



## Expand Your Fempire Podcast #36 How to Build a Thriving Referral Partner Program

*Welcome to Expand your Fempire with Caterina Rando, the podcast for women in business on a mission. Sharing ideas to support you to grow, lead, and thrive. Now here's your host, Caterina Rando.*

[00:00:25] Hey, my friends, Caterina Rando. So happy to be with you. **Today, we are talking about a very hot topic, how to build a thriving referral partner program.**

[00:00:40] Now, the reason I'm talking about this today is because many of my clients have been asking for this and I thought, you know what? Let's just go ahead and do it for everybody. **Because this is something that can support you in really monetizing in your business.**

[00:00:59] I mean, wouldn't it be great if you had people that consistently dropped clients on your lap? That consistently gave you a Facebook introduction or an email introduction. And they said, "Hey, you've got to talk to my friend. She's got massive value to bring. And she's a great match because you told me you're looking for X, Y, Z, and she's the best at X, Y, Z."

[00:01:27] Don't you think that would be great? And that's what I want for you. I want you every month to have people dropping clients on your lap. Sounds good? Sounds good. Let's take a deep breath.

[00:01:45] Now let's go through this hot topic on how to cultivate great referral partners.

[00:01:55] Okay. **First thing, you want to create a criteria for your referral partners.** Before you go ahead and say, "Okay. Yeah, I want some referrals" Let's have you identify the kinds of people that you want to have referrals from.

[00:02:21] And I'm going to tell you that I'm going to give you, give you a hint here, that you want your referral partners to have the same values as you. Okay?

[00:02:35] So what do I mean by that? I mean, if you are loving your values by which you run your business, which I'm hoping you are. Integrity generosity, attitude of service, outstanding client care. You're probably experienced. These are some of the criteria that you're going to have for your ideal trusted alliance referral partners.

[00:03:09] **Now notice, I said trusted alliance referral partners. Because the trusted piece in my opinion is really the most important piece.** So, the part I'm talking about right now is that they

have to be trusted. Because **if you don't trust, they're going to represent you really well, then my friends, they're not the right match for you.** Did you hear that?

[00:03:42] And so this is why just because you might have a business and someone has the same ideal clients as you. And by the way, that's the first place to look if someone is a good trusted alliance partner for you, a potential trusted Alliance partner, is that they have the same clients as you, but they provide a different product or service.

[00:04:05] So for example, the interior designer, she's looking for homeowners. Well, who else is looking for homeowners? People that clean rugs, people that have home cleaning services, people that do gardening, right? All of those other people have the same ideal client of the homeowner, but they provide a different product or service.

[00:04:28] **Think about who would be good categories for you to have as trusted alliance partners.** That's where you start, what are good categories? But then it's really about not the category, but the individual or the leadership at any company that is a good partner for you.

[00:04:53] For example, as a business coach for women, what am I looking for? My partners might be someone who's an image professional that works with women business owners. Might be a life coach that works with women business owners. Might be a virtual assistant or a virtual assistant company that works with business coaches. Now, you know, my clients all use speaking to grow their business. I get a lot of referrals from my friend who helps people get booked for speaking.

[00:05:26] **So it's really important that you look at categories, but then we look at the individuals.** Do they have the same values as us? Do they have integrity? Are they operating with excellent client care like us? Do they genuinely care about their clients? Are they having an attitude of outstanding service as an ongoing objective in their business? Do they have outstanding service as an ongoing objective in their business? Do they do a great job for their clients? Are they highly responsive to their clients?

[00:06:08] **Because everyone that you partner with is a reflection of you.**

[00:06:13] This is very, very important that you get this. It's not just about, "Oh, they're in the same category." It's also that they have the same values as you, and they run their business with the same values.

[00:06:28] Because for example, give you example, some years back, I had a wonderful, phenomenal, amazing trusted alliance partner. She was doing great work for many of my clients and others I'd referred to her. There was one situation where somebody was not happy at all with her work. Well, guess what? I talked to her because sometimes you have to step in. **Because if they're your client and you refer them to this person and they're not happy, as we've said, it's a reflection on you.**

[00:07:03] What are you going to do about it? Now I knew when I called her that she would absolutely take care of it. Because she operates with integrity. And that's exactly what happened. She didn't even charge this person for whatever she had done. That was the right thing to do. Now, maybe the other lady, the client, maybe the client was in the wrong too. I don't know.

[00:07:27] But the bottom line is she fixed it insta and it was not a challenge anymore with this client. And then of course I was confident to continue to refer people to her. Not because only of the great work she did, but because of the integrity by which she ran her business and she wanted to keep everything clean and straight.

[00:07:52] I'm hoping that that's the experience you're having with your trusted alliance referral partners. And if not, let's make that upgrade.

