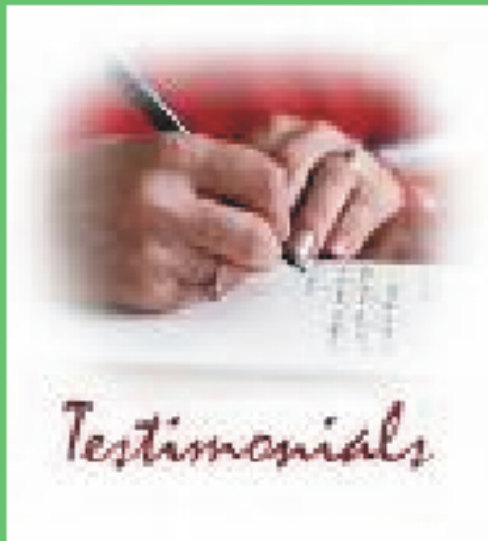


The Why, How and When of **TESTIMONIALS**



By Heather Richards

The Why, How and When of **TESTIMONIALS**

By Heather Richards

Table of Contents

Why You Need Testimonials	3
What is a Testimonials	3
Benefits of Testimonials	3
How to Get Testimonials	4
The Questions to Ask	5
What You Need in a Good Testimonial	8
Types of Testimonials	8
Where to Use Testimonials	9

TESTIMONIALS

Why You Need Testimonials

Do you want to significantly increase the traffic to and the sales from your website? You can by using no-cost, easy to obtain, highly effective testimonials. It's possible, whether you sell directly off your site or indirectly by providing quality information for those researching their purchases to be made offline.

If you're a professional who uses your website as a credibility tool to tell people about yourself and/or the services and/or products you provide, then you can enhance your business success by placing testimonials on your website.

If you are an Internet Marketer or Retailer, you can even use testimonials within your banner ads to increase traffic to your website where you want people to find your products and/or services and then maybe buy them sooner, because people really do believe more about what about people say about you, your company and your products more than what they believe what you say about them.

The best news is that you can start using Testimonials Today and at NO COST!!!

You can make your website stand out and even get a total stranger, who could even be in another country, to conclude that you are credible and to buy your products and/or services, without having ever communicated directly with a single soul. The most successful (and of course, profitable!) websites that do this—and do it very well—use testimonials from their existing customers, clients and fellow professionals.

Powerful testimonials are going to be ones that specifically address the question: **What's in it for me?**

What is a Testimonials

A testimonial is a positive statement, that contains information on how you, your product or service in going to be beneficial to others. Testimonials is where you will often hear, read or see "unpaid referrals and recommendations." These testimonials are made by people who have appeared willingly because they got their desired results and often even more. They really believe strongly in the product that they have bought or maybe received as a free trial gift.

Discover More about Online Marketing at www.HeatherRichardsLive.com

Benefits of Testimonials

Using testimonials has many benefits and it amazes me how little attention most companies pay to them. Many companies that have been in business for many years have less than a handful of testimonials and the ones they do have are weak and corny. It's not that they don't get referral business; it's just that they aren't proactively collecting and utilising testimonials to create greater influence in their sales advertising and presentations. Testimonials establish credibility and credibility is the respect you earn when the results you've achieved are clearly and publicly communicated. Credibility can be based upon facts

you've presented that measure past results for your clients or it can be a perception of the customers or clients based on their personal experience with you or your company. Often in the initial contact with a client, you are seen as the Salesperson and often not trusted, testimonials help you start to break down the barriers and can be the start of building a trusting business relationship. The faster you can build trust and gain credibility, the faster your prospective clients are going to believe and listen to what you are saying. The most important benefit of testimonials, is that they can establish your credibility fast. Testimonials give credibility to every area of your company, product, employees, website and presentation that potential clients and customers rate you on. If the client has not heard of you or met you before they are going to be asking themselves questions about you and your product. Who is this person? Can I really trust what they are saying? Are they reliable? Do they offer a guarantee? So with testimonials you are looking to establish concrete credibility, you need to offer enough testimonials to create confidence.

