



46 Working 'word of mouth'

What is word of mouth?

Word of mouth is what happens when people tell people about you. Word of mouth is happening when potential customers hear about your service on the grapevine. They may hear about you from someone who has never even used your service.

Word of mouth is a way of getting business when people talk positively about you and your service. These people may be satisfied customers of yours or they may be people who have simply heard about others' satisfaction with your product or service.

Word of mouth advertising happens when you get known through the conversations people have with each other. This may result in referrals or recommendation. Many people get most or all of their new business through word of mouth advertising.

I had a conversation recently with a friend who wants to plan her financial future and needed some advice. She asked if I knew anybody she could talk to. I gave two people a very good word of mouth advert.

Why is it important?

Word of mouth is *free*. It is important because as it builds up over time it can provide you with an ongoing supply of new business without you having to do anything at all.

Your challenge

Word travels fast when you do something extraordinarily good for someone. It also travels just as fast when something goes wrong and the customer complains. Your challenge will be to continually provide a level of service high enough to 'wow' your existing customers and build a level of trust and rapport that prompts those who use you both to remember and recommend you to others.

What makes word of mouth successful?

- When people feel motivated to talk about you to others.
- When they like and trust you and the work you do.
- When you have done a really good job for someone.
- When you provide an extra special service or go the extra mile.
- When you provide your customers with leads or referrals.
- When you keep in touch with those you have done business with, ensuring that they remember the experience they had.
- When you make a connection with the people you do business with and they really feel that you care.

How to get word of mouth working for you

Be the best

All you really have to do is concentrate on doing the absolute best you can for the customers you have. You need to put into practice all of the profile building and communication techniques outlined in later chapters of this book. To make word of mouth work you need to be worth talking about and you must be memorable both as a person and as a business.

The longer you have been in business providing an excellent service, the more likely it is that word of mouth advertising will be working for you.

Promote your success stories

If you are a new business you can encourage word of mouth by promoting the success stories you have. Publishing customers' testimonials in your marketing materials can help to build conviction in your offering. By talking about the problems you have solved for your customers and the results they have achieved you give potential customers a chance to recognise themselves or the people they know.

When that happens you are more likely to get word of mouth business.

Show appreciation

When you get a piece of word of mouth business you can encourage more by showing appreciation for it. A gift, thank you or invitation to one of your special social events will reinforce the goodwill you have created and motivate more.

Reciprocation increases momentum

Show what word of mouth means to you by reciprocating the gesture. Spread the word about your customers' businesses and you will see the word of mouth momentum increasing.

IS WORD OF MOUTH WORKING AS WELL AS IT CAN FOR YOU? – SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ How much word of mouth business do you get?
- ▶ How do you measure word of mouth business?
- ▶ How do you say thank you and encourage more from the people who have generated it for you?
- ▶ What could you do to promote your success stories and spread the word?
- ▶ What could you do to accelerate your word of mouth advertising?

How to use this information

Word of mouth is the best natural form of advertising there is. Focus your attention on what you can do to stimulate its impact on your business and you will see your business grow.

Think word of mouth and increase the talk-talk about you