



Viral Marketing to Women

By Tony DiLeonardi and Barbara Kay

October 23, 2012

Advisor Perspectives welcomes guest contributions. The views presented here do not necessarily represent those of Advisor Perspectives.

Expanding your client list is a never-ending goal. Even if you already have a large and profitable client base, you need to replenish it over time. That perpetual chase can be a distraction – unless you can get clients to seek you! That's viral marketing at its best.

But most viral marketing focuses on publicity stunts with some unexpected hook. This can be a very effective, but the communication it sparks is the kind that's designed to sell you and your expertise. And women – half your potential client base – want connection more than salesmanship. To market effectively to them, move away from the publicity-based approach and focus on spurring female-friendly viral marketing that expands connection.

It's not easy to generate that kind of trust. One third of women presume all salespeople are untrustworthy. A history of *selling* instead of *servicing* the customer has soured women's trust in the sales relationship. Trust is a big factor for female consumers.

Whatever women are seeking in the marketplace, they want to be able to trust in its reliability. That's why women use their personal relationships as their primary conduit for referrals. They're confident a friend or family member will offer honest and trustworthy advice, and information is constantly flowing both ways – women ask advice from other women, and they actively promote preferred services to their peers. Social media and the Internet offer new ways for them to get this advice quickly and easily, amplifying the potential gains clients' networks can offer.

Understanding how women network can have a bottom-line impact on your business. Well served female clients are not only loyal, but they make referrals for the professionals who work for them twice as often as men, and they recommend you to friends and family three times as often.

Tapping this viral potential is not complicated. Read on, and we'll explain how.

Inspiring women to get the word out

The female viral marketing network is already active and flowing. You don't have to create it from scratch; you just need to be accepted into it in a way that will earn you positive buzz. There is a negative network that runs alongside women's preexisting promotion



channels, and if you're not careful, these viral networks can just as easily spread a warning to avoid you.

There's a natural magnifying effect that occurs when viral marketing is done well, and this is especially true when it comes to women. If another woman is present when another offers a review, she will jump in with her own recommendations. If the women concur, then the force of the advice is magnified. Your goal, therefore, is to be a recommended advisor in multiple, overlapping female networks.

How do you make that happen? As usual, it starts with the cardinal rule of working with women: It's all about the relationship. Then remember three simple imperatives: *Listen*, *Show Interest* and *Ask*.

Listen

Women promote those who have served them well, and the best way to do that is to listen for service needs while you interact with your female clients. Listen for clues especially in stories your female clients tell about their friends and family – ask yourself what matters in each client's life, and how can your services reinforce that?

Show interest

Women are focused on trust in any relationship – and that's true for professional service relationships especially. Show a genuine interest in being helpful, and then act upon it. If you build trust, she will promote you and invite you into her network. You get there by asking questions that help you align yourself strategically with her interests – and, ideally, the interests she shares with others in her network.

Ask

Once you have achieved high trust, you are prepared to move forward. If you don't have confirmation of full satisfaction, verify that first by asking what more you can be doing. If she's not fully satisfied and she thinks you're using her to get to her friends, you'll be doubly unlikely to succeed.

Once you've confirmed that the strong bond is there and your superior service has been recognized, you can seek direct entry into her network. She needs a financial advisor, and so does everyone she knows. You can reach her network by offering to meet their needs, and your clients can help you figure out what those are. Strategic questioning will provide important information.

Below are examples of interest-gathering questions. Start by checking service satisfaction and soliciting honest feedback.



“My industry has not always met the needs of women well. Am I meeting yours?”

“What has been most helpful for you as we’ve worked together?”

“I want to make sure that I serve you and others well. What kinds of concerns do you hear when you talk with other women?”

“Financial services and products can be very complex. How could I help make this topic more accessible for your friends and family?”

“What kind of outreach effort might be helpful to your friends and other women you know?”

“People are so busy these days. I sure don’t want to be an annoyance. Among your friends, what do you see as the preferred way to for someone like me connect and be a help?”

These questions have the side benefit of eliciting important information about your service to the client herself. As you ask these questions, listen for verbal and non-verbal cues about her receptivity to being questioned in this manner. If she appears hesitant in any way, quietly back off. Hesitancy indicates that she is not really your advocate or that she’s uncomfortable inviting you into her network. Your goal is to prompt an eager advocate. When you feel resistance, back off and then rededicate yourself to building a higher level of trust.

In some cases, a woman may be a strong advocate, but she will not invite you into her network with a direct introduction. She may wish to refer by giving friends your name, rather than by inviting you to a meeting or facilitating a personal connection. If that’s her preference, go with it. You’ll not win any friends by pushing for a personal introduction to her peers. If she feels pressed, she may acquiesce to you and then apologize to her friends for the intrusion, rather than say “no” to you. In that case, you’ll present yourself to a group of women who’ll listen politely but may secretly resent you for the coerced meeting.

If this seems complicated or fraught with risk, don’t be overly concerned. Listening and asking will serve you well throughout this process. Clients will communicate (either verbally or non-verbally) their level of willingness. It’s just a matter of tuning in, listening and showing genuine interest in helping the client and her friends. She will guide you, if you take the time to listen.



Tony DiLeonardi is the founder of [Third Quarter Advisers, LLC](#), which offers strategic best practices, coaching services and solutions for wealth advisers and their clients.

Barbara A. Kay, MA, LPC, RCC is president, [Barbara Kay Coaching](#). She coaches, consults and speaks on individual and relational core competencies including: productivity, time, teams, client relationships, change, behavioral finance, motivation, communication and leadership.

DiLeonardi and Kay are authors of the recently published book, [The \\$14 Trillion Woman: Your Essential Guide to Engaging the Female Client](#).

www.advisorperspectives.com

For a free subscription to the Advisor Perspectives newsletter, visit:
<http://www.advisorperspectives.com/subscribers/subscribe.php>