AgencyGod

THE FREE PLAYBOOK

AGENCY GROWTH · VOL. 07

The Strategic Partnership Playbook

Build **6 referral partners** who hand you warm, pre-sold clients with **zero ad spend** – leads that already trust you, close faster, and **churn ~18% slower**. The exact partner types, the word-for-word outreach script, the commission structures, the one-page agreement, and a **30-day build plan**.

- The 6 partner types
- The outreach script
- Commission & rev-share
- The partner agreement
- The 30-day plan

A playbook from **AgencyGod**
agencygod.com

WHY YOUR BEST LEAD SOURCE IS ALSO YOUR SCARIEST

Referrals already feed you. You just can't turn them on.

Be honest about where your last three good clients came from.

Not cold email. Not ads. Somebody who already trusted you said your name to somebody who trusted them. That call was easy. They showed up. They closed fast. They did not grind you on price. And then you went right back to cold outreach and the feast-or-famine cycle, because you have no way to make that warm intro happen on purpose.

THE UNCOMFORTABLE MATH

In a survey of 612 agency owners, **66% named referrals from existing and past clients as their #1 source of new business.** Partner-company referrals ranked #2 at nearly 13%. Cold outbound sales? Just over 6%. Your single best channel is the one almost no agency builds on purpose.

You are living on the channel you refuse to systemize.

A referral partner is someone whose clients already need what you sell, who has no reason to compete with you, and every reason to look good by sending business your way: an SEO shop with a client who needs paid ads, a web studio that just shipped a site and has no marketing arm, a fractional CMO who writes the strategy but never executes it. **Build six of those and the warm intros stop being luck.** They become a channel you can count on, with leads that trust you before the first call and stay longer once they sign.

88%	~18%	16%+
Trust a recommendation from someone they know over any ad (Nielsen, 2021)	Slower churn from referred clients vs non-referred (Journal of Marketing)	Higher lifetime value from a referred client (same study)

Sources: SparkToro, The State of Digital Agencies 2024 (612 owners). Nielsen, Trust in Advertising 2021 (40,000+ respondents). Schmitt, Skiera & Van den Bulte, Journal of Marketing 75(1), ~10,000 customers tracked nearly 3 years.

THE 6 PARTNER TYPES · PART 1

Where your warm leads are hiding

Six kinds of people already sit on top of your ideal clients. Each one wins something by sending them to you. Know what they get, and the ask becomes easy.

1 Complementary Agencies

An agency that sells a service next to yours, not on top of it. An SEO shop sends you paid ads. A branding studio sends you funnels. You send them what you don't do.

IDEAL PARTNER

A focused, single-service agency in your niche that gets asked for **your** service constantly and has to say no.

WHAT THEY GET

A trusted home for work they can't do, plus your reciprocal referrals coming back the other way.

WHY THEY SAY YES

"My clients keep asking me for ads and I keep losing those conversations. Now I have someone to hand them to."

2 Web & Dev Studios

They build the site, hit publish, and walk away. The client is left with a beautiful storefront and no traffic. That gap is your client.

IDEAL PARTNER

A design or development shop with **no marketing arm** that finishes projects and never hears from the client again.

WHAT THEY GET

A reason to stay valuable post-launch, a happier client, and a fee for the intro.

WHY THEY SAY YES

"I just shipped a site that gets 4 visitors a day. I look bad. Someone driving traffic makes my work pay off."

3 Fractional CMOs & Consultants

They diagnose the problem and write the plan. They do not execute it. They need a team they trust to hand the build to.

IDEAL PARTNER

A fractional CMO or strategy consultant who sells **the plan** but has no hands to run it.

WHAT THEY GET

An execution partner who makes their strategy actually work, which makes them look brilliant.

WHY THEY SAY YES

"I write killer strategies and then watch the client fumble the execution. A team that delivers protects my reputation."

THE 6 PARTNER TYPES · PART 2

Three more channels most owners never tap

4 CRM & Automation Implementers

The people who set up HubSpot, GoHighLevel, or a marketing-automation stack. They build the machine. They do not fill it with leads or write the campaigns.

IDEAL PARTNER

A HubSpot or **GoHighLevel** certified partner, or an ops consultant who installs tools but does not run marketing.

WHAT THEY GET

A partner who feeds their system real campaigns, so the client keeps paying for the platform they set up.

WHY THEY SAY YES

"I built them a beautiful CRM and it's sitting empty. If nobody runs marketing into it, they cancel and I lose the account."

5 Adjacent Service Pros

Accountants, business coaches, PR firms, and bookkeepers. They have deep trust with business owners and zero ability to sell them marketing. Their whole client list needs you.

IDEAL PARTNER

An accountant, coach, or PR firm whose clients **all need marketing** but who never sells it.

WHAT THEY GET

A way to add value to clients they already advise, plus a referral fee for a 10-second introduction.

WHY THEY SAY YES

"My clients ask me who to use for marketing all the time. I'd rather send them to someone I trust than shrug."

6 Software & SaaS Partner Programs

Tools your clients already pay for run formal partner programs that pay you to bring them clients. This is referral income that arrives whether or not you do the work.

