

Growing Nominations

While there are many methods to recruit customer references, it is difficult to do without a nomination from those that already hold a trusted relationship. Here are a few tips for growing nominations:

Be Strategic. Understand what's in your current customer reference portfolio. Consider coverage by industry, geography, products and other dimensions important to your company's current strategic direction. There's no sense wasting resources in less important areas.

Coordinate Efforts. Bring together individuals from organizations that use customers (i.e. PR, Advertising, Product Management) to build an integrated approach that elevates the importance of the request. Going solo risks overlapping with others and makes it more difficult to maintain executive support.

Make it Part of the Job. While the salesperson's job is growing revenue, more sales managers are recognizing that seeding the customer reference process is an important key to that revenue. When that appreciation exists, make sure that nominations are a measured part of the sales job. Plan to build a communication effort to build that recognition if it isn't there already. Don't forget the importance of your executive sponsor towards this end.

Rank & Recognize. Don't forget to play off the competitive nature of salespeople by broadcasting a ranking of those that nominate - highlighting the top and bottom of your list! Quid pro quo rewards for nominations often can't motivate an already highly compensated salesperson. Instead secure executive recognition for them in the form of a letter - and make sure that gets public visibility too.

Look Beyond. Don't forget other organizations like customer support. You should already be tied to a support escalations team to ensure you don't interfere with critical situations. Look there for nominations, since customers who have recently overcome challenges often have great stories to tell.

Don't Overload Yourself. While having too many nominations isn't a common problem, executed campaigns have been known to bring in more nominations than can be quickly handled, leading to disappointment on all sides. Stay ahead of the curve with a continuous, rolling outreach – even if that means breaking a large sales team (i.e. by last name starting A through F) by month.

Gaining the help of those that already have a trust relationship with customers is a critical part of customer reference efforts. Make it happen with an organized approach.