

# Marketing Strategies for a New Entrepreneur

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*Editor's note: In this series, Next Avenue will follow Patricia Wynn as she embarks on becoming an entrepreneur with her North Carolina lifestyle assistant business. Future installments will note her progress, with advice for her and for other midlife entrepreneurs. This article is part of [America's Entrepreneurs](https://www.nextavenue.org/americas-entrepreneurs/) (<https://www.nextavenue.org/americas-entrepreneurs/>), a Next Avenue initiative made possible by the [Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation](https://www.schulzefamilyfoundation.org/) (<https://www.schulzefamilyfoundation.org/>) and EIX.*

Word-of-mouth networking through personal recommendations and referrals is the lifeblood of Patricia Wynn's Hillsborough, N.C.-based business as a lifestyle assistant.

As of January 2022, Wynn's nine-month-old business, Patricia Services, LLC, which includes cleaning, doing laundry, caregiving, sometimes cooking, and completing grocery shopping and other errands for her clients, has grown to nine customers, directly as a result of referrals from her existing clients.

"I give so much credit to Ms. Virginia Williams, my first client. Once I began working for her, she recommended me to some of her friends and neighbors, and my client list began to grow," said Wynn.

Virginia Williams is the international president and co-founder of Williams Life Skills, Inc. with her husband, Dr. Redford Williams, who is also a professor of psychiatry and psychology at Duke University. They are both 81.

"Ms. Virginia has really done a lot to market my business. She has played a key role in getting me new clients, and they all say she sells my services very well as a reference," said Wynn.

## The Positive Impact of Current Clients

Daniel Forbes, a professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management and a senior editor for the (EIX) Entrepreneurship and Innovation Exchange, which is a funder of Next Avenue, confirmed that current clients for all types of businesses are an excellent form of advertising.

Noted Forbes, "Endorsements and recommendations from current clients are among the most valuable forms of marketing for any business. If you can find a customer willing to do it, let them tell the story of how you made their life better in some way."

Wynn's evolving client list is an example of how positive recommendations can help a new business find a foothold and acquire customers.

Williams recommended Patricia Services LLC to Duke University professor Katherine Bland, who then recommended Wynn's lifestyle assistant skills to neighbor and University of North Carolina professor Jeffrey Simms and his wife Laura, an executive at a local non-profit organization.

Recently, the home maintenance contractor who works for Williams, Robert Spadacenta, hired Wynn to do some cleaning, and he also recommended her to another colleague.

"The contacts that I've made through Ms. Virginia have led to more clients than my Care.com profile, which is where she found me originally," said Wynn. "It really helps to have someone who is trusted recommend you to others."

## Finding Ways to Get the Word Out

In addition to personal referrals, Wynn has branched out by printing business cards, lawn signs and car decals in a package from Vistaprint to advertise her business, at



a cost of about \$450. Friends have placed links to the first Next Avenue article about her business, "[Our New Series: The First Year in the Life of a 50+ Entrepreneur](https://www.nextavenue.org/year-in-the-life-of-a-50-entrepreneur/)" (https://www.nextavenue.org/year-in-the-life-of-a-50-entrepreneur/) on Facebook.

Wynn has also been able to bounce marketing ideas off Maxine Stern, [her SCORE mentor](https://www.nextavenue.org/become-score-small-business-mentor/). (https://www.nextavenue.org/become-score-small-business-mentor/) SCORE is the national organization of retired business executives affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration that offers free advice to new entrepreneurs.

"Ms. Stern suggested that I update my website and include the Next Avenue article about my business from December 2021 on it," said Wynn.

According to Forbes, developing a focused appeal to advertise a new business is the way to go.

"The most effective marketing is going to come from focused appeals to people who fit your market and who already know you as a trusted person, or at least someone with shared interests," he said.

As a 52-year-old Black woman, Wynn is part of a segment that makes up 46% of Black entrepreneurs, according to a survey by Guidant Financial and the Small Business Trends Alliance (SBTA).

According to the survey, Black women represent one of the highest percentages of female small business owners of any group. Also noted in the survey is that marketing and advertising is seen as one of the top five non-COVID-19 challenges faced by Black entrepreneurs, in a list that includes lack of capital/cash flow; recruiting/retention of employees; administrative work; and managing/providing benefits.

Under the category of [women who are small business owners](https://www.nextavenue.org/women-entrepreneurs-can-successful/) (https://www.nextavenue.org/women-entrepreneurs-can-successful/), 16% of the respondents included marketing and advertising as one of the top five non-COVID challenges.

Wynn says she is learning to carry her business cards with her at all times, and asking her regular customers to distribute some of her business cards among their circle of friends.

Recalls Wynn, "I recently took a trip to Atlanta, and

forgot to bring my business cards with me on the plane. I started chatting with a woman sitting near me, and she was interested in my business services. She took my name and number, but it would have been better to give her a card. Now I make sure to take them with me wherever I go."

Wynn also appreciates clients such as the Simms, who have agreed to display a yard sign advertising her company, which, combined with the decal on her car, will broaden her reach to possible new customers.

According to Forbes, "[It's good to try some broad-based marketing to allow for unpredictable connections](https://www.nextavenue.org/3-inexpensive-ways-promote-your-small-business/)" (https://www.nextavenue.org/3-inexpensive-ways-promote-your-small-business/) – for example, people who might be looking for services for someone else even though they don't personally fit your market."

## Different Platforms for Different Markets

Social media is another nut to crack, especially since Wynn's clients represent a mix of generations – baby boomers, Gen X, and young professionals. Forbes suggested having [a presence on a variety of platforms to better reach a mix of potential customers](https://www.nextavenue.org/5-digital-marketing-strategies-to-launch-a-business/). (https://www.nextavenue.org/5-digital-marketing-strategies-to-launch-a-business/)

"Given her business, she might need to use different platforms to reach different markets," he explained. "The senior citizens she wants to reach are probably on Facebook. But the young professionals are more likely to be on Instagram."

Forbes added, "For the older crowd too, she may still get some mileage out of more traditional media, like a local community newspaper."

Wynn has been able to get the word out in the communities of Hillsborough and Chapel Hill, N.C. courtesy of permission to post her lifestyle assistant cards in some local businesses.

"A woman that I know from high school days, Michele Wagner, has allowed me to put up my business cards in her store – Wagner's Wrap, Pack & Ship in Hillsborough," said Wynn. "Also, a new customer,

Susan Crisp, has a tax preparation business in Hillsborough and said I could post my cards. Her home is in Chapel Hill."

Acquiring additional customers for her lifestyle business means that occasionally, Wynn pays her brother or cousin to take on some cleaning jobs if she is already booked.

"My goal for 2022 is to have twenty clients, and then I could hire four people in addition to myself, giving everyone a set number of hours of work per week. But until I grow to that size, I will have my brother and cousin handle the overflow on an as-needed basis," Wynn said, adding "They both did an excellent cleaning job, and I inspected their work when they were done."

Wynn is pleased with her progress so far.

"Recently, I had to tell Ms. Virginia to slow down in terms of getting me more clients. My original availability has changed, and I'm booked up – which is a good thing," she said.