



# 4 Startup Marketing Strategies Every Company Should Use to Stay Relevant

by *Dennis Hammer*

Even if your startup had a big launch, it can be tough to keep the momentum going. Staying relevant in your niche can be difficult, especially if there are a lot of new players competing for potential customers' attention and money.

In this post, we'd like to talk about four important ways to keep your startup relevant. These strategies should *complement* your growth tactics (although it's possible that one of these strategies *are* your primary growth tactic).

1. Referral Marketing
2. Content Marketing

3. Influencer Marketing
4. Product Iteration
5. Focus on the People Who Matter

## 1. Referral Marketing

The best way to market your startup is to let existing customers do it for you.

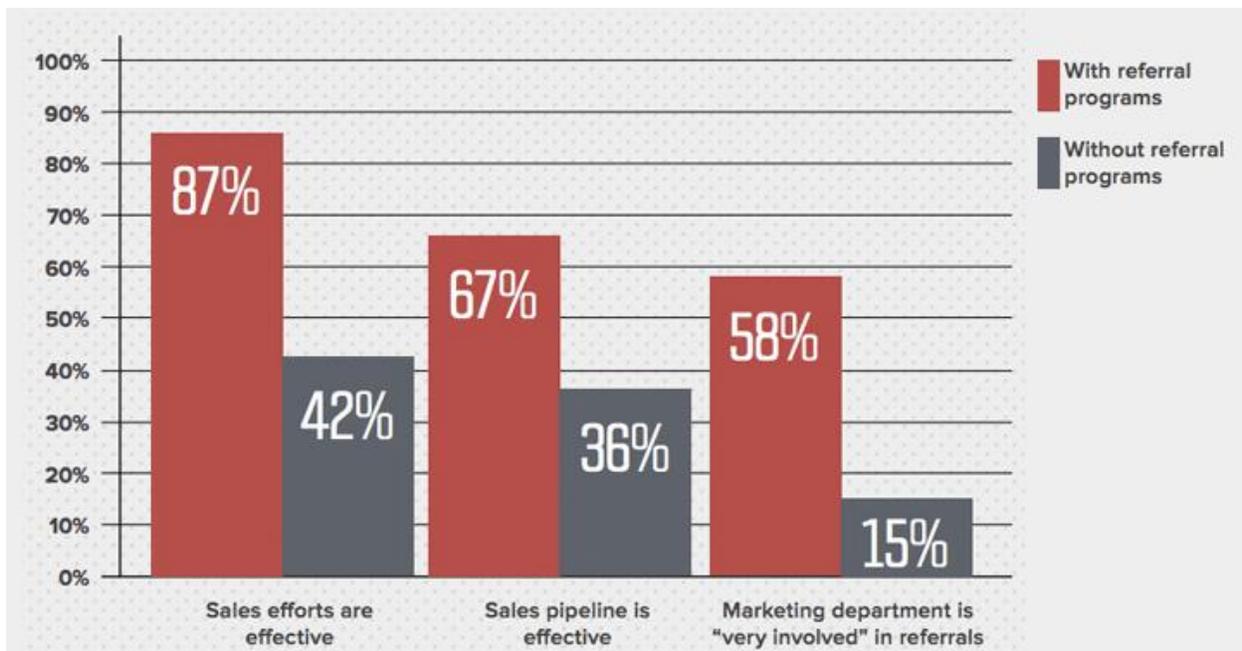
Referral marketing is the practice of incentivizing your customers to refer more customers. It relies on word-of-mouth, which [improves marketing effectiveness by 54%](#).

When one person refers a product to someone else, the referred party is [four times more likely to buy](#) than if they didn't have the referral.

Andrew Chen, head of growth at Uber, [explains why referrals work](#):

“The behaviors that cause people to do this are the same as what existed in the past – there’s a personal incentive for the sender, but also an incentive for the recipient,” he says.

[Influitive and Heinz Marketing researched referral programs](#) and found 70% of companies with referral programs were on track to meet or exceed their goals. They also learned that a majority of companies with referral programs rate their sales efforts and sales pipelines as effective.



