

# Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

## The Pedestal Group

### Referrals—the Best Clients

#### Special points of interest:

- *Manta*
- *Marketing Tools*
- *Laptop Batteries*
- *Vista to Windows 7*
- *Monitor Your Brand*
- *Alt Text*
- *AND MORE!*

#### Inside this issue:

Manta	2
Marketing Tools	2
Laptop Batteries	2
Vista to Windows 7	3
Monitor Your Brand	3
Alt Text	4

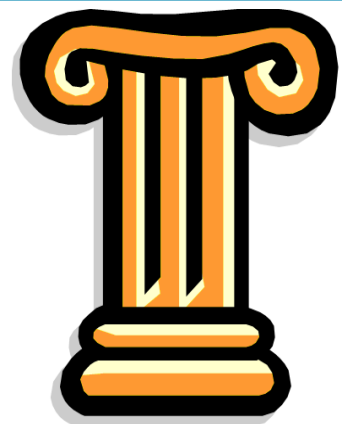
There is no question that a client who comes to you, with knowledge of your services and information from a friend letting them know why they should work with you is clearly the best kind. And clients who naturally recommend you are gold—but few and far between. Generally, to get referrals you have to ask. And asking is a tough thing to do.

To effectively ask for referrals, you want to make it as easy for you and your client as possible. First, let the customer know you want more customers just like them—it is a compliment after all! Create a “preferred customer” program and ask them to be a part of it. The “cost” is their email address but the rewards include coupons, discounts, free services, or other benefits they will appreciate. Since most satisfied customers are already in your database with an email address, it isn’t asking for anything unusual. Then, periodically (i.e. once per month) send them a news item, note or deal and as a special incentive,. Offer something to them for referring a new customer. Be specific—

ask for certain needs, characteristics, or types of people each month to help the person think of someone to refer. It is often difficult to think of “anyone” but “moms who need a break”, “companies in the retail space”, or “people complaining about headaches” can help put the idea into a context. This is much easier to consider for the customer.

As soon as you kick off your referral program, you need to make sure each new customer is asked how they found you. This is critical because thanking the customers doing the referring is key. Also, someone who agrees to participate in your referral program but never sends a referral in may not be satisfied with the service but not willing to say anything. This will give you an opportunity to ask the individual for ideas on how to improve.

Once a referral comes in the door, make sure everyone dealing with the person knows it was a referral. Can you imagine how special you would feel if you started doing business with a new company and they remembered your



friend as well? Make the referral feel special. They will remember and be even more willing to pass on your name. And their referrals are great because when they tell someone about you, they also quote their friend. Now the person hearing about you gets two opinions at the same time!

The final step to a successful referral program is to thank the person who referred the individual. A personal thank you note goes a long way in this instance. Saying thank you reminds them you are involved and paying attention and will help them come back and participate even more.

Your clients are your best source of clients. Be sure to ask for referrals!

## Manta—Small Business Directory

Manta is a small business directory site, similar to LinkedIn and others, but gathers information on small businesses from all over the internet to build their database proactively. To that end, there is a great deal of information in



**MANTA HAS  
OVER 13 MIL-  
LION MONTHLY  
VISITORS!**

Manta, but it may or may not be accurate.

Currently Manta has over 700,000 members and 64 million profiles worldwide. With those kinds of numbers, Manta is definitely used by Google and Bing to offer information about small businesses. As part of your on-going branding efforts, it is vital to claim your profile on Manta and be sure it 100% accurate.

In addition to listing with Manta, it can be a great site to research small

to mid-sized businesses. Generally public company information is easy to find but smaller, privately held firms are more of a challenge. Manta gathers data on these smaller companies and provides it on their site along with articles, tips and information.

With the reach and breadth of information, Manta must be a part of any branding program. Claiming your profile helps with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as well as helping clients find you!

## Marketing Tools and Their Effectiveness

**WHITE PAPERS  
VIDEOS  
NEWSLETTERS  
EMAIL**

Spending money on marketing is always frustrating because there is no way to know what will give you the best results in advance.

According to a new study out by Eccolo Media, the following tools are the most effective.

White Papers are still a great way to get information in front of people. In the survey, 77% said a white paper influenced their purchasing decisions and 81% said they pass white papers to others.

Nearly half of respondents have viewed videos in the last six months to help in a purchasing decision. The sharing of videos is also extremely high.

In addition to Eccolo Media's results, newsletters have come out

strong in several other surveys giving the company a chance to demonstrate expertise and knowledge. In addition, recipients tend to keep newsletters and refer back later strengthening the marketing efforts over the long term.

And finally, email marketing is still going strong. Effective messages that are honest and professional reach their recipients and are acted upon by many purchasers.

## Laptop Batteries—Live Longer!

Many people have switched to a laptop or netbook as their primary computer. The batteries in these devices generally last 2-4 years depending on the care taken with them. BNet's Dave Johnson recommends the following tips:

Keep your battery cool. This is smart on a number of fronts as most of the hardware in a laptop is not made for

excessive heat. To keep it cool, keep it raised off the desk and never put a laptop on a fluffy surface. Laptop desks are a great tool to keep things cooler as well.