[00:08:03] Let's also be very clear. **Everything is in writing. What is the clear agreement you have?**

[00:08:10] **Because when you drop clients on somebody's lap, do you know what? That is marketing money that they're not spending to acquire that new client.** Did you hear that?

[00:08:27] They didn't have to spend more marketing dollars to get that client. You delivered that client to their front door. **So, what that means is that that money that they didn't spend on marketing bing, bing it's appropriate for you to get a referral commission.**

[00:08:48] And I love giving my clients and my other referral partners referral commission. You know why I love it? Because the more we give them referral commission, the more it underscores that we are happy to give them referral commission. And reminds them, "Hey, Caterina has a great referral program." I love it. I want you to have the same thing.

[00:09:12] And what I've advised all my clients, and I'm advising you, is that you want to have this in writing. And you want to have this in writing on your website. Referral program, affiliate program. If you go to my website, you will see ours. And I told my clients, "grab it modify it for yourself." because of course everyone's business is different.

[00:09:37] Let's be very clear. By making it public, that makes it more certain for the people that look at it. Let me tell you a little bit about ours and I'm going to then get back to more about trusted alliance partnerships.

[00:09:55] If someone sends someone to one of our workshops, which is \$47 [00:10:00] or \$97, or \$197, we give our referral partners 50% of that. Now I say 50%, that's a lot. Well, that's because the amount is not that much. \$47, \$97, \$197. So, I want to be giving them a little something, right?

[00:10:17] We give 50% because remember I'm not trying to massively monetize my workshops. Those are opportunities for people to come and be with me, have an experience of the massive value I bring, and as a result, choose to continue to work with me, right?

[00:10:33] So I recommend much higher commission on whatever the first "easy yes" is, which is usually your workshop, or might even be one time session. Then if they choose to join one of our programs... Thrive at Sales program, Speaker Mastermind program, we have our Bliss Retreat coming up, January 31st, 2022.

[00:10:58] All of these things- if someone refers a client who signs up, then that person who referred them gets 10% of whatever program the client invests in. Okay. Now, programs have a high cost of goods sold. That's why. It could be higher. It depends on your business. Could be 20%. It's up to you, but that's what we do. We do 10%.

[00:11:25] Now we also do it for the lifetime of the client. That means if somebody joins another program the next year and another program the next year, then the commission is delivered.

Now I will say also, that let's say you refer someone, and they come to some stuff and they don't do anything and then two years later, I see them at a speech or something and they sign up for something again, you don't get the commission. They have to have done something, made some purchase within the first year after that referral, okay?

[00:12:05] That's something else to be aware of. Now, particularly for me, cause I'm out marketing all over. So, if you referred Sheila five years ago and she didn't do anything. And then she sees me at a speech virtually five years later and she signs up for something that was a marketing speech now, and not that initial thing. But that's up to you to decide okay? It depends on how out and about you are.

[00:12:31] Now I'm going to also say that we pay commissions quarterly. And when we pay commissions, we send a little gift with the check or we do Venmo or cash app, but at the same time, we send a little gift to say, thank you. That's only four small gifts a year, once a quarter, but you know what? It's reminding them, "hey, thank you so much for being our awesome referral partner."

[00:12:55] Okay. Now. This is what you need to have in place. You need to have your referral partner program in place as we have just discussed.

[00:13:04] You have standard operating procedures around it. One is at the first week of the second quarter, we review everything, and we get ready to pay the referral fees from the first quarter.

[00:13:20] **That means it's a standard operating procedure. It's on the calendar for the whole year.** We run a report, we review all the sales. We make sure we haven't missed any referral tags, meaning we haven't missed anybody that came in as a client, making sure that their referral partner who sent them is indicated in their record. Very important.

[00:13:44] Then we review everything, and we pay the commissions in the month after the quarter ends. Now I'm explaining this more techno part, because I want you to get your standard operating procedures in place. That's going to support your business to thrive.

[00:14:02] Okay. Take another deep breath. Now let's jump back though.

[00:14:06] We have said so far, you're looking for people that have the same clients as you but provided a different product or service. We've said they have to have the same values as you. Now let's be clear. We want long-term and lifelong trusted referral partners.

[00:14:24] So what does that mean? You don't just meet someone and say, "Hey, let's be referral partners." no, you want to get friendly first. go to their workshop. Hire them.

[00:14:35] **I always do everything I can to hire a referral partner before they're going to be a referral partner. Because just because you like someone networking doesn't mean they're going to be a great referral partner.**

[00:14:47] **So get friendly first. Ideally hire them.** Now, maybe they're a life coach, you can't hire them for three months. Hire them for session. Hire them for three sessions so that you have a client experience. Because when you have a client experience, you can say, "Hey, she did a great job for me. I had a great client experience," okay?

