

The Bridge Leading To Referrals

By Bob Burg

For many salespeople, the most difficult part of the referral process is how to transition from the actual sale into asking for referrals without coming across as nervous, abrupt, anxious or even desperate. Enter the “Referral Bridge.”

What is a bridge? In the physical world, it’s simply a structure that transports a person from one safe piece of land to another. In this case, however, the *Bridge* is a phrase that will transport you from the safety of the sale and relationship you’ve built into the actual asking for referrals. This, without any feelings of discomfort, either by you or your potential referral source.

The “Bridge Phrase” I suggest using is:

“Anne, I’m in the process of expanding my referral business, and I find it’s helpful to partner with my clients and friends such as you. Could we take a few quick minutes to run past the names of some people I might also be able to help?”

The Wording Is So Important

Every aspect of this Bridge Phrase has a specific purpose.

#1 States Your Intent. It lets your referrals source know exactly what you’re looking to accomplish, and does so with polite *posture*.

#2 Gives Them “Buy-in.” It then includes this person in your mission by making them your “partner.” And, people who know, like and trust you, and desire to help you, want to feel some ownership in your success. Thus, “partner” is a very accurate and positive word.

#3 Assures Them This Won’t Take Up Too Much Time. By saying “A *‘few’ ‘quick’ ‘minutes’* to *‘run past’...*” (note all the words in that phrase that imply quickness) you let your referral source know that you’re not going to take a lot of their time.

#4 Provides Security That They Have Nothing to Fear. By saying, “might” (i.e., “might also be able to help”) you’ve used a word that will relax them because it shows you don’t assume everyone will be interested. Thus, they won’t have to worry that you’ll ever come across to someone they refer you to in a way that is high-pressure or in any way less than totally appropriate.

Now, Personalize It

Of course, depending upon your product, service, unique situation, and individual style, you’ll use some different words than above. But, use the basic principle and you’ll realize great success in terms of obtaining their agreement to provide referrals.

Now that you have their buy-in to the idea of referrals you can begin the actual process of asking correctly (providing several specific frames) in order to elicit high-quality names.

Of course, the “Bridge Phrase” is not only for use when asking for referrals from someone with whom you’re already doing business. It can be utilized when speaking with anyone with whom you have a sufficient “know, like and trust” relationship, even if that person isn’t personally a prospect for your product.

Bob Burg is a popular speaker at sales and leadership conferences and coauthor of the International Bestseller, *The Go-Giver* (over 500,000 copies sold in 21 languages). To read Chapter One and connect with Bob visit www.burg.com.