Another great benefit of testimonials is "Third-Party" validation, if a friend introduces you to a new product, that is a third-party recommendation – you are not being "sold to" by the salesperson, in fact the referee has done all the work for you, all you have to do is deliver the product or service. So "Third-Party" recommendations are highly effective and you should use them as often as possible.

Testimonials can initiate additional sales, they can also make you strive for a higher standard in your next product or service. They can also give you an insight into what it is that your customers are looking for in a new or additional product. If you ask for their honest evaluation, they may tell you where your product fell short or how it could be improved, giving you great ideas and market research for a new or improved version.

Another benefit is to include testimonials in your offline and online media advertising and articles, when discussing your business, product or service with the media journalist, presenting them with testimonials increases their confidence in writing a better article about you and it can also encourage readers to take more notice of you and what you are offering.

One of the best things about testimonials are they cost little or no money. Your clients are already know you and talk with you. Capturing testimonials is a way to increase the content and quality of your communications with them. Putting many testimonials on your website demonstrates that you offer superior customer service and validates your product's excellence. Communicating with your client base probably already is a part of your business processes, however doing it intentionally to collect positive feedback may not be. I am strongly suggesting and recommending that you include the practice of collecting testimonials to your marketing system as a matter of urgency.

Collecting testimonials is yet another opportunity for customer contact. The more you contact your customer base, the more likely you are to uncover additional needs and sales opportunities. A wonderful side effect of more frequent contact is a direct positive impact on client loyalty. When you deliver timely and useful information to your clients, they remember and recommend you to their friends, family and colleagues.

Discover More about Marketing your Business Online at www.HeatherRichardsLive.com

How to Get Testimonials

People have a natural tendency to reciprocate. If you give them a gift or invite them to a show, then they feel compelled to give you a gift in return or invite you to another show in the future because they have the "I owe you" feeling. If you have delivered great value with your product or service, then your customers will probably want to reciprocate. They want to help you with testimonials and even want to contribute to a common good and help those investigating a similar purchase. If you commit to quality and customer service, then your satisfied clients will be happily volunteering to help you because they are reciprocating.

It is a good idea to constantly collect testimonials, that way you can select from a wide variety to fit almost any marketing campaign, targeting a specific group of clients. Take the best ones and get them up on your web site as soon as possible and with the rest either put them aside for later use or even better set up a new page on your site for all of the testimonials you receive, that way prospective customers see you have a lot of clients who have been happy with your service or product in the past, which gives you that third-party credibility again.

One way and probably the most common way to get testimonials is to wait for the happy client to write you a letter or an email these days and thank you or your company for the great product or service that you have provided to them. A problem with this method is you probably are not going to receive that many and they are likely to be all very similar. You should always use and encourage these letters, however this approach is not an effective method of collecting great testimonials.

Many of the best testimonials occur almost daily, these are the positive things your clients say without giving any thought to it, on the telephone or in your store, but it goes without being recognised because nobody writes it down and saves it. The Big Hint here is to learn to listen intently (listening in my opinion is the most important part of communication) and recognise when you are being GIVEN a GREAT testimonial.

Regardless of your business, whether it is online, whether you work for yourself or for someone else, begin to train yourself now to get into the habit of "Spotting the Testimonials." Even when you are introduced before speaking, often people will say some great things about you or your business.

TAKE ACTION POINT - Here is where I want to get you in the habit of listening for and collecting Testimonials. Write yourself a note now, that says something like "Today I am going to watch out and LISTEN for testimonials" place this note on your desk, or in your diary or as an appointment reminder in your calendar on your computer, but make it a priority to begin to learn the habit. I have been told by a qualified behavioural therapist, that it takes just one full cycle to create a new habit, and to maintain it takes three full cycles. (a full cycle is equal to approximately 3 weeks). So by the end of nine weeks this should, if practiced regularly be a habit that is coming naturally to you. Of course, you still need to continue, that way it will become a part of your long term memory and you will begin to do it without even thinking about it.

