

February 2020

Start working on your word-of-mouth referrals

By Sue Horner

If you're like many solopreneurs, you aren't comfortable selling yourself. You feel awkward singing your own praises to people who don't know you. But how else are you going to get prospects to choose you as a service provider?

You need referrals.

People buy from others they already like and trust, or people suggested by someone else they like and trust. The key to getting more of these word-of-mouth referrals is to earn that trust. Do this by building relationships and by consistently showing clients you care.

So says Matt Ward, author, podcast host and member of the National Speakers Association. Matt lays out how in his book, [MORE...Word of Mouth Referrals, Lifelong Customers & Raving Fans](#), which he talked about in a recent IABC webinar.

How do you show you care? Matt gave the example of Mark and John Cronin, founders of [John's Crazy socks](#). Their stated mission is to "spread happiness." The socks themselves make people smile, with 2,000 fun and funny designs. They offer fast, free shipping in the U.S., and every package includes candy and a handwritten note from John. The website notes "20k+ Happy Reviews (90% 5-Star);" [here are some](#).

"What if *your* mission was to spread happiness to your customers?" Matt asked. "How would you make them feel?"

Matt outlined four ways to spread happiness:

1. Overdeliver

"Good enough" isn't good enough. How can you exceed expectations? What is a differentiating factor? Figure out what matters to your clients. When you make people feel great, they will remember you and refer you. Matt gave an example of sending a limo to pick up a client rather than an Uber or taxi.

2. Listen

People share things about themselves that let you learn who they are. When you pay attention to, remember and do something with that information, that builds the connection that leads to referrals. As an example, a client made a passing reference to liking chocolate-covered bacon. Matt sourced some and sent it to her with a handwritten note saying, "I heard you love this – enjoy."

3. Surprise

When you want to build relationships, follow up with an unexpected card or gift at an unexpected time. A handwritten card is more likely to stand out than another email in a cluttered in-box. Matt sent a card to a podcast guest months after the session, and the guest posted a photo on social media of himself holding the card. "You don't have to have lot of reason to send a card," Matt said. "You can just thank them for something or reference a conversation you had."

4. Don't be self-serving

Do something for others without expecting anything in return. Matt gave

the example of attending a Super Bowl as a bucket list thing. Some of his business colleagues texted him, cheered him on and encouraged him to share photos. Matt later sent them Super Bowl pins, thanking his colleagues for "following along on my bucket list journey."

Should you pay for referrals? "You don't need to if you are doing this," Matt said.

Oh, and get rid of clients who are causing you grief. "They aren't referring you anyway."

Related reading:

[The three sources of leads, or why it pays to be nice](#), by Josh Bernoff



Sue Horner is a writer, principal of [Get It Write](#) and Co-Director of Communications for PIC. In 2019, all of her income, including completely new business, came from referrals and existing clients.



Ryan McGuire and Pixabay

Last call
REGISTER NOW

Getting Business by Getting Found

How to raise your online profile and grow your business using Google and LinkedIn.

Wednesday, February 19, 2020 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Central YMCA – Community Room, 20 Grosvenor St., Toronto
\$20: IABC member rate | **\$30:** Non-member rate



Tricia Belmonte,
Owner, LikeUs
Communications
Marketing Agency



Kristine Leadbetter MCM,
Producer and TV Host,
“Lead Better with Kristine”, Marketing,
Reputation, and Relationship
Development Professional.

Welcome new member

Chad Heard
Heard Communications
416-898-8859

[Email](#)
[Website](#)
[LinkedIn](#)



I help organizations focus and amplify their launch activities through sound strategic planning and compelling communications.

A seasoned writer and corporate storyteller with experience in the automotive and energy sectors, I deliver customized, turnkey PR campaigns that achieve your objectives.

