A catalyst in a chemical reaction speeds the reaction—it’s an active ingredient. Too often, networking strategies are passive—go somewhere, be seen, get a database, join a club. It’s better than no action, but it doesn’t require one to step outside his or her comfort zone. Because of that, one has little control over what connections are made—one is simply waiting for opportunities to come to him or her.

What if you were more like a catalytic converter? What if you were someone who took some bold risks, stuck their neck out to be the person who was a focal point of the action and converted those actions into new relationships?

Passive

- Attending events
- Listening to the speaker
- Reading the article or the blog
- Joining an organization
- Being punctual
- Hoping

Catalytic

- Organizing the event
- Being the speaker
- Writing the article or the blog
- Leading the organization
- Come early, stay late
- Making something happen

What’s the big difference in the two lists?

- Investment of time
- Willingness to take action



Each of us has sufficient quantities of time and imagination to be catalytic!

Another huge difference? Access to many more prospects and future clients!

STEP FIVE: SCRIPTING THE ARTFUL ASK

This is the part that's going to give you a huge boost of confidence and reduce your fear factor. In fact, with some rehearsing and a few live experiences, you'll even begin to look forward to your referral meetings.

You'll need to create multiple scripts for the various scenarios. A meeting with a close contact is not the same as a casual acquaintance.

Framing when used as a psychological concept is simply the context in which an idea or a question is posed. I want to use it in a similar way to help you gain more referrals than you might otherwise. Here are some ideas to consider when you meet with a referral source:

- The brain generally works better when it can process from a general to specific.
- Most of us are pretty busy and distracted.

- Although we all have many connections and referrals, we don't necessarily organize our relationships as such.

- The brain has loads of processing power if we give it some time to work (even in the background). We speak up to 200 words per minute, but my mind can think five times that fast.

- The brain will work on a "problem" even if it's not intending to do so. That's why we wake up in the morning with solutions to problems we went to bed with—sleep on it is pretty good advice.

I can positively attest to power of framing "the ask." I've used it successfully hundreds of times seeking referrals! Here's how to leverage the "unbidden" processing power of the human brain and the scores of relationships we all have but usually don't organize as referrals.

Framing the Ask

Here are the steps:

1. Gain the attention of the source (in person or by phone)

- a. Thanks and permission

- i. The pace of business is ever-quickenning and it's polite and respectful to thank people for their time and attention.

- b. Buffer zone

- i. No matter that the meeting or call was scheduled, you're interrupting someone's train of thought.

- ii. Create a buffer from the previous train of thought and your request by engaging for a few moments some talk that is personal to the source (family, business, etc).

2. Engage the undistracted (or less distracted) source.

a. Purpose

- i. What am I trying to accomplish? Don't worry, the referral source is consciously or unconsciously working to figure this out already.
- ii. Deftly include your value creation statement so that you lay out what's in it for the source and for you.

3. Paint in the "Frame"

- a. Imagine that you are an artist and by describing in detail your ideal referral, you'll trigger the problem solving gears of the source's brain. It's impossible for the undistracted mind not to work on the puzzle. This is the critical step that allows you to speak openly about your "problem" (the need of a referral) without hesitation or directly pleading for a referral.

4. Allow for your source to marinate

- a. If you're fortunate, the referrals will spring forth immediately.
- b. Don't despair if that doesn't happen. Allow for some marinating.
 - i. Change the subject to personal or trivial.
 - ii. Re-describe your quest in other terms or words.
 - iii. Be patient. The puzzle solving may take 10 minutes or more.

5. Practice the Law of Reciprocity

- a. What do you have to offer in return?
- b. Marinating continues.

6. Thanks

- a. Provide easy access back to you when the marinating finishes (it may continue for days).

Earned vs Favored vs Combo

To harvest the “geometry” of all your relationships (the basis of LinkedIn, for instance), you need to inventory those relationships and recognize that each of them is born from slightly or largely different beginnings. Clearly relationships evolve and can’t spring instantly into trusted or intimate. Our supposition says that close, close relationships can be more difficult and ironically greater reluctance ensues.