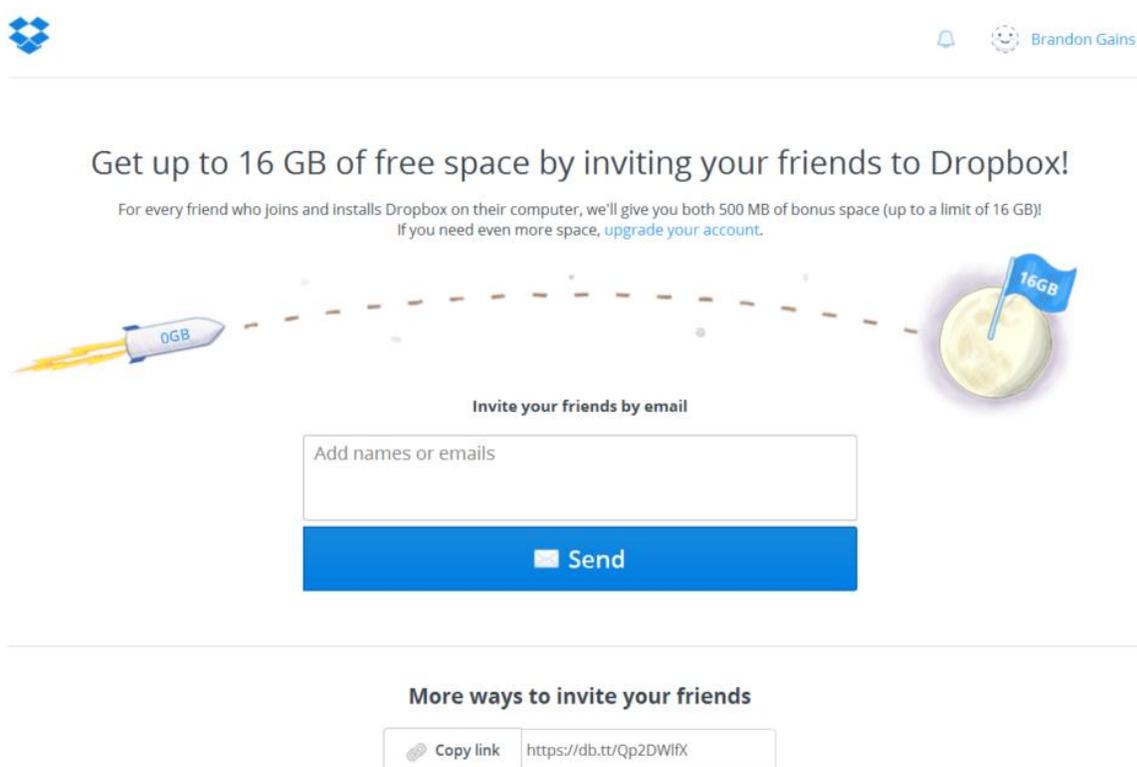
Here's how referral programs usually work:

You give customers a special link or code (depending on the tool you use) to give out to other people. When new customers sign up using that link or code, the referrer receives a reward.

Rewards can take lots of forms, like extended features, free months added to their account, or free credits *within* your app (e.g., If an SEO tool gives customers 200 searches per month, a successful referral might award an additional 50 free searches.)

In some referral programs, the referred party receives a reward too. This is called a double-sided reward. It's considered the most effective type of referral reward, but of course you have to give more away.

[Dropbox is the best example](#) of a dramatically effective referral marketing program.



The screenshot shows the Dropbox referral program interface. At the top left is the Dropbox logo, and at the top right is the user's name "Brandon Gains" with a dropdown arrow. The main heading reads "Get up to 16 GB of free space by inviting your friends to Dropbox!". Below this, a sub-headline states: "For every friend who joins and installs Dropbox on their computer, we'll give you both 500 MB of bonus space (up to a limit of 16 GB)! If you need even more space, [upgrade your account](#)." The visual features a rocket labeled "0GB" on the left and a moon with a "16GB" flag on the right, connected by a dashed line. Below the text is a form titled "Invite your friends by email" with a text input field labeled "Add names or emails" and a blue "Send" button. At the bottom, under "More ways to invite your friends", there is a "Copy link" button and a text box containing the URL "https://db.tt/Qp2DWfX".

Dropbox's original customer acquisition strategy relied on ads. They were spending between \$233 and \$388 to acquire each customer. Considering their product costs \$99/year, they had to keep someone paying for three to four years just to make *any* money.

In 2008, Dropbox created a referral program. Users could accumulate more storage space by convincing their friends to sign up.

Dropbox *knew* their customers would respond to the offer because they're *already* paying for storage space. Of course they'd take more.

In 15 months, Dropbox surged from 100,000 to four million subscribers.

### **Why should you start a referral marketing program?**

Because they're effective and easy. You'll lower your customer acquisition cost, raise your customer lifetime value, and improve your lead quality.

Most importantly, referral marketing programs keep you relevant by constantly fostering conversations within your niche. The incentive will compel your customers to discuss your startup with their friends and colleagues.