See you on social media

Build and strengthen your connections with other PIC members, advance your communications business, discuss business issues and network with PIC on social media: on Twitter at [@pictoronto](#); LinkedIn, [IABC Toronto Professional Independent Communicators](#); and Facebook, [Professional Independent Communicators \(PIC\), part of IABC/Toronto](#). Recent posts include trends for promoting your business on social media, advice for networking, the importance of tone in marketing and more.

Changes to the PIC member list due Feb. 28

As a PIC member, you can promote yourself at no charge on the [PIC member list](#), which is updated quarterly on the IABC/Toronto website. Send your updates to PIC’s director of membership, [Kathy Lim](#), by **February 28**. For new profiles, send your name, company name, city, email address, telephone number, website and LinkedIn URLs and a brief (about 40 words) description of your business. Existing members, does your listing include your LinkedIn profile?

PIC’s Bust the Winter Blues Social

March 5, 2020

6:30 p.m. onwards
[Duke of York](#), 39 Prince Arthur Ave.



PIC PERSONALITY:

Meet Cathy Cowan

By Nancy Miller



President of Cowan & Company Communications, **CATHY COWAN** runs an award-winning communications consultancy that works with premium lifestyle brands to create integrated marketing communications programs. A passionate and innovative communicator, she recently collaborated with York University School of Continuing Studies to develop and teach the Storytelling, Strategic Messaging and Content Development course curriculum. Learn more about her on her [website](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#).

What's your elevator pitch?

Cowan & Company specializes in marketing communications planning and implementation, content creation, issues management and corporate citizenship. Since 2003, C&C has collaborated with leading organizations including L'Oréal Paris, Jamieson Vitamins and Food Banks Canada to create programs to engage stakeholders across Canada.

How did you arrive at where you now are?

I started off my career working with a few non-profits, but I desperately wanted to get into agency work. Around the time that tech was taking off, I got my foot in the door with an agency that specialized in technology. I moved on to work with international PR agencies based in Toronto and into progressively more senior roles. At the height of the dot com boom, it was exciting. But of course, the bust came. After the agency I was with merged with another agency, I got laid off.

Within a couple of weeks, I began freelancing and got involved in all these fascinating projects. Although I had intended to go back to agency work full-time, when I got to the final stages of a job interview, my mind drifted elsewhere. I had just come from a fashion shoot for International Women's Day for L'Oréal Paris. I thought: "I have something here." It wasn't the path I was planning to take, but when I told my partner I was going to make [the independent life] happen," he said: "It's about time!"

What's your education background?

I did a BA at Western and had always thought of doing an MBA. So, when the tech boom was slowing down, I enrolled in distance learning program through the University of Leicester and completed my MBA in three years.

What do you enjoy most about being an indie?

I love the diversity. I like the richness of the work. And I like using different parts of my brain. As an independent, I like being involved in what I call full-circle work. I get to develop the strategic plans but also get my hands on the front-line work. I find working independently is more efficient. I can do better work for my clients, bring in the exact fit complementary talent when it's required, and provide a higher return on investment.

"As an independent, I like being involved in what I call full-circle work. I get to develop the strategic plans but also get my hands on the front-line work."

Is there anything you don't like about being an indie?

I still miss the day-to-day social aspect of office life.

What's your advice for someone new to the independent life?

You have to learn to say no – especially to new business opportunities if they're not the right fit. It's counterintuitive, because as an independent you may not know when the next opportunity will come. But I've learned to choose projects that allow me to collaborate with the right people, provide the kinds of

services I want to and where I know I can exceed my clients' expectations. My advice: choose opportunities that are worth your time.

How long have you been an IABC and PIC member and what value do you get from your membership?

My involvement with IABC over the past 15 years has been fantastic. The resources it provides, obviously, are beneficial. I've also spoken at events, been involved in mentorship programs and received IABC awards. Being a judge has been especially inspiring. Our peers are doing amazing work, and I benefit from learning from them both personally and professionally. When it comes to PIC, I'm interested from a talent perspective. It's great to know what options are out there. I'm looking forward to making it to some events!