The full-blown Piper (not diagrammed here) starts with an inventory process and then asks the questions whether the basis of the relationship is business (earned); friend or family (favored) or an evolved business-friendship (combo).

Every great movie starts with an outline and eventually a script, but even the best actor is stymied by a lousy script. Here are some script ideas that are intended to help you script your referral meetings.

Earned Script (they should know how you create value, and if they don’t, shame on you and be ready for your competition to exploit this gap)

1. How are you? Make it about their favorite topic.
2. How’s business? Make it about their favorite topic.
3. How are we doing? Has our business relationship earned referable status?
4. How can we do more?

5. Lead or token. Okay—this is where you take the lead (sorry about the pun). You lead with a referral. Model your process by being the best in the world at providing referrals!

6. Frame the ask, envision the target and paint in the frame.

7. Favor:
- a. Intel
 - b. Name
 - c. Introduction

8. Thanks

Favored (This conversation can be tougher than the earned one because many feel that they are encroaching on the friendship.)

1. How are you? Be curious, genuine and patient.
2. What’s the big picture look like to you? Shift the conversation to business in general.
3. Admission that you have your business development hat on. Here’s where you declare that you’d like to shift the conversation if they’re open to it.
4. How can I help you?
5. Frame the ask. Paint the frame.

6. The favor
- a. Intel
 - b. Name
 - c. Introduction

7. Thanks

When it comes to confidence, there’s no substitute for experience and practice. The anxiety we feel toward any new or awkward situation is natural, but it can be dispelled by confidence. Gaining confidence in the referral meeting or phone call is a function of planning and practice. There are three components to the successful “ask:”

- Build common ground
- The “Give”
- The “Take”

Each component is bound together as a whole (see list below) by the Law of Reciprocity. Simply stated: we're very likely to help someone or receive help if there's been an investment—quid pro quo.

So let's imagine a meeting with these three components scripted and practiced.

Common Ground

- Business, specifically how it can create value
- Family
- Sports
- Current events, especially local happenings
- Avoid: politics, religion

The Give

- A referral from you
- Meal
- Info/expertise
- Tangibles (tokens)
- Tickets and entertainment
- Your value creation capabilities

The Take: The Ask

- General Information
- Specific targets as described
- Permission to reference
- Introductions

The most important thing to remember during this process is to show, rather than tell, your source what value you have to them and others whom they know. By using this give-and-take approach as you frame your ask, you are positioning yourself for a successful referral.

STEP SIX: GETTING THE ASK MEETING (OR CALL)

You may wonder why a script for asking for the meeting or referral is the sixth step not the third. Good question, but we think that once you have the script for the referral ask, you'll develop a smoother and more confident approach to those ask meetings or calls.

The Soft Ask and the Gracious "Out"

Like most of life, there's the yin and yang, the art and the science. The science portion of the Piper is the disciplined approach to creating the pipeline and the deeper understanding of how psychology impacts the process. The artfulness is equally important to your success in creating an endless supply of warm leads. This is really important when you sense that your referral source isn't very comfortable with the process (offering leads, introductions and endorsements).

Nowhere in the Piper is "art" more important than your ability to walk the razor thin line of encouraging referred leads and the artful off ramp or out that allows the uncomfortable resource a graceful way to decline your request without impacting your relationship and, more importantly, your ego.

The direct and non-subtle out: *"If you're uncomfortable with my request for whatever reason, just say 'pass' and we'll drop that topic."*

The indirect or anonymous out: *"If you prefer, I'll approach the prospect very professionally but without using your name. I'll say something like, a business leader mentioned your name as someone who has a tremendous perspective on the industry (ego trumps logic)."*

The more indirect out: *You'll never know what or if any action was taken. "It would be great if you would reach out to your friends who might have an interest, benefit, etc. I'll forward my contact info and a little blurb so you can forward it by e-mail if you like."*

Getting the meeting

Now that you've mastered the art of gaining the referral, you want as many of these meetings as possible, right? I mixed the sequence hoping that once you see how effective a referral meeting can be that it would give you confidence to establish a permanent cadence of such meetings. And that is critical. Establish a habit of keeping your pipeline full of referrals. This is foundational to working smarter than your competition. A steady stream of warm leads trumps every other sales strategy.

