

The Marketing Power of Testimonials: How To Get Them & Use Them

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For many clients, (of course, there are those with confidentiality issues) I strongly recommend to them using testimonials as a marketing tool. Testimonials are a great PR tool, while at the same time can enhance your advertising initiatives. The bottom line: they can do wonders to build credibility for your business. And they don't even cost you a dime. Plus, they can be used in many different advertising and public relations applications. Put them on your website, use them in ads, make them a part of presentations, print one or two of them as support messages in brochures; use them a part of your media press kit; put them to use wherever you have space for almost any marketing tool! (Yes, even on the back of a business card.)



How do you get testimonials? Here are several ways, but what it comes down to is you simply have to ask:

1. Whenever a client/patient has something great to say about your product or service, ask them to write it down for you. Tell them you would like to have those words on their company letterhead, with his or her signature. If they really like your product or service, they will be happy to do it.

2. Ask your clientele to fill out a brief customer survey. Design the survey so there is room for comments. At the end of the survey, simply ask if you may use their comments for marketing purposes, by circling either Yes or No. Again, if they are pleased with your work, nine times out of 10 people will respond with a "Yes."

3. Encourage your clientele to write letters or e-mails expressing their satisfaction.

Actual written letters or e-mails are another way to get testimonials. Of course, you need to make it clear you would like to use their words to help promote your company and when soliciting for such letters or e-mails make absolutely sure the customer is truly pleased.

4. Offer to write copy for customers. There is nothing wrong in taking this approach and actually it might help you get more testimonials. Yes, people in general always want to help, but as we all know people are busier than ever these days. So make it easy for them. Give them a draft. Allow them to edit the copy as they so wish. You'll be surprised how often your copy is approved with no changes at all.

5. Use the satisfied customer's full name whenever possible. I don't like to see testimonials on marketing materials with only the person's first name. For many businesses, there is absolutely no reason why you cannot get a person's full name, the person's company title, or where he or she lives, depending on the kind of products or service your business offers. Testimonials said by a "John" or a "Mary" really look contrived, even if they are true words of endorsement. Therefore, do your best to get John's or Mary's last name. Avoid any hint that a testimonial could be bogus. This is the last thing you want from a PR image standpoint.

6. Use testimonials when public speaking and pass out evaluations to your audience whenever you speak. Testimonials can be wonderful little stories or antidotes in support of your talk. By handing out an evaluation form to your audience for their opinions on your speech and again allowing space for their comments, you will have another opportunity to gather testimonials. Once they circle "Yes" to indicate you are free to use their comments and give you their signature, their remarks are all yours to use. What great PR!

If you aren't using testimonials in promotional materials, you are missing a golden opportunity to build a sense of integrity, reliability and trustworthiness – important core values for any business's marketing and public relations strategies. So take the initiative to start collecting testimonials for your company as soon as you can. Testimonials are powerful words of persuasion every businessperson should have in their marketing toolkit.