Now lets remember we are promoting our own business, so it is our responsibility to collect testimonials, so **ASK** and you need to make it easy for your clients to give you that testimonial. If you ask and then leave it with them, the chances are you are still going to be

waiting for that testimonial six months later. Your clients are busy people too, so we need to ask them direct questions or give them some type of incentive.

Discover More about Marketing your Business Online at www.HeatherRichardsLive.com

The Questions to Ask

Some of the questions I recommend you ask are as follows (you can ask in person, via email or by telephone, where possible take notes, but more importantly LISTEN intently.)

Question #1 – "Sue, do you mind if I ask you quickly, how has your experience been with our product?" - This is an open ended qualitative question, you are not actually asking them for positive comments, but you are leaving it open for them honest with you about their experience.

Question #2 – "Sue, you could have purchased a similar book from another author, is there any reason why you selected this particular book?" Now it could be any reason they selected your book, let them tell you in their own words. It may have been the title, or the colourful cover, it may have been the table of contents, or it may have been the testimonials.

Question #3 – "Sue, is there anything that you would like to see included or improved upon?" This is the what I like to call the "Back Pedal Question" This is where you are saying "I am not perfect, so if you can see any area that needs improving, please tell me" Your product may be great, but the process of ordering it from your web site, may need to be made a little easier, again it could be anything, let them give you their honest feedback. Inviting constructive criticism is a great way for self improvement and market research. Customer feedback is vital to success, remember to validate and act on your clients concerns, after all you asked for it because you care. Build trust and shown sincere interest and concern and you will be rewarded with loyal, repeat clients.

Question #4 – "Sue, since you have purchased and used our product, can you tell me what it is you like best about it?" "What result did you achieve after using the product?" or "What benefits did you discover?" You have eased into these questions, but this is where they tell you all the good things about your product, company or service.

Question #5 – " Sue, who would you recommend our product to and why?" This is where you should do your best to get a referral within your testimonial, you may even consider offering an ethical bribe, like an added bonus if they give you names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses or whatever it is you require to contact the referred prospects. This may also be a general referral like "I recommend that all businesses looking for quality business cards with unique designs in Australia, see Printing Solutions as the owner obviously has many years of experience and has an ability to understand what it is that you want and need." or for a parent who bought a book on nursing new born babies, they might say something like "I really recommend this book for all new parents, it really helped explain the stresses and thoughts that we are having is similar for all new parents."

Another way to ask this same question is "Sue, what would you say to somebody looking to buy the same product as you have just purchased?" One way the focus is on the type of

client and the other way is the type of product you are offering, but both are still open-ended questions about your company or your product or service.

You can also add this twist to the question like "Sue, what would be the thing that they would like best about ?" Get it? Your satisfied, happy customers are helping your prospects decide to purchase from you in the future.

Ahh, now there is a Trick! Mmmm you just knew one was coming didn't you? Well the answer is simple. **You have to know when to ask.** Your timing is critical and can make a huge difference to the tone of the testimonial that you are receiving. You need to ask for the testimonial at the peak of the clients satisfaction. For example, I owned a Retail Trophy Outlet for many years, the best time for me to ask for a testimonial was straight after presentation day when everyone was excited at having received their award. Another example would be straight after someone had finished reading your book or right after they had returned from the holiday they had booked with your travel agency. So a second person may not have experienced or received the benefits yet, however they can confidently expect to receive the desired results as they have had a or maybe even several third-party endorsements that the results will be forth coming.