I'm certain that one of the greatest sales training books ever wasn't written with that intention but *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell is an essential read for every business development pro. In it, Gladwell describes the phenomenon of "word of mouth" or how ideas spread. He explains how three very rare and special psychological types, whom he called connectors, mavens and salesmen, create word of mouth. A connector is that person we all know who seems to know everyone and everyone knows him or her. A maven is an expert in a particular topic. Remember Cliff Clavin, the bar know-it-all in the TV show *Cheers*? Cliff was an all-time maven. They are outstanding sources since they make it a passion to really know a subject matter or business segment. Lastly, the salesmen are the persuaders and the good ones are virus carriers of ideas and are consequently busy spreading the virus to others by making lots of contacts.

STEP SEVEN: SCHEDULING AND CONFIRMING ASKS

We've found four candidates for our formula:

1. Permanently paralyzed by fear: *"Not gonna do it."*
2. Sporadic and panic driven: *"Yikes! I got nuthin' in the pipeline."*
3. Sporadic: *"I need to get some stuff going."*
4. Steady and habituated to various business development strategies.

I'll bet you can guess which we favor. Like numerous proverbs you already know, steady not only wins the race but also winds up with the big prizes. We understand that life will constantly get in the way of business development. It's the No. 1 rationalization used on all continents for several centuries—I didn't

have time to do that because something more urgent came up.

To help others and myself combat this problem, I had some toothbrushes created several years ago that had the following on the handle:

Make business development part of your daily sales hygiene.

When I asked one group, all admitted that they brush daily so I figured they might get the message. Because referral reluctance is such a fear-based epidemic, the thought of a daily requirement for gaining a referral or scheduling an ask is completely off the radar. We're certain that our Rule of Nine is spot on—only one in nine sales professionals habitually gain referrals.

STEP EIGHT: ARTFUL LIKEABILITY

Artful Likeability

In the past 20 years or so there's been much written about rapport building. Sales persons have been encouraged to learn about mirroring, pacing and other techniques that enhance the seduction of their prospect. Several years ago, I developed a simple formula to help people acquire a truly precious goal—a livelihood! If you can build sufficient rapport to get your dream job, then you can learn to build sufficient rapport to get the referral you wish to earn.

Here's the advice I've given to insure a warm interpersonal transaction worthy of extra consideration (a job offer or a referral): The Three P's. Professional. Prepared. Positive. Let's consider each.



Professional

Professionalism is the look, the attitude, the demeanor and the evident skills to be fit the beholder's perception of having the right stuff to be considered a pro. Absent these intangibles, the referral source is likely to see you as unworthy and a potential liability to his or her reputation. Offering a recommendation or introduction to a friend or colleague must pass a smell test: *If I introduce you to my good friend are you going to make me look bad?*

When you present yourself in a referral situation, be a professional worthy of the introduction. How do you do that?

- Look the part. Be well groomed and dressed appropriately.
- Act the part. Be confident, polite and likeable.

Prepared

Being prepared is critical to your success! Have you done your homework to insure the best outcome?

- Before I attend a meeting of any sort, I ask myself "What's a great outcome to this meeting?" That provides the basic path to success.
- With online resources, I never go into a meeting without a search for information about the attendees of the meeting. What are their interests? Where did they go to school? How have their careers progressed? What are the important details of their business?
- Have I rehearsed the essential talking points of the meeting?
 - Who?
 - What?
 - Why?
- How do I build common ground?
 - Examples of how to build common ground: family, hometown, business interest, mutual acquaintances, etc
- What do I have to offer them?

- What is my value creation statement and description of the persons I wish to be referred to?