Learn more: [The Beginner's Guide to Building a Referral Marketing Program](#)

## **2. Content Marketing**

It's impossible to stay relevant if you aren't constantly reaching out to your following and taking steps to grow your audience. Even if you're sure everyone in your industry knows about your product, it's important to repeatedly remind them of your existence.

Content marketing is a fantastic way to connect with people by adding value to their lives and convincing them you're a solution provider.

The [value of content marketing](#) to your startup is undeniable:

- It generates [three times as many leads](#) as paid search per dollar spent.
- It's the [most effective SEO technique](#).
- [80% of business decision makers](#) prefer to learn about companies via articles, as opposed to ads.
- [82% of consumers](#) feel more positive about a business after consuming its content.

Venture capitalist [Tomasz Tunguz was right when he said](#), "Content is one of the few forms of marketing that has compounding returns." Where an ad stops working once you stop paying for it, published content performs *forever*.

Content marketing is also an important strategy because it influences other pieces of your overall online strategy.

- Content drives traffic to your website.
- Content drives people to subscribe to your email marketing list.
- Content gives you something to share on social media.
- Content gives you a platform to mention influencers.
- Content creates opportunities for search engines to find your site.
- Content can be used to nurture and support your customers.

Content can take many forms. Most startups write blog posts, but you can also create videos, design infographics, lead webinars, and even speak at presentations. The format of your content should depend on your topics and your customers' preferences.

Unfortunately, content marketing isn't something you start on a Monday and see results Friday. According to prolific content marketing expert Neil Patel, typical content marketing with consistent posting can take up to [six months to see any movement at all](#).

That means the sooner you start, the sooner you'll see results.

### **Why should you start a content marketing program?**

Content marketing keeps you relevant by continually nurturing your audience and bringing new people into the group. With a basic understanding of [conversion optimization](#) and [email marketing](#), you can create a system that spreads your value and turns fans into customers.

Learn more: [The Advanced Guide to Content Marketing](#)

## **3. Influencer Marketing**

A big part of staying relevant is getting other people to carry your message.

[Influencer marketing](#) is the practice of leveraging other people's audiences to attract attention to your message and product. Identify key people who have influence over your potential customers and convince them to promote your company.

Truthfully, influencer marketing is just a fancy word for something brands have been doing forever – the celebrity endorsement (think [Michael Jordan's historic partnership with Nike](#)). But you probably don't need to spend millions of dollars to hire an A-list celebrity to reach your prospects.

In fact, some influencers are free and highly accessible because they *want* your help serving their audience. Many won't charge anything and will collaborate with you to get your message right.

How you structure your influencer marketing program is up to you. It depends on your product, customer, and the influencer you connect with. For instance, a [TechCrunch contributor](#) would mention you in an article, but an Instagram celebrity would sneak your product into a picture.

Other types of influencers might mention you in their videos and presentations, help you set up cross-promotional opportunities, or simply introduce you to key people.

In some cases, you can get a popular blogger to give your product a comprehensive review. These are great opportunities because the reviewer can dive deep into your product's value and they typically have an audience that's hunting for new tools and apps.

### **Why should you start an influencer marketing program?**

You can't stay relevant to people in your niche if you have to speak to them all yourself. Give your message wings by enlisting influential people to help.

Influencer marketing lets you stimulate conversations about your company by leveraging the people who control those conversations.

Plus, when an influencer promotes your brand, you take advantage of the same referral effect we spoke about earlier. The influencer's audience trusts the influencer's opinion, so they give your product a try.

Learn more: [The Beginner-Friendly Guide to Influencer Marketing](#)

## **4. Product Iteration**

The final and most important way you can keep your startup relevant in your niche is by continually iterating on your product and service.

Product development isn't a traditional marketing strategy, but it's a key way to make your product more attractive to potential customers. It also helps you prevent churn, which is a crucial part of growing your startup.

The "release early, release often" philosophy of startup development applies throughout your company's entire existence, not just in the early days. You need to optimize and improve regularly if you expect to be a major player in your niche.

### **Why should you invest in product development?**

New development helps you stay relevant with new things to talk about. You can chronicle your development in your blog, reach out to your influencer network with the news, and encourage customers to use it as a selling point for their referrals.

Plus, product development helps you respond to market changes. You can maintain your spot as a relevant product if you improve your product to solve your customers' *new* problems.

## **Focus on the People Who Matter**

Keep in mind that most products never become household names. It's not important whether *everyone* knows about your product.

Instead, focus on staying relevant with the communities of people who matter - the ones who might actually become customers. In that context, staying relevant is easier than you think.