

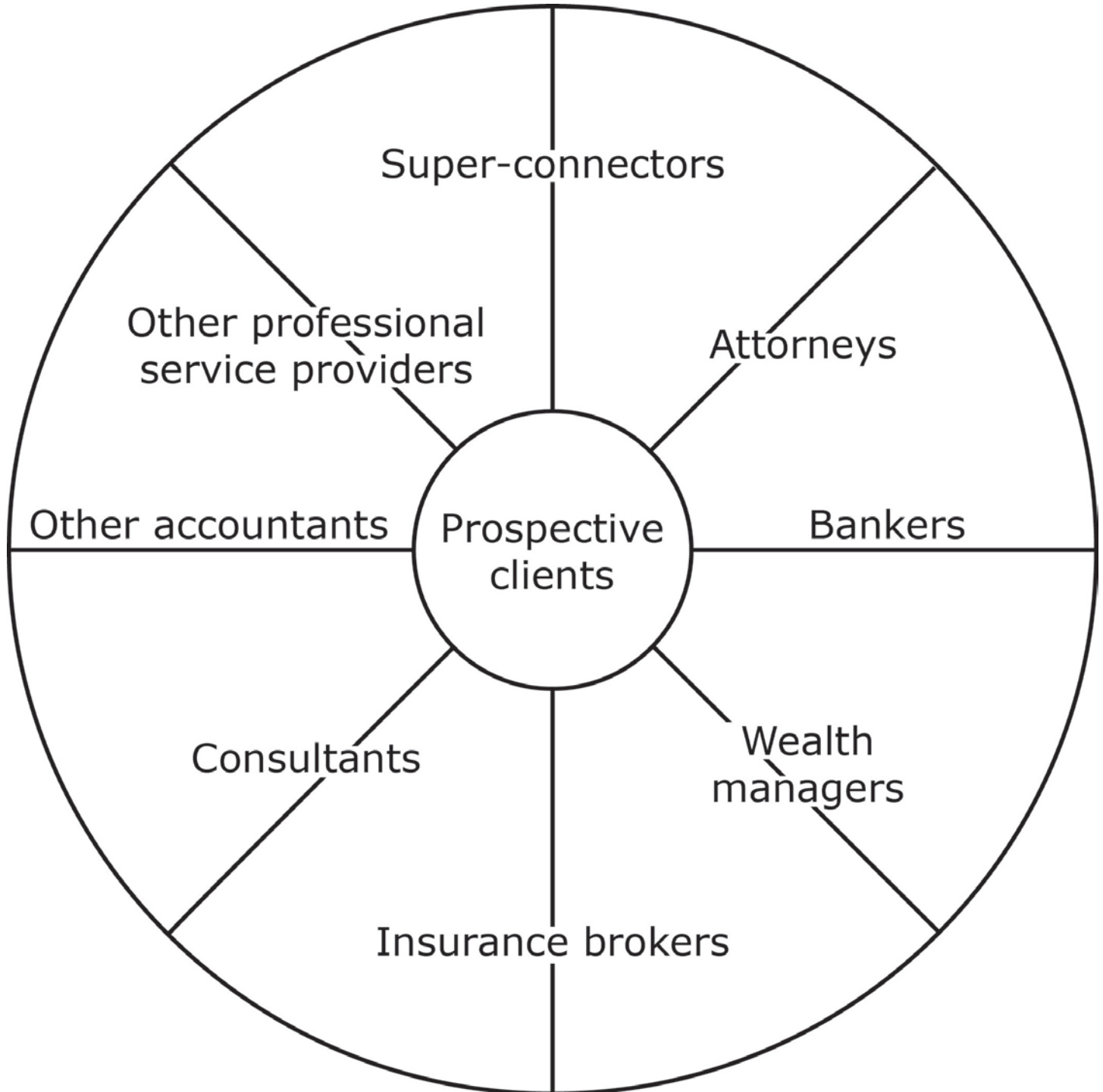
***REPLACING***  
***- THE -***  
***RAINMAKER***

***WORKSHOPS***

***CENTERS OF INFLUENCE***

This workbook accompanies the audio workshop. It includes speaker's notes, which summarize the content covered in the workshop. It also includes activities, which you'll complete during the workshop, and a continuing education assignment, which you'll complete after the workshop. The continuing education assignment gives you a chance to apply the theory you learned in a practical setting. At the end, there's a quiz to test what you've learned as well as space to make notes and information on where to go to learn more.