- How can I best facilitate that introduction or referral? How can I make it easy for the referrer?

Positive

*"If you done it, it ain't bragging."
-Walt Whitman*

There's an attractiveness to humble arrogance or arrogant humility, isn't there? I had a friend who once remarked about a candidate for a sales person that they had a distinctive loser's limp, meaning he didn't want to hire someone who gave off an air of defeatism. There's a magic that happens when a conversation becomes synergist—everyone feels they're in the presence of like-minded winners. It's flattering, warm and creates openness conducive to "yes." Yes—I'd be happy to recommend you. Yes—I'd be happy to introduce you. Yes—I'd be happy to suggest others who may be interested in how you create value.

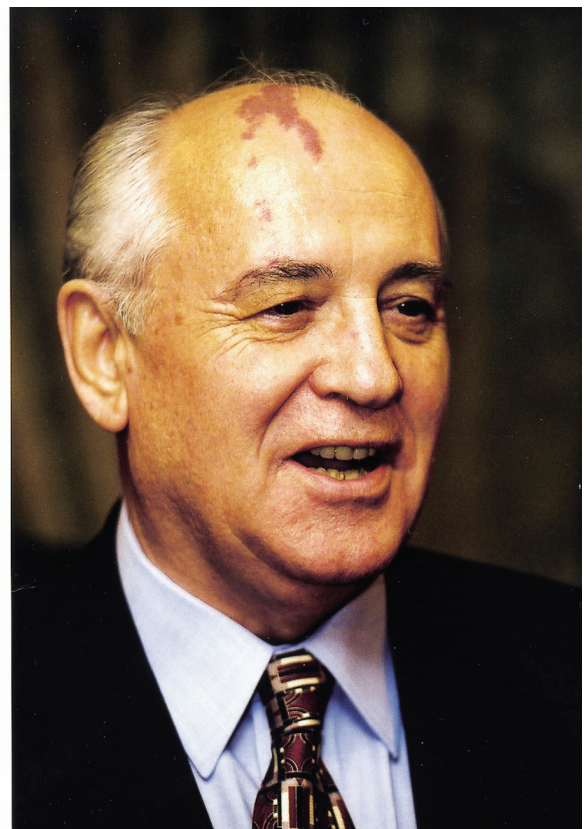
To create this positive, yes environment:

- Smile
- Make eye contact
- Be purposeful
- Be respectful of other's time
- Be grateful
- Be authentic
- Be open
- Be a winner
- Never play the victim

Much sales research says 80 percent of people will buy from a sales person that they personally like. It makes a lot of sense that given a choice we like to buy from those we like or don't dislike. Whether the referral source is earned, we've already made a sale based on our likeability. If it's a favored resource, we've likely created and maintained our likeability.

I'm convinced that a crucial component of likeability are communication skills. A non-verbal communication expert once stated that more than 90 percent of communication was derived not from the words but how the words were communicated, including the non-verbal cues. We know this. Tone and attitude come across much more loudly than the definition of the word. Body posture, eye contact and expressions are hugely important in how we message.

I once had the privilege of talking to Mikhail Gorbachev during a two hour flight. President Gorbachev doesn't speak English and I don't know Russian. As you can imagine, it was an incredible experience interviewing him through his very talented translator. The stories and insights he relayed were amazing, but what's truly stuck with me was his likeability. He was genuine, warm, engaging and had a great laugh and sense of humor. I'm sure of these things, yet I couldn't understand a word he spoke.



STEP NINE: THANKING AND FOLLOWING UP

This step is hugely important if you want more where that came from. Common courtesy dictates that we thank those who help us, but it is often a social norm that gets left by the wayside when the hustle and bustle of life gets in the way.

The thank you can be simple, but it should be personal. This means picking up the phone, hand writing a note or, at the very least, sending a well thought out personalized email.

This is the general maintenance to your Piper system. It's what cleans the pipes and keeps the referrals flowing throughout your career.