Never pack the laptop when the battery is still hot to warm. Trapping the heat in a bag will cause the battery life to be cut significantly and could cause problems for the laptop in general.

Once to twice a month, unplug your computer and let the battery drain. The act of draining and charging help the battery live longer. In fact, if you keep your laptop plugged in most of the time, it may be beneficial to remove the battery (assuming that is an option).

Keep your battery running longer and save money in replacements!

## One Upgrade From Vista to Windows 7

I have been looking forward to upgrading from Vista to Windows 7 for a long time. Vista was constantly locking up, running slowly, the boot up time was extremely long and shut down even longer. In addition the constant prompting to okay changes, etc. was annoying.

The upgrade itself was very simple. I checked my computer on line at [www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/what-is-windows-7.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/what-is-windows-7.aspx) to make sure I wouldn't have upgrade issues. I then put the disk in and started the process.

Windows 7 did want 16 gb of free space to install so I had to move some things around to get it going. Once that was done, the upgrade took several hours, but required no intervention on my part—I just let it run. When it was finished, the system rebooted and it was working.

### The Good News:

I regained an additional 12 gb of space on my hard drive. Boot time has been cut in half. Shut down time is less than half of what it was.

### The Bad News:

I have lost both the headphone and mic jack on my sound card. Neither work. It is apparently a driver problem so I am waiting for an update.



Overall, the experience has been great and my sound card issue is minor. If you are thinking about upgrading, I would check with others that have your computer to see what issues you may encounter.

## Monitoring Your Brand

Monitoring your brand is getting more and more complicated but even more important today than ever before. With new sites coming on line every day, customers, employees and competitors have greater opportunity to talk about you on line. Keeping up with it can be a daunting task.

Traditionally, companies have used Google Alerts to track new developments about themselves and their people. Setting up a Google Alert is easy and delivers updates directly to your email.

To create a Google Alert, go to [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts) and set up the keywords you want to find. We recommend keeping an alert active on both your company name and the principles of your business. Sales people should also have alerts running on their names as people may put up reviews of their performance.

Another great tool to use is Addictomatic. <http://addictomatic.com/>. Addictomatic searches a number of sites and breaks down the results by

category (i.e. news, Twitter, Google, Bing, Flickr, etc.).

Finally, it is a smart idea to Google and Bing your business and principles at least once per month. You want to make sure if someone specifically searches for your company name, your information is coming up, you know what else may be coming up, and you can see what changes have occurred. Look through the results for at least 4-5 pages as most users will only review the first two but you want to make sure they don't find something unexpected.

If you do find something unflattering, address it immediately. A bad review on Yelp can be addressed on Yelp itself and also allows you to contact the reviewer directly. By doing so, you can head off the problem.

A bad review on Twitter also be addressed through a reply to the individual (viewable by anyone who follows your Twitter account) or if they are a follower, a direct message (private). It is easy to set up a Twitter account if

you do not have one and then address it as well. A great way to manage your Twitter account is to use a client like Tweetme, TweetGlide or Tweetdeck.

TweetGlide and Tweetdeck are free downloads and help you organize your own tweets as well as the people you follow. Another feature is to set up searches so you know what is being said about you on Twitter.

Monitoring your brand on line is just one more way to own the information about you that is out in the world. With so many channels and so many options, it is vital to watch what clients, employees, former employees and competitors are saying and doing. Knowing what your customers can find about you is also vital to your marketing efforts and needs to be a top priority of any business.

**MONITORING  
YOUR BRAND IS  
VITAL TO YOUR  
BUSINESS!**

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

## Use Alt Text to Strengthen Your Message

When putting images on your website, it is vital to add something called “alt text”. Every website tool out there has the ability to add it and it goes a long way to help your business get found on the internet.



**Alt Text Helps  
Get Your  
Message Out**

Alt Text stands for Alternative Text and are words describing what an image on your website actually is. Adding alternative text to an image gives search engines the ability to “see” the image as well as

text readers, mobile devices and other tools that cannot display pictures.

Search Engines use computer programs called Spiders to go out and find sites, review the content and rate and store the information. Images have no meaning to a computer program as they cannot tell what is in a picture. Instead, website builders use Alternative Text to explain the image so that the spiders can read about the image and store the information in their databases.

Adding your keywords and company information to an image is a great way to add additional strength to your ranking in search engines as search

engines like multi-media. If there is a picture of your business, it is more likely a real place.

In addition to the search engine benefit, text readers, some mobile devices and other tools used to read websites in a fast way generally do not load pictures. Having the alternative text means these devices display information about what would be there rather than just have a large blank. Because it works with readers, this also makes your website ADA compliant which shows accessibility to all potential clients!

Use Alt Text to help get your message out!