***SPEAKER'S NOTES***



## Learning outcomes

- You'll learn what to look for when selecting contacts to serve as referral sources.
- You'll learn about the most valuable places to invest your networking time.
- You'll learn several strategies for vetting potential candidates and cultivating productive relationships.

## Sources of new business

- As an accounting firm, your new business comes from many different directions.
- One of your sources of new business is your professional network.
- One of the main reasons to cultivate professional contacts is the hope that they'll one day refer new business to you.

## Centers of influence

- Your most valuable professional contacts are usually referred to as "centers of influence."
- Centers of influence are in a position to greatly influence your ideal clients.
- Centers of influence will most often be attorneys, bankers, insurance brokers, consultants and other professional service people.

## High demand

- Relationships with center of influence contacts are usually reciprocal relationships.
- Accountants are often in high demand as a center of influence.
- The tricky task is to discern the good prospective centers of influence from the bad.

## Unofficial sales team

- Good centers of influence will send you a steady stream of business.
- Finding centers of influence is about quality not quantity.
- Think of your centers of influence as an unpaid sales team.

## Centers vs. wheels

- A center of influence is someone who regularly comes into contact with your ideal client.
- You should share the same ideal client profile as your centers of influence.
- You won't have any common clients with your centers of influence.

## Resources

- Resources are people to whom you refer work or from whom you receive work.
- There's no expectation of reciprocity.
- Knowing that a client is well cared for is enough of a reward.

## Mismatched schedules

- Don't dismiss contacts who never send business back to you.
- Often a contact serves as a resource because the timing of your services doesn't line up.
- Your mismatched schedules mean one of you is not a good referral source for the other.

## Referral sources

- Referral sources trade referrals back and forth.
- Referral sources generally serve the same ideal client.
- The key is to choose referral sources who send you good leads.

## Collaborators

- Collaborators are the highest evolution of the center of influence community.
- Collaborators work together in such a way that clients see them as part of the same team.
- Collaborators are the individual equivalent of a strategic alliance.

## **A good match**

- One of the hardest parts of cultivating centers of influence is knowing where to target your efforts.
- Prospective centers of influence should be trustworthy and credible.
- Everyone needs to have faith that their clients are in good hands.

## **Standards and values**

- Prospective centers of influence should have high professional standards.
- Prospective centers of influence should take a similar approach in how they interact with their clients.
- You won't have similar clients if you don't have similar values and approaches.

## **Committed**

- Prospective centers of influence should be trying to grow their business.
- Prospective centers of influence should be committed to the referral process.
- You want to build relationships with people who will refer clients time and again.

## **Business commonalities**

- Prospective centers of influence should serve similar clients.
- Prospective centers of influence should offer complementary services.
- Prospective centers of influence should not be directly competing against each other.

## **Aligned sales cycles**

- The sales cycles of prospective centers of influence should align.
- If they don't, one person could still serve as a resource, but not a referral source or collaborator.
- Look for people whose work occurs soon before or soon after yours.

## **Jump on-board**

- To meet centers of influence consider joining the board of a non-profit.
- You'll get to know other business leaders.
- Those leaders could serve as referral sources or help you make other valuable connections.

## **Join up**

- You can also join a business-to-business group.
- These groups are made up of professionals interested in growing their network.
- You want to be selective about what groups you choose.

## **Join up**

- Choose a group with a limited membership.
- Choose a group that promotes a sense of team.
- Choose a group that provides opportunities for participants to showcase their expertise

## **Work to the front of the room**

- You can also join an industry group or trade association.
- The most valuable part of joining an association is the chance to work to the front of the room.
- You'll emerge as a thought leader in your field.