THE FINAL CHAPTER

Isn't it ironic that when moments of illumination occur they can be followed by a sense of frustration that they didn't occur sooner—"I only wish I'd known that 20 years ago?"

My last referral vignette is one of those moments. I recently followed a circuitous route of referrals that led me to an extraordinary new partnership and opportunity. The essence of that opportunity is totally germane to referral reluctance and deserves to be included in this final chapter. Here's the story of Momentivity.

As a former professional athlete (minor league pitcher before free agency) and coaching gigs in college and high school, I've been fascinated by high performance, both individually and team. I knew from competing in sports that state of mind was hyper-critical to winning and the difference maker when talent was equivalent. I was also aware that state of mind, or mindfulness, was just as important when competing in the business world and it has a huge impact on focus, productivity, wellness and safety.

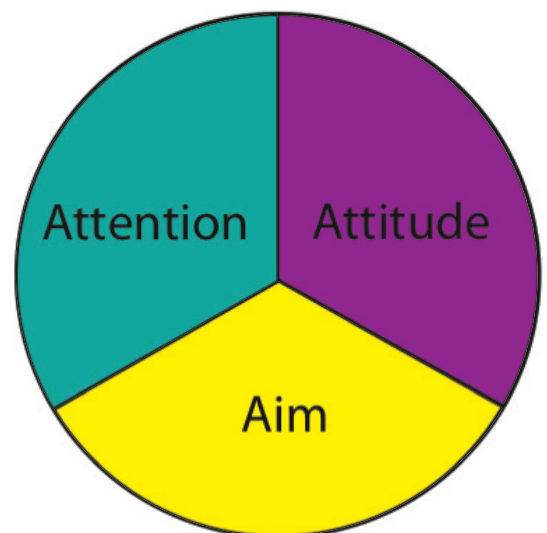
I'd gotten this big idea from a yoga instructor that mindfulness should have a place in corporate training and started to wander down that road in search of enlightenment. I stumbled across an old friend who is now director of grad studies at a local university which coincidentally

had invested five years in researching mindfulness as a part of their psych department. Lo and behold, they were very interested in putting the wheels on their research by creating corporate and individual training programs. So my friend referred me to the head of the Mindfulness Project and the president of the university and soon was born a new company that I'm proud to be a part of—Momentivity.

Momentivity has three core aspects: attention, attitude and aim. That's one of the biggest aha's that I've come across in my decades of searching for means of higher performance—why didn't I learn about this years ago?

Momentivity

I now see it everywhere when I see success or the lack of it when things go wrong. Let's apply it to the subject at hand:



Attention

Isn't it amazing to watch a "sharp" person work? They pick up on subtle cues, retain names and ideas, see what others miss, discover opportunities, see the big picture and place their time and energy in just the right spot. These sharpies are focused, keenly observant and not distracted.

Attitude

Isn't it energizing to watch a "winner?" You know the type—the non-victim! They exude confidence rather than arrogance and don't whine regardless of the breaks of the game. They see the possibilities over the liabilities, feel good about themselves, make others feel good about them and seem to draw others into their positive force field.

Aim

Stories of accomplishment are galvanizing. What do high achievers have in common? They are rarely just lucky. They may say they are, but a closer look always reveals a plan and a goal. Randomness is a great path to mediocrity.

My last piece (and best) piece of advice is to train your brain! The brain is just like a muscle and its capacity is far from fixed. You and it are capable of incredible accomplishment if you improve your attention, attitude and aim.

So what's your aim? Mine is to continue making new friends and relationships. Some may be valuable from a business standpoint, others just interesting, knowledgeable people. I'd like my endeavors to be successful and that will also rely on relationships more than any other factor.

I hope that this short "how to" has been of value. We've developed some additional tools to help the very interested organize and leverage their relationships. If you'd like to learn more about "The Piper" application and our short half-day workshop that deepen understanding and deploy "The Piper", call me on my cell phone (please reference this book) at 816-365-1866 (I'm on central time, by the way) or e-mail me at garyabram@comcast.net. I look forward to your call and our friendship.

Gary Abram