IDEAL PARTNER

A SaaS tool in your stack with a published **partner or agency program** (CRMs, schedulers, page builders).

WHAT THEY GET

A motivated agency steering clients onto their platform, lowering their own acquisition cost.

WHY THEY SAY YES

"We pay agencies 20-30% recurring to bring us accounts they were going to recommend anyway. It's free growth for us."

YOUR MOVE

web studios and complementary SEO shops. Start there. You do not need all six to start. You need two good ones.

THE OUTREACH SCRIPT

How to land a partner without sounding like a pitch

The mistake every owner makes is opening with what they want. This script opens with what you are about to *give them*. Reciprocity does the selling for you.

SUBJECT LINE — Email or LinkedIn DM

Sending you clients (not pitching you)

THE OPENER — Reciprocity, not a pitch

"Hey **[Name]**, I run **[your agency]** and we work with **[their client type]** too, on the **[your service]** side. I'm not reaching out to compete. I send out a handful of referrals every quarter when a client needs **[their service]**, and right now I don't have a trusted **[their service]** partner to hand them to. Figured that should be you. Worth a quick 15 minutes to see if it's a fit?"

Notice what that message does. It leads with leads *for them*. It kills the competitor fear in the first two sentences. It asks for 15 minutes, not a commitment. And it makes them the obvious choice, which is flattering. You are not asking for a favor. You are offering one.

✗ THE PITCH (IGNORED)

"Hi! I run a marketing agency and would love to explore a partnership where you send us referrals. Let me know if you're interested!" *(All take, no give. Straight to trash.)*

✓ THE OFFER (REPLIED TO)

"I send out referrals every quarter and want a trusted partner to hand them to. Worth 15 minutes?" *(You're giving first. They reply.)*

THE RULE

Never ask a partner for leads in the first message. Offer to send them first. The agency that gives first owns the relationship, and the referrals come back the other way once trust is built.

15

The whole ask is 15 minutes. A low-commitment call is easy to say yes to. You are not proposing marriage on a cold message. You are booking a short conversation between two people who serve the same clients.

THE 15-MINUTE CALL & THE FOLLOW-UP

Run the call, then don't quit at touch one

THE 15-MINUTE CALL AGENDA

1. **Their world first (4 min).** "Walk me through who you work with and what happens after you deliver." Listen for the moment their clients need you.
2. **The overlap (3 min).** Name the exact handoff: "When your build is done, that's when my work starts."
3. **The terms (4 min).** Float the simplest deal first: a reciprocal swap, no money changing hands. If they want a fee, name a range (numbers next page).
4. **The first move (2 min).** "I've actually got someone I can send you this week." Prime the pump so they feel the value first.
5. **The close (2 min).** "I'll send a one-page agreement so we're both clear. Sound good?" Book the next step on the call.

THE 5-TOUCH FOLLOW-UP · ~17 TO 21 DAYS

Most partners don't reply to the first message - that's normal, not rejection. These are the only five touches you need, written out to copy and paste.

Day 0 TOUCH 1	**The opener.** *"Hey [Name], I send out referrals when my clients need [their service] and don't have a trusted partner to hand them to. Worth 15 min?"*
Day 3 TOUCH 2	*"Floating this back up. Two [their-client-type] clients asked me for [their service] this month, so the timing's real. Open to a quick call?"*
Day 7 TOUCH 3	**The proof.** *"Here's the kind of client I'd send you."* Share one anonymized result or screenshot. No ask.
Day 12 TOUCH 4	**Switch channels.** *"Hey [Name], trying a different inbox in case email got buried. Still keen to trade [their service] / [your service] referrals. 15 min this week?"*
Day 18 TOUCH 5	**The walk-away.** *"I'll stop chasing this. If trading warm clients ever sounds useful, my door's open."*

COMMISSION & REV-SHARE STRUCTURES

What to actually pay a partner

The #1 thing that stalls partnerships is the owner not knowing what is fair, so they say nothing and the deal dies. Here are the real ranges. Pay more for more work and more risk on their side.

WHAT THE PARTNER DOES	PAY	HOW IT'S CALCULATED
Warm intro They email an intro, you take it from there	10%	Of first-year revenue from the client
Qualified opportunity They hand over a client who already wants to buy	20%	Of first-year revenue from the client
Partner-closed deal They sell it and close it on their own paper	25-40%+	Of first-year revenue, scaling with their effort
Recurring referral fee Ongoing share for as long as the client stays	10-20%	Of monthly retainer, every month, recurring

Commission ranges based on Jason Lemkin / SaaStr referral-partner benchmarks (10% warm, 20% qualified, 25-40%+ partner-closed, on first-year ACV). Retainer band of $5,000 to $25,000/month per Stackmatix, 2025.

START HERE, NOT THERE

The easiest first deal moves no money at all. **The reciprocal swap:** you send them clients, they send you clients, and you both track it loosely. No invoicing, no attribution fights, no awkward "where's my check" conversations. Most owners overcomplicate this with contracts before a single lead has changed hands. Trade leads first. Formalize the money once it's actually flowing.

