

## 10 Secrets to Asking for Effective Client Testimonials for Your Website

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I tend to be a skeptical consumer. I see so much marketing hype these days it's becoming more and more difficult to discern what's real and what's fabricated, and I've found that to be especially true when it comes to buying products and services online. However, reading testimonials from other satisfied customers helps in my buying decision many times.

As a service business owner, requesting testimonials from satisfied clients is one of the quickest ways you can start to establish trust with your online visitors. Why? Because it's not just you touting how wonderful you are -- it's other people stating how happy they were with your product or service and how its use changed their lives for the better. Testimonials create credibility, believability, and a sense of security for prospective customers when they visit your site, as they then know that others have successfully used your product or service.

As a side benefit, requesting testimonials from happy clients creates increased loyalty to you from your existing clients. This happens because the act of providing a testimonial puts their credibility on the line, as well, in terms of backing a product or service that they are willing to stand behind. Additionally, they feel that they are making a vital contribution to helping your business grow and prosper.

How do you go about getting effective testimonials for your website? Here are 10 strategies for creating testimonials that will make your visitors say, "Wow -- I've got to get that!":

1. Ask when the timing is right. When should you ask for testimonials? It depends on the nature of the work you're providing for someone. If you tend to work with your clients over a longer period of time, ask for the testimonial within the first few weeks or so, or at the point where they experience their first "ah-ha" or significant breakthrough or change with you. If you offer a short-term service, ask for it when you receive payment. For example, we recently had gutters installed around our house. The man who did the work was quick, efficient, thorough, easy to work with, had a great product, and did a wonderful job. Had he asked, I would have provided him with a written testimonial on the spot!
2. Request specific results. Effective testimonials go beyond the "Working with you was great!", which really tells the reader very little, to a longer statement with specific information about specific outcomes the client received as a result of working with you or using your product. They could use a "before and after" scenario to paint a more dramatic picture of how effective they found your product or service to be. Or, simply incorporating the five Ws (Who, What, Where, When, and Why) that describe their dealings with you is also an incredibly effective way to write a testimonial.
3. Keep it short yet powerful. No one has time to read a testimonial that goes on forever. Three or four sentences is optimal for an effective testimonial. It should be one that will quickly grab your reader and deliver a powerful punch. Your clients will appreciate knowing that you value a short testimonial--it takes much less of their time and doesn't seem like such a major hassle to complete.
4. Request to use their contact info. Make your testimonial provider a "real person" in the eye of your visitors. When you ask for a testimonial, it's most helpful if you request to use the name, website, and photo of the person providing the testimonial. Technology exists where you can request an audio testimonial from them, or if you're at a conference, you can create a video testimonial as well. Testimonials with initials and a city or just a job title don't strike me as authentic -- to me, they appear to be fabricated by the business owner.
5. Get diverse testimonials. I become quite skeptical of testimonials of well-known Internet marketers, for example, when all I see on their sites are testimonials by other well-known Internet marketers. It appears like they have a testimonial club established. I'm also skeptical if all I see are testimonials from people in the same industry as the person who is requesting the testimonial. Remember, the point of providing testimonials is so that your visitor can see a visual representation of someone like him/herself who has used your product or service successfully and has gained real results from doing so. Make sure that the testimonials you use represent a cross-section of your target market.

6. Request their permission to use the testimonial in all of your marketing efforts. You may decide to incorporate testimonials into your brochures, direct mail, special reports, print ads, etc. Make sure that you can use the testimonial in any of your marketing strategies.

7. Write the testimonial for them. This may seem counter to every strategy listed above, but reality dictates this step if you have busy customers or clients who simply hate to write. In many cases, you may have heard your client sing your praises so often that all you need to do is write down what you've been hearing and send it to that client for any revisions and approval. Or, you can request a 10-minute interview with the client and create a testimonial based on what answers are given in the interview and send that to your client for approval, as well.

8. Use case studies if you're new in business. If you've just opened your business, you probably have few, if any, clients at this point, which means you have no one to ask for a testimonial. In that case, I tell my new business owner clients to use either testimonials from their former lives as employees, which is a passable strategy but not the best, or better yet, create and use case studies on their site.

Some case studies anonymously document a situation and a problem of a client and then how the business owner helped the client resolve that problem. However, newbie business owners will need to research the problems of their potential clients and then create a solution for those problems. The problem-solution case studies can then be used in lieu of testimonials to help the new business owner create credibility with website visitors.

9. Create a system for requesting testimonials. If you're selling information products online, incorporate a testimonial request and testimonial writing guideline into your follow up autoresponder system. If you work with clients on an ongoing basis, incorporate your testimonial request into the sequence of your regular correspondence and follow up with your clients. If you work with clients only on a short-term basis, incorporate your request into your invoicing process and provide either an email address or online form to make the process as easy and automated as possible for them.

10. Thank your testimonial provider. Everyone likes to hear a "thank you" when extending a favor to others, so take the time and drop a note or postcard in the mail to show your thanks. Because we're so overwhelmed with emails these days, a handwritten thank you attracts more attention and is more memorable than ever before.

Getting testimonials from happy clients helps you become more trustworthy in the eyes of your visitors. By implementing a testimonial request system and incorporating testimonials into both your online and offline marketing efforts, you'll create a two-fold effect of establishing credibility with new customers and inspiring loyalty in current ones.

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### **Short note about the author**

Online Business Resource Queen (TM) and Online Business Coach Donna Gunter helps self-employed service professionals learn how to automate their businesses, leverage their expertise on the Internet, and get more clients online. To sign up for more FREE tips like these and claim your FREE gift, TurboCharge Your Online Marketing Toolkit, visit her site at <http://www.GetMoreClientsOnline.com>

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