## **Link up**

- LinkedIn is one of the best virtual options for cultivating centers of influence.
- Be an active participant by posting regularly, writing recommendations and sharing testimonials.
- LinkedIn can greatly amplify your marketing and networking efforts.

## **Efficiency is the name of the game**

- You don't want to be continually chasing after centers of influence.
- You want to build strong bonds with a few people.
- That means you need to figure out where to focus your efforts.

## **Refine your referral piece**

- A referral piece explains to whom you want to be referred, what you do and why you're different.
- A referral piece tells your referral sources to whom exactly you want to be connected.
- You'll receive more high-quality referrals if you have a referral piece.

## **Refine your referral piece**

- Your referral piece should state explicitly who your ideal client is.
- Your referral piece should highlight your talents.
- Your referral piece should emphasize your firm's competitive advantage.

## **I saw the sign, it opened up my eyes**

- Watch for signs to indicate whether this is a relationship worth pursuing.
- They'll treat your clients the same way they treat you.
- Don't invest the time unless you're willing to introduce these people to your clients.

## **Start small**

- Start by making a simple request from a prospective center of influence.
- You could ask them to serve as a resource or to provide advice.
- Yet their interest and ability without risk.

## **Classify**

- Classify your centers of influence.
- Create three tiers: "A's," "B's" and "C's."
- Invest your time in cultivating centers of influence with the biggest upside.

## **Quality vs. quantity**

- Focus on quality, not quantity.
- Only a small number of centers of influence will consistently deliver quality work and referrals.
- Too many people focus on the big number of how many people they know.

## **Reward and recognize**

- Reward and recognize your referral sources.
- Recognition usually takes the form of verbal thanks.
- Reward typically takes the form of a tangible non-cash gift.

## **Track your contacts**

- Maintain a database that tracks all your contacts.
- The database should track how you generated all new business.
- It should also track the number and dollar value of referrals in and out.

## **Think outside the box**

- Super-connectors are individuals who maintain contact with hundreds of people.
- Examples include restaurateurs, executive recruiters and real estate agents.
- If these people routinely come into contact with your ideal client, consider cultivating a relationship.

## Summary

- The key is to know what you're looking for in a center of influence.
- Don't be in a rush to add centers of influence to your inner circle.
- Require that candidates demonstrate their ability and commitment.

## ACTIVITIES

If you're completing these activities on your own, please write down your answers in your workbook. If you're completing these activities in a group, please write down your answers individually. Then share your responses with up to two other people. Look for commonalities among everyone's responses and discuss any differences.

### Activity 1

Using the "Referral database" spreadsheet located in the top right corner of your screen, categorize each of your center of influence contacts as a resource, referral source or collaborator. With a specific individual in mind for each category, list the criteria and characteristics that make them an effective center of influence.

### Activity 2

Using the "Referral database" spreadsheet, categorize your super-connector contacts by industry type. For each contact, list strategies to cultivate your relationship and convert the time investment into tangible business development results.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

Start or revisit the conversation with your "A-type" centers of influence and convert good conversations into tangible business development results.

## QUIZ

1. Centers of influence are professional contacts who come into regular contact with your existing clients.
2. Centers of influence can be categorized into three groups: resources, referral sources and collaborators.
3. In the case of a resource, knowing that their client is well cared for is enough of a reward.
4. You want to find centers of influence who are trying to grow their business and who are committed to the referral process.
5. You want to look for centers of influence who are trustworthy and credible, have high professional standards and take a similar approach in how they interact with their clients.
6. Board memberships, B2B groups, industry and trade associations and LinkedIn are all great examples of ways to cultivate centers of influence.
7. It's not important to "work to the front of the room" to maximize your investment in an industry or trade association.
8. It's important to build strong bonds with a few people you trust who can regularly send business your way.
9. If you think you've met someone who would be a good center of influence, start by making a simple request to give yourself a chance to see them in action.
10. Super-connectors are not a significant asset in the centers of influence community.

## ***NOTES***

## ***FOR MORE INFORMATION***

For more information about additional workshops, or other Replacing the Rainmaker products and services, please visit [ReplacingTheRainmaker.com](http://ReplacingTheRainmaker.com).