



# InGenius

## Review

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A review of  
great thinking  
from

**INGENUITY  
MARKETING  
GROUP**

*a marketing and training firm that works primarily with professional service organizations and small businesses. We offer strategic marketing planning and coaching, marketing program development, and curriculum and training mainly in the areas of consultative selling, professional service marketing, and customer service.*

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## *The Power of Testimonials: Letting Your Clients Tell the Story*

By Wendy Nemitz  
President, Ingenuity Marketing Group

One of the old adages in sales is “People buy with emotion and justify their decisions with logic.” Especially when you are selling an as yet undelivered and intangible service, people buy based on their trust in you and your ability to do a great job.

One of the first questions we ask a new client is why they think people buy from them. After asking this question for years and comparing it to the answers their actual clients give, we are convinced that most of the time most of the people have no real idea what emotions they are provoking and why anyone buys from them.

Many professional service providers have told us that their clients buy from them because of their qualifications. I bet none of you can tell me what medical school your doctor graduated from, much less your CPA’s alma mater.

Others tell us it is because of their “quality service.” We have discovered that what signifies quality to you and what signifies quality to your clients are often two different things. Professionals tend to focus on professional designations and internal process as measures of quality. Clients tend to focus on timeliness, impact, communication, and relationships.

The way to find out why your clients buy from you is to ask them. One of the first things we do with any new client is call up some of their customers and have a good chat. We ask why they chose you, what they would say about you to a friend, if they would refer you to others, what you are best at and how you can improve. We ask them if they have worked with others in your field and what those experiences were like. We ask them how long they have worked with you and if they have ever considered switching.

At the end we have a transcript of the conversation and some juicy sound or word bites you can use in advertising or proposals. This gives you the opportunity to clearly understand your **UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION**

(sales talk for what makes you unique and why people should buy from you), how your clients feel about you, and a chance to address any issues. It gives you language to tell your own story to new clients and also gives you the opportunity to build your confidence by taking a minute to bask in all those wonderful compliments.

We have learned there are better and worse ways to do this. Here is our checklist for high quality testimonials:

- ~ Consider using an outside party who is good at drawing people out. Your clients will tell you that you are “great.” “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 folks 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 a little into much more compelling copy. (However, compelling copy should never drive you to make anything up they did not say. It just gives you a little more license to edit.)
- ~ Craft a variety of testimonial quotes for use in your promotional campaigns.
- ~ Send each quote you might ever consider using to the client 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.

- ~ Keep a file of that signed-off release form as long as you use the testimonial.
- ~ Send a copy of brochures or newsletters where the quote is used to the client. Most people like seeing their name in print.

One huge advantage of the persuasive testimonial is the second person referral effect. Most people choose professional service providers from personal referral—in other words, a referral from someone they know and trust. A testimonial is from a person the potential client may not know, but who does know you and is willing to brag about the intangible—how it feels to buy from you—in print. While not as powerful as a personal referral, it carries more weight than you saying the same thing.

If your brochure claims that your service is wonderful, it sounds like so much ad copy. If a real person testifies in detail about how it feels to work with you, it is much more persuasive. Having a file full of testimonials will make all your promotional material better and easier to write. It will help you understand just why people buy from you. And it will build your confidence to go out there and tell your story.

If you would like to understand your unique selling proposition, why people buy from you, and more about the how to craft powerful, persuasive testimonials, call Wendy Nemitz at 651 690 3358.

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