

How to Let Your Customers Do Your Selling FOR You

You know about testimonials – those little blurbs from customers that tell prospects how great a product or service is.

But did you also know that over 70% of customers look at product reviews before buying? And 90% of participants in a Zendesk survey say they were influenced in their buying decisions by positive reviews.

According to research firm McKinsey, customers that come in through the advocacy of other customers actually stay longer and pay you more over time.

And it gets even better, because according to Influitive, customers who advocate for you will actually stay longer and pay you more.

Talk about a win-win-win, with YOU coming out as the biggest winner of all.

But getting testimonials can be a problem. Business people don't want to ask for them or don't know HOW to ask for them. And customers, while they might want to give them, don't know how.

That's why we're going to show you exactly what to ask to get testimonials, how to use the testimonials to overcome the biggest objections of your prospects, and even how to get testimonials without asking.

First, let's talk about the elephant in the room – that is, the problem with 90+% of testimonials out there right now...

“I don't believe it!”

The problem – and it's a big problem – with testimonials is they tend to be too sugary. Too positive. Too... unbelievable.

“Since I bought the ABC Super Scooper Money Making Machine, I've made so much money I dumped my wife of 22 years and I married 18 year old super model triplets. I now own 16 homes, 83 cars and my own personal rocket ship to Mars. Plus my skin rash cleared up real nice and I'm about to buy a big yacht and an island and become president of a South American country. Let me tell you, that was the best \$19.95 I ever spent!”

Yup.

Uh-huh.

You believe that, don't you?

Me neither.

Testimonials are a lot like resumes...

What happens when you hand your snazzy jazzy resume to a hiring manager? Sure, they read it. But do they BELIEVE it?

Nope. If they did, they wouldn't do all that digging into your past, your social media accounts, your previous employers, your college records and your references.

Why don't they believe what they read in resumes?

Two reasons:

1. A lot of people 'pad' their resume, making themselves sound better than they are. And since they don't know you, they just have to assume you're padding until proven otherwise.
2. It's all positive. Nearly nobody every puts anything negative on a resume. "That company canned me because I didn't do a darn thing for 8 months but play video games on the computer and play with the company dog."

And what does this teach us about why people don't believe testimonials?

1. A lot of testimonials are fake, or at least people perceive them as being fake
2. The reason they think they're fake is because they're all positive – sometimes ridiculously positive - like the example at the beginning of this article.

With those two strikes going against you, how do you get real testimonials that people BELIEVE?

By getting *believable* testimonials.

Which brings us to the question:

What makes a testimonial believable?

If the testimonial starts out on a negative note, people's defenses go down and they your credibility goes up. In fact, not only does a bit of negativity ring true and become believable, but there's a second benefit as well:

Because the testimonial starts out negative, people are captivated into reading it from start to finish.

Let's say a friend is recommending an auto mechanic to you.

What might they say?

"You know that repair shop on 5th and Vine, the one in the tacky yellow building? Well I went in there the other day because something was wrong with my car.

The place came highly recommended, but I gotta tell you when I walked through the door, I wasn't too sure. It didn't look nearly as modern as the repair shop at the dealership.

But they took great care of me and my car. They diagnosed the problem in minutes, told me exactly what was wrong and how long it would take to fix it.

It cost way less than I thought it would, and they had me back on the road in 40 minutes. I was so impressed.

The last time I went to the dealership they tried to upsell me on a bunch of stuff and I know they overcharged for what I let them do. I'll never go back to the dealership again.

That repair shop might look a little funky, but the mechanics are top notch, fast and friendly, and they don't try to rip you off."

Notice how different this testimonial is from most of the testimonials you see online. This one starts out negative, talking about "the tacky yellow building," and "it didn't look nearly as modern as the repair shop at the dealership."

And near the close it gets negative again, saying "That repair shop might look a little funky."

But there is no doubt the author of the testimonial is thrilled with the service he received and the price he paid.

THIS is a testimonial people will believe.

In fact, if you have several of these kinds of testimonials, half your job of selling will be done for you.

That's because your customers will be overcoming prospect's objections *for you*, in a way you alone could never do.

Just imagine, you haven't written one word of your sales letter or sales video yet, and you already have half of your selling done.

How sweet would that be?

We're going to teach you right here and now how to do this in your own business for your own products, with REAL life customers and real life testimonials composed by your customers.

Your prospect's mindset:

I'm sure I don't have to tell you that your prospect is skeptical. She's skeptical of your product, your claims and possibly even your industry. She's been scammed before and she's heard of numerous other people buying products that didn't do what they said they would do.

In a word, she doesn't believe you.

Not yet.

