

Four Proven Strategies for Turning Your Clients into Your Best Promoters

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Perhaps the greatest sign that a home care business has risen to new heights is when they can honestly boast: "Our current and past clients are our number one referral source." There is real power behind such a statement because everyone knows in order to receive customer referrals, in any business, those customers must be more than satisfied with the services provided. This is especially true in home care. The happier your clients are, including their loved ones, the more referrals you should receive. However, getting your happiest clients to become your best promoters requires hard work and a well-executed Client Referral Program.

As found in the 2013 Private Duty Benchmarking Study and based on thousands of Home Care Pulse® monthly client interviews, we have identified the top five reasons why consumers choose a home care provider. The top reason was the company's reputation, and a close second was their recommendation by a family or friend. Of course, these both go hand in hand with each other and illustrate the impact that a family or friend's recommendation can have in the mind of a consumer looking for home care.

Turning your happiest clients into your best promoters does not happen overnight, nor should you expect one method or technique to bring in droves of referrals. However, by following some of these simple and proven strategies utilized by award-winning providers (Best of Home Care®), I am confident you will see an increase in client referrals over the coming months and years.



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1. Produce the Ultimate Client Experience

Before you can expect to significantly increase your client referrals, you first need to ensure you are producing happy clients! When I had my home care business, we identified six key attributes our professional caregivers had to possess in order to provide the ultimate client experience. Many award-winning home care businesses we worked with created and laminated pocket cards with these attributes and gave them to each of their Professional Caregivers. I also did this when I had my home care business.

The attributes are:

1. **Professionalism**—my clients see me as a true professional because I wear my uniform and badge to each and every shift.
2. **Consistency**—I always follow the care plan with exactness and give each client the same high level of care they deserve.
3. **Integrity**—I am always on time, and my clients never question my honesty and reliability.
4. **Compassion**—I always put my client's interests above my own and ensure they feel my compassion in all my interactions with them.
5. **Quality Training**—I always seek after knowledge & training that promotes confidence with the clients of [your business]
6. **Safety** – I ensure each and every client's safety comes first in every duty I perform, and I follow the Safety Guidelines as outlined in my training manual.



Think of your business as a Broadway Show. In order for a Broadway director to provide their patrons with the ultimate Broadway experience, they must ensure that everything is happening flawlessly backstage. The lights must be just right, the stage crew must be in position, the sound system must be operating perfectly, and the entire Broadway cast must be in sync with one another. It's no different with your home care business. In order to provide the ultimate client experience, you must ensure your backstage activities, such as your caregiver training program, are in sync with your front stage performance, which includes the interaction your caregivers have with your clients.

2. Establish & Promote Your Unique-Abilities

Ten years ago consumers looking for home care had to dig a lot more to find home care providers who offered private pay/duty-type care. This has drastically changed over the years. In today's market, consumers have many more choices when looking for a home care provider, and you must find ways to stand out among the crowd and really "wow" your clients from the beginning until the end. This is your front stage performance as mentioned in the -first strategy. At Home Care Pulse, we call it your unique-abilities," or in other words: "what makes you so special?"

Whether your unique-abilities include 24/7 on-call support, caregiver training can endorsed by your local health department, or proof of the quality of care you can provide; the most important thing is to identify what your unique-abilities are. The purpose behind this exercise is two-fold. 1) To consistently remind your clients and their loved ones why they continue to use you over anyone else. Remember they are human and may forget what makes you so unique. If they are consistently reminded by you and your team, the benefits they are receiving will stand out. 2) If they are consistently reminded by you and your team, the benefits they are receiving will remain more in their mind for future retrieval when speaking to a friend or neighbor who might be in need of your care.



3. Formalize the Asking

For the last several years I have been enrolled in a CEO coaching program that I've been extremely happy with. After every class, they hand me a referral card that teaches me how to send a referral to them. Because I am a very happy customer, filling these cards out and sending those referrals has been a pleasure. The referral card simply reminds me of the benefits I have received, and the type of customer they are looking for. The card has a place for me to write a referral's name and contact information. I also select the type of information to be sent from a list of about ten options. Prior to handing us these referral cards, the main business coach I work with reminds the class of the benefits we have received and encourages us to share them with others. It's a wonderful and formal way of asking for referrals.

