

Entrepreneur warns small business is losing human connection and reveals the global referral gap costing billions

Small businesses are losing billions to the global "Referral Gap" as word of mouth breaks down. ReferUs is bringing back real human connection.

BROADBEACH, AUSTRALIA, December 2, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After working with businesses across multiple continents, award-winning entrepreneur Justin Herald says small

businesses worldwide have drifted away from the one thing that has always driven their growth: the human connection between customers and the businesses they love.



ReferUs

“

The world doesn't have a marketing problem. It has a referral problem, and small businesses feel it the most"

Justin Herald

Herald, who grew the global clothing brand Attitude Inc. from just \$50, says the world has become so dependent on digital ads, algorithms, and automation that the oldest and most trusted driver of business, genuine word of mouth, has been neglected. In a world full of noise, small businesses have been pushed towards systems and platforms that often overpromise and underdeliver, while the simple power of personal recommendation has been

forgotten.

New consumer behaviour research across Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and the US has highlighted a surprising global problem. Up to 80 percent of recommendations people intend to make never actually reach the business. Herald calls this "The Referral Gap", a modern, worldwide challenge that is costing small businesses billions of dollars in missed revenue.

"This is a global issue," Herald said. "People everywhere still rave about the businesses they love, but life gets in the way. The referral never gets passed on. The intention is there, but the action is missing."

A global problem intensified by tough economic conditions

As cost-of-living pressures rise across the world, small businesses are facing some of the toughest conditions in recent decades. Margins are shrinking, operating costs are increasing, and digital advertising is becoming more expensive while delivering less. Many small businesses have found themselves trapped, spending more on marketing in an attempt to stay visible, only to see diminishing returns.

“Small business is doing it tougher now than at any time I have seen,” Herald said. “They are being told to pour money into ads, boosting posts, and digital campaigns, but the return simply is not there. Most small businesses do not need more marketing. They need a cost-effective way to make what already works actually work again.”

This belief became the catalyst for [ReferUs](#).

A modern fix inspired by old school connection

To close the referral gap, Herald developed ReferUs, an Australian-built platform now being adopted around the world. It brings back the old school simplicity of sharing trusted recommendations but adapts it for the speed and expectations of the modern consumer. The platform allows anyone, anywhere, to send a referral in under ten seconds, capturing the moment before it disappears.

“When you are already talking about a great business, you should be able to pass them on instantly,” Herald said. “ReferUs captures that moment. It is the global evolution of scribbling a number on a scrap of paper, except now it takes seconds and never gets lost.”

Recognising that small businesses globally are under pressure, Herald priced ReferUs at just over \$1 a day. The goal was to create a universally accessible option that allows businesses to grow through the people who already believe in them, without stretching their budget.

“It had to be something any small business anywhere in the world could afford,” Herald said. “Referrals should be the most effective and affordable growth channel in the world. We made sure ReferUs stayed that way.”

Why this matters worldwide



Businesses are searching for that one unicorn

With digital ads becoming less trusted and more costly, consumers everywhere are returning to the one thing that has always guided their choices: recommendations from real people. Word of mouth is borderless. It crosses cultures, economies, and industries. It has always been the most powerful way for a customer to discover a great business, yet in the digital age, the mechanics of passing on a recommendation have broken down.

Herald believes the next global shift will not be towards deeper automation, but towards deeper connection. People are overwhelmed by information but energised by trust. They want to support the businesses they value, but the process has become too hard, too slow, or too easy to forget.

“Consumers trust people, not ads,” Herald said. “Closing the referral gap is how we bring back the human side of business. It allows customers to support businesses in a way that feels natural, meaningful, and authentic. And it does so at a price small businesses can actually afford.”

Global uptake already underway

Although ReferUs was built in Australia, it has already expanded to businesses in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, and Israel. Uptake has been especially strong in industries that depend heavily on personal recommendation, including trades, real estate, automotive, beauty, fitness, finance, and professional services.

“What we are seeing is not a trend. It is a global movement,” Herald said. “We are not reinventing business. We are reconnecting it. ReferUs is simply giving people a way to act on something they already want to do.”

About Justin Herald

Justin Herald is an award-winning global entrepreneur, speaker, and author of 8 international best-selling books. He turned \$50 into the worldwide clothing brand Attitude Inc. and has since launched multiple ventures focused on customer experience and small business growth. He was named International Entrepreneur of the Year for his contribution to business and his impact across global markets.

About ReferUs

ReferUs is a globally expanding platform designed to close the world’s “Referral Gap” by giving people a fast, simple, and human way to recommend great businesses. The platform enables anyone, anywhere, to send a referral in under ten seconds, restoring the simplicity and trust behind word of mouth for just over \$1 a day.

Justin Herald

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