That's why when you hit her with "This is the world's greatest product ever!" type of testimonials, you're not getting through to her.

You've got to start where she is in her thinking, take her hand, and lead her to where you want her to go.

And she's thinking, "I don't believe this!"

That's why testimonials that start out with some variation of what she's already thinking are so powerful.

"I was skeptical this could even work so imagine my surprise when..."

"I had tried so many things before, I didn't think this would work either. But it was the only thing I hadn't tried yet, so I gave it a shot and..."

"I was sure the investment was too high, but when I got the results I realized it was the greatest bargain I'd gotten in years..."

"I thought the whole process would be too difficult for me, but once I tried it..."

"I hated the product name, I didn't like the way it looked, but the first time I used it I became a believer because..."

So how do you get testimonials that answer the objections of your prospects?

By asking your existing customers a very specific set of questions. Here's how:

Testimonial Questions:

Whether you're writing to your customers or calling them on the phone, you're going to ask them the following questions, in order (feel free to adapt these to your business as you see fit.)

1. What was your main concern when deciding to buy this product?
2. What did you discover as a result of buying and using this product?
3. What is your favorite feature of this product, and why?
4. What are 3 other benefits of this product?
5. Would you recommend this product to others? If so, why?
6. What else can you tell us about your experience with this product?

Let's break down the reasoning behind each question:

1. What was your main concern when deciding to buy this product?

This is where you're going to uncover the main objection the customer had to purchasing your product.

As you do more of these, you'll likely notice a pattern of just a handful of objections buyers had. This tells you what the issues are and how to handle them in your sales copy. And it often provides you insights you may not have considered.

2. What did you discover as a result of buying and using this product?

This question is the flip side of the objection. "I had this (objection) but when I bought the product I discovered that the purchase was worth it because..."

For example, "I thought it was priced too high, but once I got it I realized it gave me 10 times the value of any competitor. I'm amazed they don't charge more."

3. What is your favorite feature of this product, and why?

You want specifics here, which is why you're only asking about that ONE favorite feature. For example, saying the product is great isn't going to make any sales. But saying the secret revealed on page 44 made them an extra \$1000 a week is going to sell your product like hotcakes.

4. What are 2 or 3 other things you like about this product?

You've got their favorite feature, so why not see what else they like about your product? You might be surprised by some of the answers you get.

5. Would you recommend this product to others? If so, why?

Now you're asking your customer to put their own reputation on the line. If they're willing to, then it's clear to prospects they really do believe in your product.

6. What else would you like to tell us about your experience with this product?

This is a wild card because you never know what they're going to say. They might reveal something that could be improved, a feature you didn't consider important that they love, or a unique way of using your product that you haven't even thought of before.

From the answers you get from these six questions, you can compile a testimonial that rocks. When you do, be sure to send it to your customer for their final approval. Yes, they did say every single thing you've compiled into the testimonials, but you still want to get their final approval to use it.

Answering Specific Objections

This is an advanced technique that is a slight variation of what you did above, and it goes like this:

Let's say you keep getting the same objection from prospects - for example, your product costs too much.

You might already have some testimonials that cover this objection, but if you don't, then you can go to your customers and ask them directly, "Did you think the investment in the

product might be too high?" If they say yes, ask follow up questions. If not, that's okay.

So let's say they said yes, they initially thought the price was just too much. Ask them why they went ahead and bought anyway. Do they now feel it was worth the investment, and if so, why? Knowing what they know now and after getting the value or benefits from the product, do they still think it was too high, or did they make a good decision / return on their investment? And so forth.

In just an hour of phone calling or emailing, you can accumulate a half dozen testimonials that strike right at the heart of an objection. And you can do this for every single objection that you repeatedly get from prospects.

Do you see how powerful this is?

"But what if I don't have any customers yet?"

The fastest way to get some great testimonials is to give your product away to people in your niche, in return for their feedback.

This doesn't mean randomly giving it to every person you can find. Instead, hand select your 'guinea pigs' to try your product.

Ideally you want people whose opinions are respected and trusted. For example, if your niche is online marketing, you can go to established online marketers and ask them to review your product. Some will, some won't, and that's okay.

And if you need a specific objection answered - such as price in the example above - be sure to ask a question such as... "Do you believe this is a terrific deal, considering everything the customer gets for this price? Why?"

For those watching closely - yes, that was a leading question. We didn't ask what they thought of the price, we asked if they considered it to be a terrific deal. Not a good deal, or an okay deal, but a great one. Remember, they are still free to answer any way they choose. But it doesn't hurt to help them just a bit by pointing them in the right direction.

"HELP! I'm afraid to ask for testimonials. What should I do?"

