

Colleen Francis



Good Testimonials Sell. Bad Testimonials Repel!

By Colleen Francis

When we receive positive testimonials from clients, it might seem difficult to ever find fault with them.

After all, if they're saying something positive, it *has* to be a good thing, right? The truth is, there are three vital components that make an effective testimonial. Without all three of these important elements, the testimonial may actually repel potential clients from working with you.

Curious to know what these three important keys are? Your testimonial must be *credible*, *current* and *compelling*. When all three of these elements are present, the testimonial is most likely to convince prospective clients that you're the real deal.

Current

Testimonials aren't persuasive if they don't contain current information. Make sure the testimonials reflect your current products and services and that they represent current clients who are still in business!

Also make sure that the testimonial is fresh, recent and pervasive. If you're still flashing around a 10 year old testimonial from a business that shut down years ago, it does very little in solidifying your own abilities. Review your testimonials annually to check for current information and make changes.

There will be times when you will have to stop using some testimonials (even some of your favorites!) and gather new ones. A good habit to develop is to ask for a testimonial from each client. Doing so will ensure you always have a batch of the most current success to share with new prospects.

Credible

Ensure your source is relevant, and from an industry that is similar to your core client base. If your testimonial comes from an irrelevant or less than credible source, it damages your credibility as well.

For your testimonials to be credible they need to be from respected people and businesses, real (never fake a testimonial or endorsement), and in alignment with the products and services that you are selling.

Only when testimonials are credible are they a powerful selling tool. Credibility is decreased when the testimonial is attributed to a vague name such as “Bob” or to simply a title. Even worse are testimonials with no attribution.

Credibility is increased when you use your client’s name, business, title and picture. You can also increase the credibility of your testimonial by using a video or audio clip of your client sharing their success.

Compelling

A testimonial does little good if it doesn’t outline a specific gain that the client obtained by working with you. *Compelling testimonials are objective testimonials.*

A tangible and measurable benefit should be outlined in the testimonial for maximum effectiveness. These benefits can include:

- **Revenue increases.** For example, “our sales increased 50% when using Colleen’s referral scripts”
- **Time savings.** “ABC’s online ordering system saved us 40 hours a week in data processing”
- **Productivity increases.** “The ABC product increased our machine’s output by 20% in one week”
- **Cost reductions.** “This new oil reduced our annual costs by 15% because it lasts longer than other products we used in the past”

Your testimonials *must be specific* to speak to and persuade your market.

Here is another example. A testimonial that simply states: “Company ABC is great to work with!” doesn’t capture a buyer’s attention, create emotion or encourage anyone to work with you. Instead, use a testimonial that has more detailed information.

Made over, the ineffective testimonial above would be: “Working with Company ABC has saved us time and money. Our teams work one hour less a day because we have reduced duplication and all corporate files are in one central location that everyone has access to.”

This testimonial is compelling because it fully describes the benefit the client received as well as objectively showcasing the tangible value.

How to secure the best testimonials

Businesses of all sizes can produce high-quality testimonials in text, audio or video format. Here are four ways to secure more of the best testimonials for your business.

Contact your passionate newer clients. Get on the phone and call your newest clients. No matter which industry you serve, the most passionate praise you'll find for your work and the service tends to come from clients with whom you have only recently started doing business. Follow the lead of Audi. Less than 30 days after a new car purchase an Audi representative will call to confirm you are happy with your purchase and ask for feedback on the dealership. If that feedback is positive the surveyor asks if that information can be shared.

Contact your wise and insightful repeat clients. Your repeat clients provide prospects with important insight about what makes your product or service worth buying. Make a point of calling up those that you have been doing business with for a long time and ask them why it is that they call on you. The answers you get will often include a great sentence or two that can be added to your testimonial collection. Again, all you have to do is ask.

Make it easy for people. One of the most common comments you'll hear from clients when asking for testimonials is "Well I'm really not much of a writer, so it's hard for me to put it in words." The real power of testimonials comes from the fact that they're not polished...they're authentic and from the heart. *Show the client other client testimonials as an example. That should set the table for them. Next, ask your client the following: 'Finish this sentence in 25 words or less: I really like (product/service/person) because...' This really works because it gets right to the point about the feelings people have for you, for what you do and for what you're selling.*

Do unto others. Write testimonials for others in your client community and whose services have impressed you. This creates reciprocity, and sends an important message to everyone about the high standards you have not only as a supplier, but as a buyer, too. You will find that they will return the favor with glowing references for you too.

If a client is prepared to present a testimonial to you, chances are you've done something well! Leverage that success by ensuring the endorsement is current, credible and compelling and you will grow your sales faster and with less effort.

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