

How to Use Lead Generation Methods to Grow Your School, Part 1

Introduction

Every martial arts instructor needs a lead generation system to attract new students. Whether you teach 20 students once a week at the local Y or hundreds of students at multiple locations, you must replace the students you will lose just to maintain class levels, and to grow your school.

School growth begins with consistent and constant quality lead generation—and that is simply a matter of numbers and effort. If you want five new students, for example, you'd better generate many more than five, 10 or even 20 leads—you may need as many as 50 or more. To generate that many leads you can't rely on just one lead generation method; you need multiple sources of leads.

This is often known as the Parthenon Principle. If you expect to support the stone roof of the great Parthenon in Athens, Greece, or the growth of your school, then you need many columns to distribute the weight and many lead generation methods working together, simultaneously, to attract new students. One column won't support the roof, and one lead generation method won't support your school's growth.

Your goal is to collect as many quality leads as possible from as many different sources with the least expense. Once you begin to do this effectively, then you'll be able to conduct more quality enrollment presentations to increase your school's active student count.

This is where your effort matters. Lead generation is one of your primary Key Results Areas (KRAs), which are tasks that require your active involvement every day. Are you willing to do the daily work, using the lead generation methods in this report? If you are, then you are likely to reach your goal, whether it's modest or ambitious.

One of the big misconceptions of many instructors and school owners is that they must have a large marketing "war chest" to generate many leads. The fact is that most of the lead-generating mechanisms that work really well, in a broad range of martial arts schools, cost little or nothing.

Test the lead generation methods in this Black Belt Marketing Report to determine which work best for you—squeeze the last lead from them before you try others. Lead generation is like the perseverance of a martial arts fighter: never stop, never stop, NEVER STOP!

The First Seven of 21 No-Cost and Low-Cost Lead Generation Methods

The first seven lead generation methods in part 1 of this Black Belt Marketing Report include one, referrals, that you should plan and implement immediately, as it may be the most important. The next four are easy to start and begin to test. The last two will require some assistance and more time, but they may be just as important as referrals.

The following lead generation methods are taken from NAPMA President Rob Colasanti's business teleconference, *Hitting Hard in the Martial Arts Business*. The text has been edited for length, but you can listen to the entire presentation by visiting the Pro Shop at napma.com and ordering the "Hitting Hard" audio CD.

1. Referrals

Referrals are the least expensive and highest quality source of new student leads.

You should have at least three referral systems that are actively generating leads. These are three you can implement almost immediately.

- 1) Your Program Director, or other qualified staff member, calls at least two students per day, who have been training at your school for at least three to six weeks, and ask them for a referral. The rule of thumb when asking for referrals is to always say, "Thank you, may I have another?" Ask for referrals until there aren't anymore.

- 2) Use the same technique above, but during in-person office chats between classes. Do this

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consistently every day of the week, and you will see results. It's virtually guaranteed.

3) Create a referral program for your school, where you give away a free year of training to a student for five referrals that enroll in your classes.

Make it a part of your "Info Call" and "Appointment Confirmation" scripts for new prospective students to ask them to "bring a friend."

The script could go something like this:

"Ok, great, Mrs. Jones, I'll see you here Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. You know, we've found that some students are a little nervous about their first lesson. Johnny might feel more comfortable if he knows has someone to work out with. Who is Johnny's best friend?"

"Would he be able to come down with Johnny on Tuesday?"

This slight tweak to your phone script can help add new referrals at the same time you're doing an intro.

2. Guest Passes

Guest passes are one of the best ways to generate new leads for your school. They're extremely inexpensive to produce. The primary strategy is to distribute as many as possible, consistently and constantly. (This month's Professional Package includes two different guest passes; there is at least one guest pass in every NAPMA Professional Package.)

3. Testimonials, or Social Proof

Testimonials are extremely powerful and cost you absolutely nothing to acquire. They are totally free. There may not be any other type of small business that can acquire testimonials easier than a martial arts school. Simply, ask your students to "testify" to the fun they experience, the benefits they receive and the quality of your instruction. Use those testimonials throughout your marketing. They're an excellent way to generate new leads because you didn't say your school is great, your students did; and that is always extremely powerful.

