

Chamber of Commerce of Highlands Ranch

Referral Group Guidelines

The Chamber of Commerce of Highlands Ranch offers referral groups for its members. The chamber supports these groups and their members by providing:

- A venue for members to build relationships with other business professionals.
- A professional environment to expand members' professional networks.
- A variety of business and educational resources for members.
- A platform for groups, members and invited guest speakers.

Meeting Structure

Referral groups meet at the Highlands Ranch chamber office twice a month. The first 15 minutes are dedicated to open networking among the members. After that, the formal meeting will start with one minute concise introductions given by all members and guests, which include name, business name, business background, ideal client, and other information as announced at each meeting. Introductions are followed by a 15 minute discussion period covering critical business topics preselected by the group. The group discussion is intended to offer help to members facing universal business issues or challenges.

Next, one member will give a 15 minute spotlight covering business and personal information. This talk is intended to give group members a sense of who the speaker is as an individual and a business person. Sharing personal information is encouraged and is vital to business success, and may include such topics as family, hobbies, leisure activities, past careers, values, goals and dreams. A Q&A session is also part of the talk.

People do business with people they know, like and trust. We want to delve deeper into who our members are, what motivates them, and what makes them successful in business. (Members are responsible for bringing laptops or any handouts that will be used. A projector is available for member use.)

The final 15 minutes of the meeting are reserved for chamber, education, charity and other networking event announcements. Members are also encouraged give testimonials and thank-you's to other members for referrals or connections that lead to closed business.

Referrals vs. Leads

Successful networking groups are based on trust, loyalty, commitment and friendship. A successful group has dedicated members who attend meetings regularly, develop deep business relationships, and extend high quality business referrals to trusted partners. It is normal for new members not to receive many referrals in the first few months, since it takes time for group members to understand your business and trust you personally. It is important for members to effectively convey their needs to the group. Likewise, offering quality referrals to group members develops and strengthens trust and your position in the group.

Also keep in mind we are looking for strong, warm referrals not leads in this networking group. A referral is a friend, family member or client of yours who specifically expressed a need for a particular skill or service. You have made a warm introduction as well. Referrals in this group are never cold calls, or extra business cards passed on, or darts thrown at a blank wall.

Leadership Structure

The group will have volunteer facilitators within the group who will lead the meetings, coordinate with the chamber staff, and communicate with other group members and guests. The facilitators will lead meetings, manage the speaking schedule, and keep meetings on time. The facilitators will be responsible for tracking attendance and recording guests. The facilitator duty will rotate among the current members of the group as needed.

Membership / Guest Policy

The referral groups are exclusive to Highlands Ranch Chamber members and are industry exclusive. Chamber members who have more than one business, may only represent the business that is registered with the chamber.

Each member's chamber membership fees must be current. The fee for membership in the networking group is \$60 annually per person for those with networking level chamber memberships. Membership in the group is billed by calendar year (January - December). Membership is prorated for new participants. Membership dues must be paid within 30 days of joining the group or no later than January 31 of a new calendar year to remain in the group. All dues are paid to the chamber.

No refunds will be given if a member leaves the group. Chamber members or non-chamber members are invited to attend two meetings as a guest. Chamber members need to submit an application to join the group after the second visit. Applications must be submitted (and approved) after the second visit to continue to attend the meetings. Please see the facilitator or the Membership Development Director for the application link. The group will be notified that an application has been submitted, and will be given time to reply and indicate approval or concerns for the prospective member being accepted. If a member has concerns regarding the individual being accepted in the group, the member must provide the reasoning for these concerns. Upon acceptance, the new member will be contacted and an invoice will be generated by the

chamber. This invoice must be paid within 30 days.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is critical to the success of any networking group, but especially important in a small group setting such as the referral groups. Members should be aware that when guests visit the group and the attendance is low it may reflect negatively on the group and the chamber. Group members are expected to attend meetings regularly. If a member is unable to attend a meeting they should notify the facilitators or the chamber membership director.

A group member may send a substitute to attend a meeting. Substitutes should be knowledgeable about the member's business and must be prepared to fully participate in the meeting. Members are allowed reasonable substitutions but the group would prefer that members use no more than two substitutions per quarter. Our goal is to get to know you so we can help grow your business.

Group members missing more than two meetings in any quarter, without arranging for a suitable substitute, may be asked to resign from the group. Consideration will be given to the level of engagement with the group by the member outside of the regularly scheduled meetings.

One on one coffee, breakfast and lunch appointments are encouraged outside of the regular group meetings to better learn about each other. Group members are expected to advise the group facilitators if they will not be attending a given meeting.

Waiting List

You may be placed on the waiting list if you are looking to join a networking group, and there are no openings for your specific specialty or industry. When a position opens you will be contacted by the Chamber or group leaders.

Guests

Prospective guests are encouraged to attend PPA meetings. If not already chamber members, they are required to join the chamber and pay the program fee before joining a networking group. Guests must contact the chamber office or group leaders directly to schedule a visit before attending any groups. They may also attend at the invitation of a current group member. Guests are welcome to pass business cards out to the rest of the group, but visitor cards will not be placed in the group card binder.

Leaving the Group

Chamber membership will not be affected by resignation from the group. If you chose to leave the group, your company has the option of placing another company member in the group. Any such assignment must take place within two weeks of your notice to leave the group. If you are switching companies, you may remain in the group, but only if your former company declines to send a replacement, and your new company is also a chamber member.