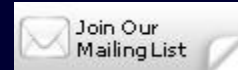




October 2009



### Dear Valued Partner:

At a time when businesses are coming under increasing pressure to justify spending, customer reference programs are getting more serious about proving -- and boosting -- their value. That's one of the key findings of the 2009 Customer Reference Program Benchmark Report, the first in a series of annual reports designed to establish a set of accurate metrics and industry benchmarks for evaluating program performance and success.

Based on a survey of top reference programs around the world, the Benchmark Report is the joint product of the Customer Reference Forum's Metrics Special Interest Group ("Metrics SIG") and Mainstay Partners. We are pleased to offer the full report to our newsletter subscribers [here](#).

### Key Findings

The report paints a broad picture of customer reference programs, describing a range of operational characteristics and performance metrics. These include productivity (request fulfillment and collateral throughput rates), usage (how references and materials are being deployed), and financial (budgets and sales impact).

The report reveals significant differences between programs -- sometimes but not always related to the size of the company. It also uncovers what reference managers feel are the most important indicators of program success and the extent to which companies are actually measuring these key metrics.

### What Reference Programs Are Doing Well

- Programs are very successful at fulfilling reference requests, with over half of respondents saying they fulfill more than 95% of requests
- Programs are highly productive, with top global programs producing hundreds of customer case studies, success stories, white papers, testimonials and videos covering a broad range of industries
- Most programs are very responsive to stakeholders, fulfilling more than 90% of reference requests within a few

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### New! 2009 Customer Reference Program Benchmark Report



[Click here to download](#)

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### Oracle's Job Dasteel on Customer Advocacy



[Click here to watch video](#)

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### Prove Your Value with Case Studies

- days
- Most reference customers are very satisfied, with programs reporting average customer satisfaction score of 4.2 out of 5 and a retention rate of nearly 90%
- Top programs are avoiding the budget axe and even increasing funding by quantifying the strategic value and cost effectiveness of reference programs

## Areas for Improvement

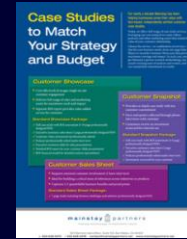
- Programs have very limited visibility into the impact of referencing on sales and revenue, with 86% of respondents unable to say how their reference activities affected sales and business performance; less than half even knew how often reference materials were included in bids
- The lack of "downstream visibility" isn't because reference programs aren't interested in sales impact, but because they lack the necessary systems and organizational integration; for example, only 25% have reference database tied to the sales/marketing database
- Once the means to measure sales impact are in place, programs should consider tracking: revenue impact (percentage of bids containing references; value of sales), sales cycle acceleration impact; and percentage of references featuring top customers
- Programs can boost the credibility and effectiveness of reference materials by including more quantified benefits: respondents said the majority of their customer studies currently do not contain hard-number benefits
- To stay relevant, reference programs must continually re-evaluate and re-align their goals with key stakeholders in sales and marketing

## Next Steps

In future reports, the Metrics SIG and Mainstay will expand the survey to incorporate more programs, further refine the list of performance measures, and continue to add to a growing database of results and metrics from survey participants.

Key next steps will include the creation of a Metrics Dashboard to help reference program managers quickly compare their programs with industry standards and use the results to enhance program effectiveness and better communicate program value to management. Stay tuned to this newsletter for updates.

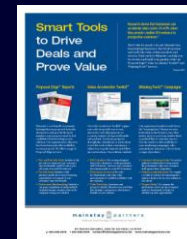
## For More Information



[Click here to download Mainstay's Case Studies brochure](#)

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## Tools to Close Deals



[Click here to download Mainstay's Sales Enablement brochure](#)

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