[00:15:14] **Get friendly first, make sure your values match, as we've discussed.**

[00:15:19] **Next, educate yourself. Review their website, review their social media. Is their message, is their languaging congruent with yours?**

[00:15:32] You know, me I'm positivo. If I see someone is complaino complaino in their social media, if they're dissing people or things, even on their personal page. No, my friend, that's not a good match for me because how we do one thing is how we do everything. If I'm positivo I can't have partners that are complaino, right? Very, very important. Educate yourself. Now, part of educating yourself is to talk to their clients, or actually, as we've said, be their client and have that experience.

[00:16:08] Related to this. Keep your eyes open. Ask your trusted sources, other people you know, your colleagues, your clients, "hey, have you done business with this person? What did you think?"

[00:16:23] Talk to people before you're gonna get into a relationship with them. **Because let's be very clear, a referral partner relationship is a very important relationship.**

[00:16:37] **Next, talk to them. Discuss how can you support each other? Because one of the criteria for a good referral partner is somebody that is out there.** They are out and about. They are not only in their shop, serving their clients.

[00:16:55] For example, give you a good example. You may or may not know that I love working with image consultants and style consultants and have done that for many years as part of my business.

[00:17:08] Well, they all, all image consultants and style consultants need a trusted seamstress to refer their clients to for alterations, et cetera. Well, that seamstress might be a great seamstress and she might be a great resource for her clients, but if she is in her shop doing her thing, 24 seven. She doesn't have a website. She's not doing social media. She's not out and about virtually, then she's probably not in a good position to meet a lot of potential clients for you. Do you see what I'm saying?

[00:17:50] **So there's a difference between a resource and a trusted alliance partner. Because your trusted alliance partners, not just have the same values as you, but they also are marketing their business and they are out and about, and they are visible and they have a network of which to draw referrals in for you.** This is an important criteria.

[00:18:17] **Now the other thing is that you may want to look at after you get friendly, how can you support each other?** Can you be loud and proud on social media about each other? Featuring each other in your email newsletter? Can you have a recommended link on your website to recommend them to other people? **These are all things that you can do to cross promote.**

[00:18:42] **But that only comes after you have begun to identify this person as a good match.** And then when you identify them as a good match, **you say, "okay, let's try it for three months and see how it goes."**

[00:18:58] because let me tell you something I've been in business long time have had a lot of amazing referral partners, but sometimes there's somebody who I like socially. I like them with networking. I maybe even like what they do and how they do it. **But I've learned it's not until I am**

**referring clients to them and my clients are reporting back and they're raving, that I can be solid in my decision to make them a trusted referral partner.**

[00:19:33] Very, very important for you to recognize this. And yes, there have been a couple bad apples over the years. The thing is though, when I stick to this criteria that we're discussing, things go very, very well.

[00:19:46] Now, remember we said earlier about the commission, I said earlier about write everything down. **Let's talk a little bit about what to write down, okay?**

[00:19:57] What you want to write down is your [00:20:00] agreement about commission, what the commission percentage is. Your agreement for when it's going to be paid. And your agreement for how long it's going to be paid.

[00:20:11] **The other thing I do is after that three-month period, then we sign another agreement for the rest of the year. And these partnerships are renewed on an annual basis.**

[00:20:26] **Now, what we have discussed today is referral partners that have the same clients as you, that have other businesses. This is a whole different discussion for getting referrals from existing clients. We'll have to discuss that at another time may be very soon.** But these are from other business owners that are serving your same client base.

[00:20:54] Now let me say a little bit more, because one of the things that I have seen when I have talked about referral partnerships, how they work, how to have them work successfully, is I **have seen cohorts or groups start around a particular focus.**

[00:21:13] For example, many years ago, I gave a talk, and my banker was there, and she liked the idea very much. And she, I'm not sure why, but maybe someone else suggested she created a cohort for women who were going through divorce. So, she was the banker. She had a financial services person. She had someone who mediated divorces. She had a image professional. She had a therapist. Now, they all served other clients too, but they were particularly interested in serving women through divorces.

[00:21:56] And what did they do? They met every month. They actually put a brochure together back in the days when we used to put brochures together. Now you put a website together. And they would give referrals to each other. And because it was sensitive area, they would of course ask the client first, but they would say, "Hey, do you need this? Do you need a new banker? Do you need financial services? You know, would you like some support with therapists?" And then they would refer clients back and forth based on this specialty that they created.

[00:22:33] **Now, I want you to look at this. Are there other people that you can partner with on a regular basis and meet with on a regular basis to facilitate more referrals?** I will tell you one of the things I do. It's a little bit sidebar from our discussion today. I meet on a regular basis with three other speakers who are awesome and outstanding. They have the same target market as I do service-based women business owners. However, they talk on other topics. And we have an agreement that we give each other at least three speaking referrals every month. So that is something else that you could do.

