

2nd EDITION

GREEN SIDE UP



**Straight Talk on Growing & Operating
A Profitable Landscape Business**

ED LAFLAMME

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KEEP REFERRALS ROLLING IN THE DOOR

Most companies I work with, including my former one, grow because their happy customers spread the word. They refer us to their personal and business friends. When quality work and good service is offered on a consistent basis, there is generally a steady stream of referrals. As a result, most companies in the green industry spend little on marketing. Two percent of sales would be a lot for most. Referrals save companies thousands of dollars each year.

As companies grow, it's especially important to remember what, or who, got them there. As I mentioned, there's no secret to earning referral business. The formula is quality work and happy customers who spread the word about your services.

Armed with this information, we should guard against even a hint of complacency because every single customer is important to your reputation. Every employee who deals with

a customer either on the phone or in person should make sure that client is not just happy, but totally satisfied. You want customers to be raving fans of your company.

To make sure that referrals keep streaming in the door, be sure to reward the person who referred you. I learned the importance of reward when my little dog, Popcorn, was a puppy. Popcorn is a West Highland Terrier, more commonly known as a Westie. These dogs are cute little white puff balls when they're puppies. We just love our little guy. Anyway, I would teach Popcorn to roll over and when he did I gave him a treat. Guess what? When I asked him to do it again, he did. If I kept asking him but stopped the treats, after a while he would lose interest. Is this a simplistic example? Of course. But, nonetheless, Popcorn is an awful lot like your customers in some ways.

Every single time someone tells you they were referred to your company, be sure to find

his business card. The print is too light and too small. There are many companies guilty of this same problem. Some of these companies even have their own in-house marketing departments. For the life of me, I can't understand why they have business cards that are so difficult to read.

To conclude, put business cards where you keep your keys or wallet, and check to make sure you always have plenty of them

with you. I recently had work done at my home and three out of five contractors did not have business cards with them. No sense in having business cards if you don't carry them. Also, print business cards for everyone at your company who has contact with customers. Your people will feel good about the cards, and customers will have all the information they need to reach your company.

TAKE ACTION:

- List all contact information and what you do on your card.
- When you meet potential customers, immediately offer them your business card.
- Check each day to be sure you have an ample supply of cards, and be sure to always take them with you. You don't want to run out.