In some cases you may even collect testimonials that make future predictions like "I have heard many of the strategies of Heather Richards' course and I know that if I apply them, it will increase my income in the coming months by anywhere from 25% to 75%." Now this is forward-thinking on behalf of the person giving the testimonial, which involves some expected statistics and client satisfaction, generating excitement and enthusiasm to TAKE ACTION.

With tangible products, you can collect testimonials almost immediately. People often use the item and begin to experience the benefits immediately. Imagine you are selling Global Navigating Systems (GPS"s) drivers and tourists can immediately enter in their desired destination and be guided with ease right to the location without needing to take a look at a map, even if there is a detour the GPS will recalculate the directions and still guide you to the door. Here your client can comment on the quality, the compactness of the unit, the ease of use, etc., from almost the moment they remove it from the packaging.

If you offer a professional service you may want to ask for comments about sales process, or the customer service. Whatever it is you or your business delivers, you simply must go back, check in with the level of satisfaction and get your testimonials.

Try to make sure the testimonials you receive don't have a date on them, it is okay to use a dated testimonial for a year or two, but certainly no longer, as it then appears you, your product/s and information is out of date.

The best way to obtain a testimonial is just ask and supply structure questions, however in some cases you can use the testimonial as a part of negotiations, for example, if you supply us with your testimonial within a certain amount of time, we will give you this extra bonus or a certain percentage refunded or discounted, it is always a good idea to refund a percentage as it has a higher perceived value.

It is a good idea to include testimonials in your sales process, to educate your clients that it is a natural part of the sale when dealing with your company, this also assists in building relationships. Testimonials create a Win, Win situation, for your company you are building a

relationship based on trust and for the client it means you will try your best to deliver the best possible product or service in return for their (hopefully) positive feedback.

As I have mentioned, your clients are busy people too, so you may need to make it easy for them to give you a testimonial. One way of doing that is writing the testimonial for them, from what they have said to you or someone in your company and ask them to endorse it. Or as you are talking to them ask if they mind if you take some notes, and would it be ok if you emailed them a draft of the testimonial for them to endorse, in return they will receive the bonus on offer. Of course they could alter it, but by you doing the initial work it gives them the ideas of what it is you are looking for in a testimonial. Don't just write them yourself and put their name to it without gaining their permission and make sure they are accurate, remember this is a building of trusting relationship that we are aiming to achieve.

Discover More about Marketing your Business Online at www.HeatherRichardsLive.com

What You Need in a Good Testimonial

There are good testimonials and there are powerful testimonials. A good testimonial is a positive comment about you, your product or service that expresses the clients happiness or the level of satisfaction they have experience from dealing with your company. Try to be sure you get Full Names, Title, Company Name and Country in the sign off, initials are ok, but doesn't express a willingness to be associated publically with your company, so it wouldn't be a testimonial that you would use on your main advertising, regardless of how good the content was. Event or actual product inclusion is also good at the end of the testimonial, imagine you are looking to attend the "Business Blast Intensive Training One Day Workshop" and at the bottom of a testimonial you read that the person giving the testimonial was an attendee, you will often see this in seminar companies testimonials – simply because it works!

A powerful testimonial is much more than just a positive statement about your product, it has more influence and more persuasion. It includes all of the characteristics of a good testimonial, plus many facts, figures, proof and statistics. These testimonials will include statements like "After using Heather's Training System, we have increase our profits by 27%" or "With just one of Heather's Strategies we saved over \$600 per week in advertising, that is over \$30,000 per year back in our pockets" See the power, quoting facts and figures on what people can make or save. Very Powerful!

Other powerful testimonials, would be to get a celebrity or someone who is recognised in the industry to endorse your product or service. For example, if you sold Soccer Clothing and you were able to get David Beckham to say he would not take to the field unless he was wearing your extremely comfortable brand of soccer attire.

A referral is the most extremely powerful kind of testimonial, this is when someone addresses an issue within the testimonial, like "When we first took a look at Heather's Training Course we were a little concerned about the price. However once we actually received the package and began to implement the strategies, we completely understood the value of her package . . . not to mention her fantastic customer service. So, if you are

contemplating purchasing a training package, don't waste another minute like we did. Just buy it, take action today and enjoy the rewards coming your way!"