Ask your students to write a paragraph titled, What Martial Arts Has Done for Me, whenever they test for their next belt. Make it a requirement. This specific method is one of the easiest ways to accumulate volumes of social proof, quickly.

4. Newsletters

School newsletters are yet another easy way to generate new leads. Once you create your newsletter, you can distribute it as a hard-copy document or an HTML version you can email. You'll save time and money on printing, folding, stamping and mailing.

Don't just send your hard-copy newsletter to your students and parents, but also local government officials, community leaders, guidance counselors, the principals of local academic schools and all of the other high-profile people in your community. You want the leads they could generate by recommending your school to those THEY know.

Although your school newsletter is certainly a source of information for your students, it is also a great way to market to prospects. Mail your newsletter to prospects each month, increasing the likelihood that they will enroll with you when they decide to try martial arts.

Every monthly NAPMA Package includes the Kickin' Newsletter, with pre-written content and a blank page three that you can customize with news, announcements and information just for your students. You can do the entire job digitally, since the Kickin' digital file is included on the Media Master CD-ROM.

5. Signs, Banners and Posters

Because of the development of large-format digital printing technology, the cost of producing school window banners, bandit signs and posters for academic schools presentations (to state just a few ideas) is very low.

Be creative and place these items in high-traffic areas throughout your community, so the greatest number of future students sees them.

6. School Web Site

Since students and parents in your target audience are almost all computer-savvy, you should communicate with them through the media of the Internet. A school Web site can be a low-cost and highly effective method to generate leads because it is always working!

There are many sources of expertise to develop your school Web site. You can hire a professional, which will probably cost the most. That's probably a good idea, if you operate a large school or multiple locations. There are even many vendors that specialize in martial arts school Web sites. Part-time instructors and smaller

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schools will often have staff members or students with the skills to create a basic Web site, and at no cost.

You may also be able to find a local high school, technical school or college student, who is studying Web design and development, to create your site for a modest fee or as part of a school assignment or project.

7. Internet Search Engines

One of the primary benefits of the Internet is search engine services, such as Google, Yahoo, etc., that make it very easy for anyone to search for martial arts schools in your community. Many school owners have experienced a dramatic increase in leads generated from Internet searches, and this method will only continue to grow in importance every year.

The same person who creates your Web site, depending on his level of expertise, may be able to help you register keywords with various search engine services. The goal is for your school's Web site address to be at the top of search listings, or at least on the first page.

As mentioned above, this is a lead generation method that is working 24/7. You save a considerable amount of time because these prospects are informing themselves about your classes and programs. They will also know about your school before you speak with them the first time, which makes the entire sales/enrollment process much more efficient.

Conclusion

In review, the primary parts of a good lead generation system include:

- A consistent and constant use of lead generation methods.
- Multiple lead generation methods in operation, simultaneously (The Parthenon Principle).
- Testing various methods to determine which work best for your school.
- One of your primary Key Results Areas (KRAs) or the tasks that require your active involvement every day.

An Example of Marketing Synergy Using Lead Generation Methods

Synergy is usually defined as a combined action or operation in which the effect of the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

You are a local resident of your community, and you've just received a letter in the mail from Central City martial arts school. In most cases, if it is the first communication you've ever received from Central City martial arts school, then you will probably throw the letter in the garbage. That's expected, according to direct mail standards.

A few days later, you're shopping at the local grocery store, and when you leave you notice a flyer on the windshield of your car from Central City martial arts school. You may give it a quick glance, but it will also find its way to the trash quickly. That reaction is not unusual.

A week later you're at the mall and students from Central City martial arts school are staging a high-energy, very positive demonstration, and everyone looks like they're having a great time. Suddenly, the demonstration causes you to make a connection between the students performing and the various marketing messages you've recently received and seen. It only takes a moment for that synergy to occur in your head, even though you only watch the demonstration for a few moments.

Another week passes and your son brings home a guest pass for a free month of training at, of course, Central City martial arts school. He really wants to use the pass because Stevie, his best friend, takes classes at the school, and it's hosting a buddy day as a special event.

Now, the marketing synergy really grabs hold and motivates you to take your son to Central City martial arts school to give martial a try.

An active, well-managed lead generation system with multiple sources of leads can duplicate that little story many times, becoming the primary method to grow your school.