

How to Build a COI Network

December 1, 2015

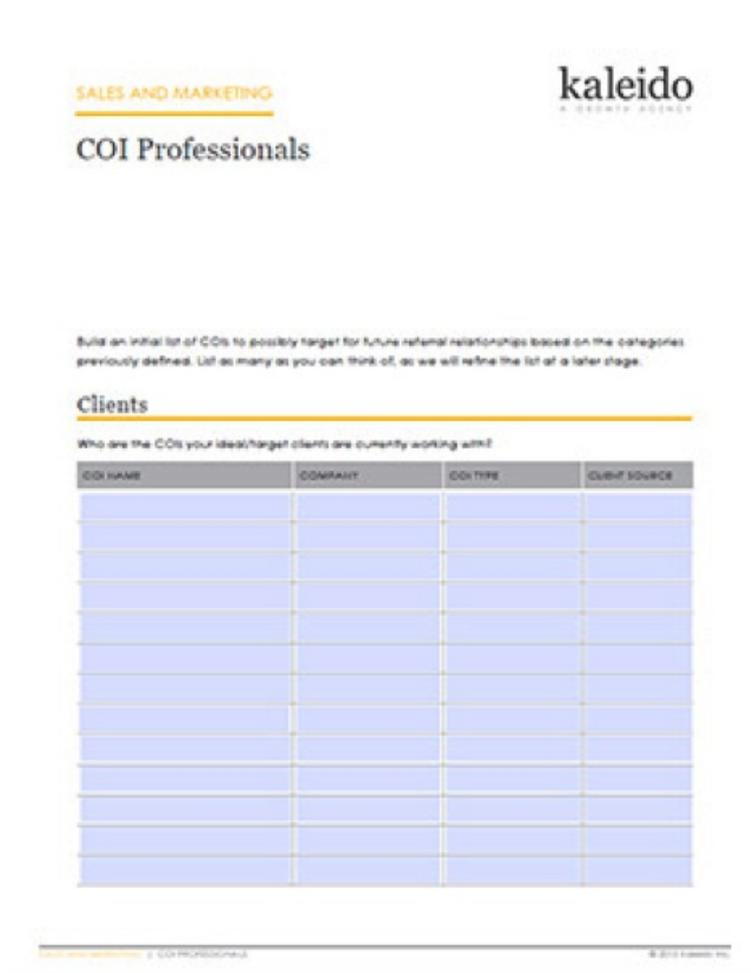
by Kristen Luke

Advisor Perspectives welcomes guest contributions. The views presented here do not necessarily represent those of Advisor Perspectives.

In financial planning, client referrals are important, but they are not as valuable as referrals from centers-of-influence (COIs) – the attorneys, accountants and other professionals who also serve your clients. In fact, a well-developed network of COIs that reciprocally refers prospects will bring in many more clients and help you keep your existing ones.



So, how do you find good COIs with whom you can trade referrals? Follow these steps to create a powerful COI network:



Step 1: List each COI with whom your clients are working

As you work with clients, you're bound to interact with other professionals also working with those clients. Write down each COI's name, company, the type of COI (attorney, CPA, etc.) and the name of the client. Once you've listed this information, reach out to these COIs and discuss how you can help each other gain and serve more clients.

Step 2: List each COI in your professional network

Who are the accountants, attorneys and other people within your network? Are you optimizing your professional

relationships with them? Add them to your list of potential COIs and bring them into your network.

Step 3: List each COI in the professional associations to which you belong

Are you a member of your local chamber of commerce or another professional association? List potential COIs in these organizations and make them a part of your network.

Step 4: List each COI in your LinkedIn network

Are you on LinkedIn? Which COIs are you connected to directly, and which are you connected to via other people? Ask the people connecting you to them to make introductions.

Step 5: Do a web search and find a COI with whom you can work

If you're thin on potential COIs, do a web search of accountants, attorneys and other influencers in your area. When you find a COI who you think would be a good fit, develop a relationship.

The outcome!

Unfortunately, a productive reciprocal relationship is not something that develops overnight. Studies show that it takes, on average, two years of building trust before a COI begins referring clients. However, through hard work and relationship development, you will enjoy a steady stream of new clients through your COI network. When this happens, all your effort will have (literally) paid off.

Kristen Luke is co-founder and chief innovation officer of Kaleido Inc., a practice-growth agency helping financial advisory firms break through growth barriers to build brilliant businesses. For more information, visit www.kaleido.net.