Discover More - Register for a Free Webinar at www.HeatherRichardsLive.com

Types of Testimonials

There are many types of testimonials, beginning with **text**. Text is can be seen as weak in today's modern technology, but you can increase the power by including a photograph, name, company, title etc. You can capture these text testimonials over the **telephone** too, remember to note down the positive comments the client volunteers and ask them to endorse them for you.

An advantage of text testimonials is that you can automate the process utilising the powers and the tools available via the internet. Once someone places an order on the internet, the order can trigger a series of automated **email** messages. From the follow up that they received the product, right through to the satisfaction questionnaire and bonus products for participating can all be automated and therefore build a strong trusting relationship automatically.

Audio is a more powerful third-party recommendation, as it is someone actually saying in the own words and is excellent for communicating the emotion, again use the suggested questions, ask for their approval to record the conversation if you are speaking over the telephone and run through the questions with them, before you begin to record. You can also interview in person, just have a small portable recorder, and ask for their comments, using the questions as a guide. Try to keep the hype and excitement in your questions, so the person being interviewed will respond in a similar tone.

Video is by far the most powerful way to collect testimonials. It involves the human senses. You can see the person, sense if they are genuine and willing in their delivery. You can gauge the excitement and willingness to interact. If the person on the video is looking at you, smiling, and speaking comfortably —then your potential clients are going to think, "Now, there's a customer who really honestly likes that product, who is really comfortable with the person who sold him that product or service. They are volunteering their name and reputation as well as that, they are willing to have themselves filmed stating their position!" Video captures many emotions, that text alone can not and often multiplies your success by five to ten times.

Where to Use Testimonials

E-mail is still the number one mode of communicating with your prospects and clients, so I recommend that you include a short testimonial in your e-mail signature—maybe one or two sentences—and link back to your website, where you display many more testimonials. Also include testimonials in your signature in your newsletter.

Consider including a testimonial in an advertisement, this creates a balance, people recognise it is a paid advertisement, however if you include a third party endorsement you gain credibility.

Naturally you need to include testimonials on your Website. You can have some on the main page and I suggest you scatter them throughout all of the pages on your site, as sometimes people land on pages other than your main home page, just be sure to make the testimonials on each page relevant to the products or services that are displayed on that web page. You can then have an entire collection of them of a page of their own.

When you are a guest speaker, you could have the master of ceremonies include a testimonial as a part of your introduction.

When you are telephoning clients, you could read a testimonial, whether you're speaking with the person or leaving a message. You could say something like "Hi, this is Heather Richards calling. I was at the presentation last week in Sydney, as I know you were too. With our system we have helped companies just like yours increase their sales by up to 33%. In fact, if you go to my website you will read how Bruce Turnbull tells us about how our system took his profit from next to nothing to an incredible \$150,000 in just 60 days., I would really like to discuss with you to find out if we may be able to achieve similar results for your company. I am Heather Richards, and my number is +61 3 9010 6019"

You can also use testimonials on your "On-Hold" messages.

Quote testimonials with contact details for verification if required to the media or in press releases. Use an association, like "Heather Richards, who was originally trained and mentored by one of the greats of Internet Marketing, Brett McFall."

Add testimonials on advertising brochures, flyers and even briefly on your business cards.

Finally, It is the responsibility of everyone in your company to gather testimonials, from the very top executive right down through all of the departments. Don't forget the technical department, which is often overlooked, remember these are often the people who are having direct contact with your clients, so often here the testimonial at the peak time, they may also hear the most honest negative comments, which gives you the area you may need to concentrate on for improvement or development. Incorporate this into your company and training policy.

Discover How to Bring your Offline Business Online at www.HeatherRichardsLive.com