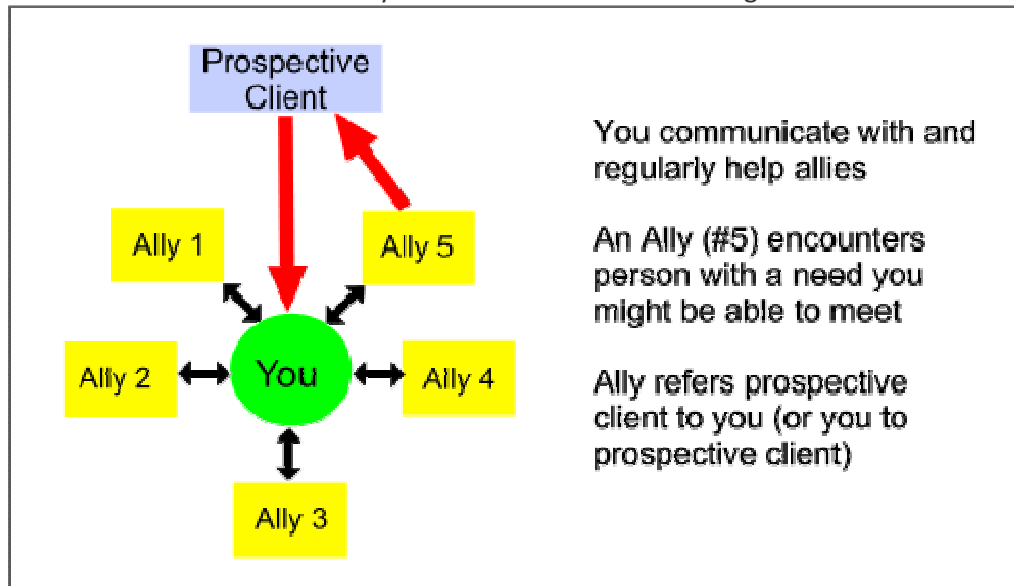


## Growing your business with a network of allies

To grow your practice, you need to be “top of mind” for prospective clients when they need someone like you. And you need to be well-regarded by them. One strategy to achieve both these goals is building a network of allies for business development.

### A network puts many more feet on the street

In a network of allies, each member looks out for opportunities for the other members, as well as for him/herself. So when a network member talks to a contact, or a prospective client, or meets someone new, that network member listens for needs that any of his/her allies might meet. If, for example, you are an attorney, and you speak with a contact who has a public relations need (rather than a legal need), you can refer them to a public relations ally. “I know someone who I believe works in that arena and might be able to help you,” you say, “could I have him call you to see if he can help.” If you have 30-50 people in your network of professional allies, you will rarely encounter someone for whom you cannot deliver value through a referral of some kind.



When you refer a contact to an ally, you directly benefit by demonstrating your ability and willingness to add value, at no cost to the contact. This builds your credibility. When an ally refers a contact to you, you benefit hugely by being favorably introduced to someone who appears to need, right now, what you know and do.

### Success depends on having the right people in your network

The right allies for your network will:

- Be in the right places for you – they’ll be people who, because of their own work, will naturally be in contact with people who might need your services, and

- Have the right approach – they'll be people who will refer you because they want to *give* (to their contacts) and *share* (with their allies)
- Want help from you or people you know (since the relationship needs to be mutual over time)

People in the right places include:

- People who sell to the same people you would like to sell to (e.g., other professionals who sell to the same industry)
- Customers of your potential clients (since a referral from a customer is almost always heeded)

People with the right approach include (but are not limited to)

- People you know who can help you/or want to help you
- People with lots of allies already!!

### **Challenges of maintaining your network**

Keeping a network vibrant requires concentrated effort. To cultivate your allies, you'll talk with them in regular phone contacts and/or meetings about:

- News of developments in the industry, at your clients, their clients
- Leads
- Suggestions about potential employees
- Advice
- A connection to someone else in your network
- Anything else that might be helpful to them

For your network to pay off:

- You need to tell your allies what you do – so they can recognize an opportunity for you when one is there
- You need to tell people what you want -- ask people for recommendations and contacts
- You have to help people – so think about what of value you can provide members of a network; you may be able to provide leads, but also may have other information or insight that might be valuable to them
- Your allies need to tell you what they do – so you can look out for them
- You must identify if potential allies seem interested in helping you – you may have to make the first move, but you ought to get some reciprocation over time or else reconsider them as allies.
- You must stay in touch with your allies – they are a key link for you to your marketplace, and you must keep them engaged with you.

Having a strong network of professional allies can be very rewarding financially. It also fits well for professionals who don't like feeling they are "selling themselves" all the time; instead, they can focus on listening to their prospects and helping them find a good solution (which often will involve an ally and will sometimes involves themselves).

### **Something to try this week**

If a network of allies is an appealing strategy for you:

1. Think about what types of people (e.g., by profession, by location) should be in your future network.

2. Think about the people you know who meet those requirements, and contact them to talk about their business and where they are trying to take it.
3. Ask them what their ideal clients would be like, in case you run into any potential ideal clients for them (if they don't ask you about your ideal clients, in response, they may not be high yield allies for you).
4. Agree to talk with them in 4-6 weeks to see how things are going.
5. Keep them in mind as you are out in the world.

## What are these tips?

These monthly tips are intended to help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.

## Can you answer my questions about business development?

We'd be delighted. Please send any questions you have to [questions@bridgewellpartners.com](mailto:questions@bridgewellpartners.com) and we'll do our best to help you out. Or call us at 312-863-3489. Or visit [www.bridgewellpartners.com](http://www.bridgewellpartners.com) to learn more about how we coach and train professionals to be better at business development and to enjoy it more.