What if you sent your happiest clients a similar card accompanied with a letter explaining your referral program? On the card, offer them, and the person they refer, 10-15% off a week's worth of services. In the letter, remind them of your unique-abilities and the many benefits they have received. Send this letter and discount card out every few months to these same clients. Everyone needs to be reminded you like referrals! Most importantly, they need to know how to refer their friends and family to you. Do not be shy when asking.



4. Identify Your Best Promoters

Once you have implemented the previous three strategies, you are now ready to identify your “happy” clients and are ready to ask them for a referral. Of course there are many informal ways of doing this. Simply asking them how they enjoy the services is the easiest. Yet the majority of happy clients unintentionally keep their praise and recognition to themselves. One of the best ways to gauge the overall satisfaction level of a client is to ask them one simple question: “On a scale of 1-10, 10 being highly recommended, how likely are you to recommend our services to others?” Generally speaking, if your clients are willing to refer others to you, they are pretty happy with the services. Once you have a score from a client, categorize their answers into three different categories, otherwise known as the Net Promoter Score (NPS) method.

- **Promoters** (score 9-10) are loyal enthusiasts who will keep using your services and refer others, fueling growth.
- **Passives** (score 7-8) are satisfied but unenthusiastic clients who are vulnerable to competitive offerings.
- **Detractors** (score 0-6) are unhappy clients who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

If you are able to collect scores from multiple clients, then you can use those scores to calculate your overall Net Promoter Score (NPS). To calculate your NPS, take the percentage of clients who are promoters and subtract the percentage who are detractors.

Percent of Promoters - Percent of Detractors = Net Promoter Score

This will give you an overall sense of the satisfaction level of your clients. The challenge is capturing honest and unbiased answers to this question. Anonymous mailed surveys can help you capture the NPS as a whole, but the response rate is typically low and does not allow you to identify your promoters specifically. There are more effective ways in gathering unbiased client feedback, including qualified third-party satisfaction research firm. These firms can help your clients feel more comfortable in sharing their identity and honest answers to questions.

Though there are several other successful client referral strategies, I am confident these four proven strategies used by many of the leading home care businesses are foundational to any Client Referral Program. Next time our paths cross, I hope to hear you say, “Our clients are our number one referral source.”



About The Author

Aaron Marcum, is the Founder of Home Care Pulse, a leading Quality Satisfaction Management firm specializing in capturing and measuring client and caregiver satisfaction for hundreds of home care businesses throughout North America. Aaron and his team also produce the annual Private Duty Benchmarking Study, the largest and most comprehensive study for the private duty home care industry, now in its 4th edition. Prior to starting Home Care Pulse, Aaron successfully owned and operated his own private duty home care business in Salt Lake City. For more information on how the Home Care Pulse Quality Satisfaction Management Program can help turn your clients into your best promoters, contact us at info@homecarepulse.com or by phone at (877) 307-8573. A similar version of this article also appeared in the June edition of Private Duty Insider, which is published by Decision Health.

About Home Care Pulse's Performance Benchmarking and Quality Satisfaction Management Program

Home Care Pulse is the industry's leading firm in performance benchmarking and quality satisfaction management and serves hundreds of home care businesses across North America. They are the industry's top resource for education, business development, certification, and proof of quality, including the prestigious Best of Home Care® awards. Visit www.homecarepulse.com to learn more about our VANTAGE program, or visit benchmarking.homecarepulse.com to learn about the Private Duty Benchmarking Study, the home care industry's largest and most comprehensive annual study, featuring benchmarks on finance, sales, marketing, operations, and more.

Call (877) 307-8573 to contact Home Care Pulse for more information or email them at: info@homecarepulse.com.

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