PIC members offer a range of talent, from coaching and media relations to video production and writing. PIC Personality randomly profiles our members. Nancy Miller specializes in integrated marketing campaigns and strategic communications for education businesses and coaches individuals and teams using strategies rooted in mindfulness and neuroscience. She can be found at threadred.com. She is also PIC's Co-Director of Communications.

THE INDEPENDENT VIEW

Celebrate like Snoop

By Nkiru Asika

You may not be a fan of his music or lifestyle, but we could all learn from Snoop Dogg. When the rapper was honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in November 2018, he used his acceptance speech to praise the person who had most inspired and contributed to his success – himself.

“I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank me for doing all this hard work...I want to thank me for never quitting...I want to thank me for trying to do more right than wrong, I want to thank me for just being me at all times.”

Absolutely brilliant. But so hard to do. Many of us pick at the scabs of each mistake and scrutinize every misstep. Yet when we achieve something – a great job for a client, a solution to a problem, a business milestone – we gloss over it. Instead of celebrating, we focus on where we fell short. Instead of savouring our success, we downplay it or immediately start stressing about the next task.

Sometimes running your own business can feel like wading through a seemingly endless to-do list. You can lose sight of why you started the business or what your business means to you besides putting

food on the table. But if to journey is really better than to arrive, then we can't keep saving the champagne for the destination. We need to pop a few bottles along the way.

“I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank me for doing all this hard work...I want to thank me for never quitting...I want to thank me for trying to do more right than wrong, I want to thank me for just being me at all times.”

— Snoop Dogg

Celebrating yourself is important because it gives you fuel to fight the battles ahead. Acknowledging even the little victories inspires you to see beyond the drudge. Celebrating yourself also gives more room for others to do the same.

So, list out all the things you've accomplished already this year, both big and small, and give yourself a pat on the back. Treat yourself. Create some celebration rituals. Flex those self-appreciation muscles more often.

In short, be more like Snoop Dogg. (Hip-hop and weed optional).

Speaking of celebration, February is Black History Month and the GTA has a ton of activities from film festivals to fairs to fundraisers. You can check out a few [here](#).

I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming professional development workshop on February 19. Let's celebrate our commitment to continuous learning.

As always, if you have any ideas for professional development topics, possible speakers (including yourself) or any questions, concerns or ideas about PIC, please don't hesitate to reach me at toronto-sig@iabc.toronto.

Onwards and upwards.

Nkiru Asika

Chair, PIC;
VP, Special Interest Groups,
IABC Toronto



[Professional Independent Communicators](#) (PIC) is a special interest group of [IABC/Toronto](#). PIC's mission is to support independent IABC/Toronto communicators through professional development, networking and marketing. [IABC](#) connects communicators from around the world with the insights, resources and people they need to drive their careers and the profession forward.

THE BUZZ *The Buzz* informs members about upcoming events, shares professional development tips from past meetings and keeps us connected. Editor this issue: [Sue Horner](#) | Graphic design: [Deana De Ciccio](#).

Want to recap a meeting or do other writing for *The Buzz*? Contact [Sue Horner](#) or [Nancy Miller](#).

Quick links

- [PIC on the web](#)
- [PIC on LinkedIn](#)
- [@PICToronto](#) on Twitter
- Email us: toronto-sig@iabc.to
- [Join our mailing list!](#)
- Get a copy of [The Independent Life](#)
- [Find back issues of The Buzz](#)

PIC executive

Contact any of us with questions, comments and ideas for speakers or topics:

Chair: [Nkiru Asika](#)

Past Chair: [Sharon Aschaiek](#)

Communications: [Sue Horner](#), [Nancy Miller](#)

Membership: [Kathy Lim](#)

Programming: [Judy Irwin](#), [Sharon McMillan](#)

Social Media: (*vacant; let us know if you can help!*)

Design: [Deana De Ciccio](#)

