



The Power of Testimonials: Let Your Clients Tell the Story

These days, people can learn a lot about you before ever contacting your firm. It used to be that they got their recommendations by word of mouth. Now with the Web, they learn about you through “world of mouth.” Why not let your best clients speak for you? It can help you step out of the commodity trap. Here are a few tips for gathering persuasive testimonials:

- Consider using an outside party who is good at drawing people out. Your clients will tell you that you are “great,” but “great” is hardly compelling sales copy. They will be more expressive with someone they do not know. Make sure your interviewer has done this before; it is an art to draw people out and get the language that persuades.
- Tell your clients who will be calling them and why. A heads-up from you means they will be much more comfortable with the interviewer.
- Always use the telephone or in-person interviews. If you ask people to write a letter, the letter will almost always be stiff and formal. Again, not compelling copy. When you interview them, you have the chance to craft the words into accurate, compelling copy.
- Craft a variety of testimonial quotes for use in your promotional campaigns.
- Send each quote (any that you might ever consider using) to the clients and have them sign off on it. Make sure they know it may be used on your website, media releases, proposals and for a variety of promotional uses.
- Whenever possible, use the person’s full name, title, and company. “Pat Z. in Wisconsin” sounds like a late night diet-aid commercial. “Patrick Zuber, President, HealthCore Company, Madison, Wisconsin” sounds real. Of course, if you are dealing with policy-driven public entities, sometimes it is easier to get sign-off by using first name and last initial or to carefully craft the client’s industry description.
- Keep the client release form on file for as long as you use the testimonials in marketing.
- Send clients copies of brochures or newsletters where the quote has been used. Most people like seeing their name in print or keeping a copy of the testimonials in their files.

A client’s view of the experience with your firm adds a personal touch to your portfolio. Testimonials can make promotional material and websites easier to write because they clarify just why people buy from you. Getting clear on that can even help in proposals.

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