

Generate More "Word of Mouth" Referrals

In the for-profit world, we know that new customers recruited by existing customers are more loyal and profitable. In fact, studies show that 85% of Likes through social media and purchases are made through referral marketing rather than from advertising. For most of us, we trust the referrals made by friends and friends-of-friends. If you've ever used Yelp or Angies' List, you know what I mean. See the **Harvard Business Review** article [Why Customer Referrals Can Drive Stunning Profits.](#)

So, how can we apply these best practices to have our members recruit the best prospects possible? In this age of time poverty, it gets harder to pull off a successful membership recruiting campaign. Our members are reluctant to commit to large blocks of time and our staff resources are stretched to the limits from trying to do much for everyone. Wouldn't it be great if we could employ our members to help us recruit new members all year long without consuming a ton of money or staff time?

Here are some techniques that are working great for other associations that you might "borrow" and customize for your organization. **IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers)** has developed an awesome Member Get a Member (MGM) program. It provides an easy way for members to refer a peer on the website, and provides testimonials, a list of benefits and testimonials from other members. Members receive incentives for each referral and are provide cash prizes for the top recruiters. Members can also download recruiting coupons to hand out to peers. [Learn more about the program. . .](#)



The **National Business Aviation Association** provides members with a URL to send to peers that provides a 20% discount on their first year of membership. By using the URL and the code REFERRAL, members are able to pass on the opportunity and savings. [Learn more . . .](#)

American Statistical Association provides referral opportunities on its website that allows members to list multiple nominations and members receive a \$10 ASA gift certificate for every new member who joins. ASA staff follow up on the referrals. [Learn more. . .](#)



ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) provides members with downloadable tickets that provide their referrals with six month, no-obligation "free membership." Tickets have an expiration date to create a sense of urgency.

Prospects have the opportunity to experience the benefits of membership and the staff work to convert these free memberships into paying ones.

BTW, ASCD also employs many of the newer trends in membership models. [Check it out . . .](#)

Keep in mind that a small percentage of your members are actually going to participate in these MGM programs, so it's not going to replace all of your recruiting initiatives. So, consider these ideas as ways to supplement your current recruiting programs. Although there will be members who see these MGM programs as a way to "make out like a bandit" with the incentives, there are also members who really value what you offer and want their peers to experience the same. When these loyal members refer others, they are bringing you others with similar values and attributes. These new members are more apt to contribute, appreciate, and stay. The true test of loyalty is when members are willing to refer others to become members, too.

Cathi Hight is president of [Hight Performance Group](#) and has over 20 years experience in performance improvement. She helps organizations build sustainable futures, improve processes, increase productivity, and develop member-centricity. [Hight Performance Group](#) is the developer of the Member Retention Kit. Cathi may be reached at (720) 304-0747 or e-mail: cathi@hightperformance.com.