[00:23:20] **And this has been very, very lucrative. Both the referral partner circles or speaking referral partner circles has worked phenomenally, but again, they have to be with people that you trust. That you know are going to do an amazing job for you.** Okay. Let's take a deep breath.

[00:23:41] I want you to think about -who would be great partners for you? What are great categories for you? And I don't want you to just say, "okay, this sounds good." **I want you to, first of all, make sure you have a written down published referral partner program for your business.**

[00:24:00] Now, let me also give a **legal note** if I can here and say, if you're in financial services, if you're in real estate, and attorneys, if you're in any regulated industry, you may have restrictions around referrals and referral partner commissions, okay? So, I'm giving general recommendations here. You have to look at your specific category to see if all of this is kosher in your category, okay? Very, very important.

[00:24:37] Now, when you have these referral partners and by the way, start with one, then go to two. The max I would recommend is seven. **You plus seven other partners that makes a circle of eight because we easily remember seven things and you can easily keep track of seven amazing referral partners.**

[00:25:02] **When you do this and you find ways to cross promote each other and showcase each other, you will find that you will be able to cultivate so much business for all of you.** I've had referral partners that I have sent them, not 20 referrals, 20 clients, people that did business with them in one year. Wouldn't you like some people to send you 20 amazing clients in one year? That can happen to you when you cultivate your referral partner program.

[00:25:37] **And then of course you want to give testimonials to each other. You want to rave about each other. You want to do everything you can to facilitate your referral partners soaring.** This is something that is really going to grow your business and impact your revenue and your sales.

[00:25:56] Now, because it's not urgent, I find that I have to keep reminding my clients to do this over and over. **What I find though is once they put that referral partner program in place, takes a little time and attention to get it set up, once it's set up it's awesome and amazing.** It is rinse and repeat every year you upgrade. Every year you evaluate. Of course, you have to initially evaluate after three months. And as a result of this, you will have a lifetime supply of referrals.

[00:26:31] And let me tell you something. It is so wonderful when I open an unexpected email from a referral partner. "Dear Caterina, I want to introduce you to so-and-so. I was telling her how amazing you are and that she absolutely needs to talk to you, go to your workshop and most likely become one of your clients."

[00:26:53] Don't you think that makes my day? That's what I want for you. **Because let's remember your referral partners are like your sales team. They're out there selling for you. They're out there networking for you. And as a result, your revenue will grow.**

[00:27:14] Bing, bing, bing! My friends, I want to remind you that I have an amazing workshop on "Selling with Ease and Authenticity." Please join me. It's free. Go to my website and register. I've got another three- hour on "set yourself up to thrive at sales" use cat 27 code for VIP discount. Also, if you have not checked out our Bliss retreat for 2022, it is January 31st. We're going on a 10-day Mexican Riviera cruise round trip, San Francisco.

[00:27:54] We're going to have programming on the ship about blissing in your business. It is going to be transformative, life-changing, uplifting and don't you need a trip to look forward to? I put it on the calendar because I certainly do. Please join me for that amazing adventure or Facebook me if you would like to have a talk about it. Let's take another deep breath.

[00:28:19] Here's what I want you to know. You have massive, massive, massive value to bring. There's a lifetime supply of people to serve. **Let's get some referral partners going who can support us in getting our massive, amazing, phenomenal service out to the world so we can serve more.** And of course, we want to sell more because altogether that supports us in uplifting more lives. Bing, bing, bing.

[00:28:53] Caterina Rando. Can't wait to be with you next time. Go bring your massive value and please put together your referral program. Cultivate your trusted referral partner relationships so we can all thrive even more.

*We hope you enjoyed this episode of Expand Your Fempire with Caterina Rando.*

---

## THRIVING *Women* IN BUSINESS

### **We invite you to connect with Caterina and the Thriving Women in Business Community!**

- Be sure to become a part of our community by joining [Caterina's email list](#), with this you will never miss any event info, super tips, or new podcast episodes.  
<https://bl939.infusionsoft.app/app/form/podcast-list-opt-in>
  - Join the Thriving Women in Business Community on [Facebook](#) in our private group where we share upcoming events and business-building super tips.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ThrivingBusinessGroupforWomen/>
  - Check out [Caterina's upcoming virtual events](#) and join us for an uplifting, value-packed workshop. Use code PODCAST for a discount on certain events.  
<https://caterinarando.com/events/>
  - Love this podcast? Be sure to [subscribe on iTunes](#) and leave a review! Your support is super appreciated. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/expand-your-fempire-with-caterina-rando/id1517228708>
-