
Small business marketing concepts



The value of testimonials (and how to get really good ones).

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Introduction

We all know the value of word of mouth for growing and expanding a business. Nothing is stronger than a personal recommendation. Testimonials are perhaps the next best thing, they can give your potential customers the reassurance that your products and services are really worth considering.

Testimonials can be placed in a folder in your reception lounge or framed and hung conspicuously for your customers to see. No company website is complete without testimonials. If a customer of yours says you did a great job then ask them for a testimonial, they're your written word of mouth.

What makes a great testimonial?

So what makes a great testimonial and more importantly how do you get them?

“Buy from Zcompany, I think they’re great!” Signed I.M. Happy

Mr. Happy may be ecstatic about you but the testimonial doesn't do much to convey that, and in reality this testimonial won't do much for your business. Unfortunately when put on the spot your customer may not know what to write so here is the **How to get a top testimonial** guideline.

Everyone likes a good story, testimonials should be a good story. A great way to get the story is to conduct a mini interview or questionnaire. It's very important that the testimonial is in your customer's own words (1st person eg... “I”, “my”, “our”). Avoid writing case studies (3rd person eg... “his”, “her”, “their”) as they are not as convincing as a person's own words.

The story should reflect the typical buying process:

Need → Purchase → Evaluate

These are the important points you need to get from your customer:

- What was the customer needing and what were the circumstances that brought them to you?
- What services were given, what product did they get and what was their experience like?
- How have your customer's circumstances changed since getting your services?
- Are there any special comments your customer would like to make about you and your products?

An example

So let's take the imaginary case of Mr Jones who wanted to set up a home irrigation system to maintain his garden and minimise water wastage. He purchased an irrigation system from Bill Smith at the Water Works. Bill has a simple questionnaire sheet prepared that he gives to all customers that want to give him a testimonial.

What were the circumstances that brought you to us?

- "With all the dry weather and the fact that I'm so busy with work I was really getting concerned about the state of my gardens. I just didn't have the time to water them properly and I was forever forgetting to turn the sprinklers either on or off. My garden was suffering, but I didn't know what system to get and how to set it up."

What was the buying experience like and what did you get?

- "I went to the Water Works and found Bill Smith very helpful. Bill asked me many questions about my garden, what plants I had, what the soil was like, what the size was and whether the beds were mulched. He then gave me several alternatives that I should consider. I decided on the "El Squirto 7000" system based on its flexibility and great price. Bill agreed it was a good choice."

How do you like your purchase? Did it meet your expectations?

- "Since getting the "El Squirto 7000" my garden is the envy of the neighbourhood, I don't have to think about watering, the sensors monitor the soil moisture so the garden only gets the water that it needs and I feel I'm doing my part to conserve water. I'm delighted".

Are there any special comments or recommendations you would like to pass on?

- "I would recommend Bill Smith at the Water Works to anyone looking for irrigation equipment. Bill is very knowledgeable, has a great range of products and offers excellent advice and service."



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This is a great testimonial, but why? The customer has answered those 4 simple questions. To the person reading the testimonial it leads them through the buying process, they can identify with the need, look at the purchasing process and see the outcome and level of satisfaction. By identifying with the testimonial your potential customer is a lot more confident with your services and products. This is a very powerful marketing tool.

Putting the process to use

Prepare a testimonial form for your business, and make sure you have a digital camera handy. When a customer offers to give you a testimonial give them your form, explain what you want and get a photo. Try and get the testimonial on the spot, offer your customer a refreshment and give them some privacy to fill in your form. You'll be surprised how easy it is to get really great testimonials.

Release form

Make sure you have a release form or authorisation paragraph on your form stating how you are going to use the testimonial content and an authority request to do so. The authorisation form shall have your customers full name and address, signature and date. Give your customer a copy and ensure that you don't change the content of the testimonial in any way when reproducing it.

Privacy

Make sure you respect your customers privacy by only using their initials and suburb as a means of identifying them. Your customer doesn't want to be disturbed with questions about your products and services, that's your job.

With high value items you may request a very good customer to speak about their experience directly. Remember that **You** should organise this, don't let your potential customer make contact directly.

Conclusion

Testimonials are a great marketing item, we hope that this concept sheet helps you to get great testimonials for your business. When you have them, use them, make them conspicuous and get them to work for you. The following pages are an example of a double sided testimonial form with release paragraph, feel free to use it and modify it for you business.

At Adalante Consulting we specialise in small business marketing and customer service relations management. If you have a small business need and would like an obligation free consultation please call 07-54979 661 (Offer valid to business within 120km radius of Brisbane CBD.)



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How have your circumstances changed since you made your purchase and have your expectations been met?

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Are there any special comments or recommendations you would like to make?

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I (name) of (address).....

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Give my permission to (your business) to use my testimonial and photo without monetary compensation for marketing purposes in print form and media (print and electronic) on the following conditions:

1. the content of my testimonial will not be altered in any way.
2. Only my photo, initials and suburb will be used to identify me.
3. My testimonial will not be used for endorsement by any other business or company without my express written permission.

Signed..... Date.....