

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: TESTIMONIALS AND CASE STUDIES**

One of the most powerful things you can do when you are marketing your business product or service is to show that it does what it's meant to do. If it's a product - does it work? If it's a service - does it provide what people want?

The easiest way to do that is to have testimonials from people who have bought your product or used your service. Testimonials provide the social proof that other people have bought your product or service, taken the risk, tried it out and found it to be of great value.

Most people don't use testimonials effectively and don't see the impact they can have. They don't even see the necessity of collecting testimonials from clients. But if you get the right testimonials from the right people, it builds respect, prestige and your professionalism. It elevates you in the eyes of the person reading the testimonial. They say, "Well, if this person says she's good - she must be good!"

Now, if the person whose opinion counts says, "Don't like it", say: "I am going to impress you so much. I'm going to go away to remodel and recreate my product. I'm going to improve it and I'm going to come back to you in four weeks' time and ask for your opinion again." In four weeks time, you return and they say, "You know something? That is absolutely amazing" and that endorsement will probably end up stronger than it would have been originally.

How do you approach somebody to get a testimonial? The best time to ask for it is when that person has just experienced your product or service and is feeling good about it. If they say immediately after using your product or service, "This is the best thing I have ever bought!" you should say, "That is such a compliment - could I put that on my website?"

You must get that testimonial immediately (before their euphoria disappears) - ideally in writing then use it on your website, your business card, your brochure and at the end of your emails.

Writing testimonials can be quite difficult for people so you have to help them. You go to your computer and you write: 'Hi, You said to me that our product "is the best you have EVER had". Is it okay if I quote you saying this on my website? Just whip me back an email if it's a "Yes".'

They reply and say: "Yeah, go ahead!"

Fantastic - there's your testimonial. You've actually done the hard work for them.

The key is to get testimonials about different aspects of your service or product. Think of it as a CAT scan - providing clarity from every single angle and providing absolute transparency so there is zero doubt in the prospect's mind that buying your product or trying your service will be the best decision they ever made.

What makes a good testimonial? It doesn't have to be entirely positive. A good testimonial can actually begin in a negative vein (and obviously finish in a positive one) because it shows a change in attitude and highlights the sort of thoughts and doubts that other prospects might have.

Don't use testimonials that just say 'Fantastic!' etc. They don't really have any weight. Similarly, don't just feature someone's initials at the end of the testimonial. You need to build up the layers of detail and you need the person's full name, their title, their location (for example, London, UK) and their job title with sort of description of their job function (for example, CEO or IT Manager).

When people see that they say, "Hey, I'm an IT Manager. That person's an IT Manager - they loved it. So will I." So, you're building rapport through the printed word. You also need their Industry and Profession, for example, IT Manager in the frozen food industry. It could be translated into the kind of consumer market. It might say, "Jenny, Mum of two - 'I loved this product, my kids loved it'."

Then you add a date. If your testimonials are more than a year old, you get new testimonials. You should collect testimonials and rotate them all the time.

You should also add a photograph of the person giving the testimonial. It's all about building credibility and making it believable so the social proof just gets stronger. It helps to build rapport because it shows that you understand people like them, and people like them are already buying from you.

If you have hundreds of testimonials collected on your database and you know the professions of those people, you categorise them. On your website, have a drop-down menu that says, "Find your occupation here" and let's say a teacher is looking, he or she clicks on the 'Teacher' section of the menu and there are your teacher testimonials. You are connecting your testimonials with a person, rather than leaving it to chance.

You can also use video and audio testimonials on your website or you can put them all onto a CD and send it with your

initial information pack and say, "Don't take our word for it, listen to what our customers have to say."

The people who listen to it are the people who need and want the additional proof. It's worth it for the very small amount that it costs to produce a CD. You could put those on your website too - 'Click here to play' and there they are. You can do exactly the same with video - you can put it onto a DVD or onto your website, so people can see video testimonials on your web site. People like to see things, or hear things or be able to read things to get a sense of what a product or service is like. If you can put video and audio on your website - you're appealing to all of those senses.

The case study is typically longer than a testimonial and it takes a particular set of circumstances and shows a journey where the use of the product or service is transformational in some way.

The essential elements of both case studies and testimonials are: credibility, believability, variety and an endorsement of your product or service. If you have good testimonials and good case studies, you make it so much easier for potential customers. You lower the barrier.

If you add in the right testimonials and the right case studies to support what you provide in your business - will it make a difference? Absolutely it will make a difference. In fact, you'll wish you'd done it years ago.