ONE-TIME FEE

Paid once on the first invoice. Simplest to track. Best for low-trust, first-deal partners. *(A clean 10-20% of month one.)*

RECURRING FEE

Paid every month the client stays. The strongest motivator. Best for partners who send volume. *(10-20% of the retainer, monthly.)*

THE FILL-IN TEMPLATE

The one-page partner agreement

Plain English, one page, no lawyer required to start. Fill the blanks, both sign, and you have removed every excuse to not begin.

REFERRAL PARTNER AGREEMENT

Parties	[Your Agency] and [Partner] agree to refer clients to one another.
Scope	Partner refers clients needing [your service]. You refer clients needing [their service].
Referral fee	[10% / 20% / reciprocal swap] of revenue from a referred client who signs.
Attribution window	A referred lead is credited to the partner for [90] days from the introduction.
Payout trigger	Fee is owed only after the client **pays their invoice**, not when they sign.
Payout timing	Paid [net 30] days after the qualifying payment clears.
Exclusivity	**None.** Both parties may work with and refer to anyone else.
Term & exit	Runs [12 months], renews automatically, either side may exit with [30] days' notice. Fees already earned are still paid.

Two details protect you. Pay on the **paid invoice**, never the signed contract, so a deal that falls apart costs you nothing. And require **no exclusivity**, so a slow partner never locks up your pipeline. Everything else is just clarity.

THE 30-DAY PARTNER-BUILDING PLAN

Two active partners and your first warm lead by day 30

One focused hour a day. Build the list, send the offers, run the calls, sign the simple deals, and prime the pump. In that order.

WEEK 1 Build the list

Goal: 30 targets

- List **30 target partners** across the 6 types, weighted toward the 2 that touch your niche hardest.
- For each, write one line: **what they sell and where their clients need you.**
- Find the owner's name and best contact (email or LinkedIn). No mass lists.

WEEK 2 Send the offers

Goal: 10 sent

- Send the **reciprocity opener** (page 5) to your 10 strongest targets, personalized.
- Log every send so you can run the 5-touch cadence without losing track.
- Reply within an hour to anyone who responds. Speed signals you're a real partner.

WEEK 3 Run calls, sign deals

Goal: 5 calls, 2 signed

- Run **5 partner calls** using the 15-minute agenda from page 6.
- Sign **2 simple agreements** (page 8). Default to the reciprocal swap to start.
- Keep following up the rest. Most replies land after touch one, not on it.

WEEK 4 Prime the pump

Goal: first warm lead

- Send your **first 2 reciprocal referrals** to your new partners. Give before you get.
- That generosity triggers the return. Expect your **first warm lead by day 30.**
- Add 10 new names to the list. The machine only works if you keep feeding it.

2-3

Active partners is all it takes to change your month. At a $5,000 to $25,000 monthly retainer, even one extra warm client a month from a partner pays for the whole effort many times over.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

One web studio, 5 clients a month

1. **The partner:** a Webflow studio that ships 6 to 8 sites a month → and has no marketing arm.
2. **The opener:** "I'm not here to compete. I send out referrals and want a trusted web partner." → reply in 2 days.
3. **The deal:** reciprocal swap to start → upgraded to **20% of first-year revenue** once leads flowed.
4. **The pump:** you sent them a client needing a rebuild week one → they sent back a launched site needing traffic.
5. **The result:** a freshly launched site with no traffic is a perfect-fit warm lead → closes in one call.

If that one studio finishes 6 sites a month and half of them need marketing, that is **3 warm clients a month from a single partner.** Build two more and you have your channel.

THE TRAPS

4 mistakes that kill partnerships

1. **Asking before giving**
   Opening with "send me referrals" makes you a taker. Send them a client first. Generosity is the only thing that earns the return.

2. **Quitting after one message**
   Most partners reply on touch two through five, not touch one. One ignored email is not a no. It's a normal Tuesday.

3. **Over-lawyering the first deal**
   A 20-page contract before a single lead has moved scares partners off. Start with a one-page swap. Formalize once it's working.

4. **Never sending leads back**
   A one-way partnership dies in 60 days. The agencies that get referrals are the ones who reliably give them. Feed the relationship.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Partners send the leads. We build the machine that closes them.

Warm intros are the cheapest clients you'll ever land. But a partner channel still needs a system underneath it: an offer that closes, a sales process that doesn't ghost, and clients who stay long enough to pay off. That is exactly what we install **done-with-you**, backed by the $10,000 guarantee. **If we don't book you a set number of qualified calls in your first 90 days, we pay you $10,000.**

Every month you live on referrals you can't control is another month of panic when they dry up. We onboard only a handful of agencies a month so we can actually deliver, so spots are limited. **Book your 30-minute strategy call now.**

$10K GTD — Qualified calls in 90 days or we pay you **$10,000**

Apply to AgencyGod →

Free 30-min strategy call · limited spots this month

agencygod.com

Results mentioned are real client outcomes and are not typical. Individual results vary with effort, market, and execution. The $10,000 guarantee is real and subject to the program's written enrollment agreement terms.