First, if you go back to those 6 questions above, you might notice something missing. Never did we ask for a testimonial. Never. We are simply asking for feedback.

And if the feedback is positive, we're going to use it as a testimonial. If the feedback is negative, hopefully we're going to correct the situation and make it right with the customer. (Unless, of course, if the feedback is ridiculous. Like, "This \$20 sweater didn't get me an A on my algebra test!" or some such.)

So you're not asking for a testimonial, you're asking for feedback. If you like what they wrote, THEN you ask permission to use it as a testimonial.

That's part one to my answer on how to get testimonials without asking for testimonials.

Part two is kinds sneaky, and it works like this:

Sometime in your product's life span, there are likely some milestones built into it. For example, if it's a course on how to build an online business, the first milestone might be to build a website.

Now then, how does your customer feel when they've reached this milestone? Probably pretty fantastic.

So why not build a questionnaire right into your course at that point that asks for feedback?

Simply ask them about their experience with your product or service.

"Hey Joe, congrats on building your first website... what's your experience with (this course) been like so far?"

This is really easy to do if you're providing online courses. But in almost any form, there is a way to build it into the product.

And here's the kicker – you might want to offer an incentive to get them to respond. In my experience, this will double and even triple the number of people who answer your questions.

Offer something that directly correlates with the product itself.

Something useful that they likely want. And all they have to do is answer a handful of questions (six, perhaps?) and they get the reward.

Then you can repurpose their feedback into a testimonial.

Remember to contact them to get their permission to use it in your marketing.

Here are 12.5 more tips on getting and using testimonials...

1: Testimonials that are rich in detail are more believable.

For example, “I love the bigger dials on this stove” versus...

“The dials are almost twice the size of the older model, making it much easier for these tired old eyes to see the settings. Because of this, I no longer burn my eggs and my wife no longer complains about having a burnt smell in her spotless kitchen.”

2: “Interesting, tell me more.”

If you are speaking to a customer, use the above phrase to get them digging deeper and telling you more about their experience.

Also, anytime you're getting feedback by phone or in person, remember to ask only open-ended questions. This will provide you with much more information than simple yes/no questions. And of course the same applies to written feedback – ask only open-ended questions.

3: Name and website

When asking to use their feedback as a testimonial, be sure to tell them you'll be using their name and URL if they have one. This is free advertising for their website. Who doesn't love that?

4: Facebook Reviews

If you have a Facebook page and you're set up as a local business, then you also have a hidden reviews tab.

Simply slide this tab into your visible tabs, and encourage fans to enter reviews.

5: LinkedIn Recommendations

If you have an individual (not a company) profile, then you can get recommendations from your customers.

6: Reviews you don't even know about

Depending on your business, there might be unsolicited customer reviews being published in the least expected places, such as blogs and social media.

Set up daily notifications on Google Alerts and Social Mention for your applicable terms. Then when your brand is mentioned, check out the links. Ask people who have mentioned you if you can use their comment or story on your testimonials page. Let them know you will be linking directly back to them, and most people will be happy to say yes.

7: Incorporate reviews right into your sales copy

We touched on this earlier but it bears repeating – use reviews to overcome objections right there on your sales page or in your sales video.

For example, when you talk about how easy your product is to use, place testimonials right there that confirm just how easy it is. When it comes time to quote a price, use testimonials to reassure the prospect of what a great deal it is, and so forth.

8: Have a testimonials page

Place all of your testimonials for a product on a page of their own. This includes the testimonials you have on your sales page. Then have a link just for testimonials from your sales page. Make sure the testimonial page opens in a new window, so they don't lose the sales page.

And place a buy now link on the testimonial page. Prospects who have read the sales letter and clicked over to the testimonial page are often on the verge of buying. Having the buy now link right there saves them from having to go back to the sales page to find the link.

9: Holy Cow Batman, someone posted a negative review!

Sooner or later someone will post a review on your Facebook page or somewhere else that is less than positive. What should you do?

Respond.

Respond, respond, respond. Yes, I said it 4 times, because it's that important.

Don't get mad or angry. Stay positive. Apologize for their negative experience and ask them to get in touch with you so you can make it right.

Once you have made it right, ask if they will go back and amend their original review.

Always stay positive. Never let anger show, even if you're feeling it. Be the courteous professional you aspire to be. And you'll find you can right 90% of the negative responses you get.

10: Use real names and photos

Of course you're never going to make up a testimonial (more on this in a bit.) But to make it even more believable, always use real names, both first and last, and photos of the person whenever possible.

11: Editing

If a testimonial is super long, it might not get read. You can cut out the weaker points, just leaving the strongest message.

And to make it more interesting and readable, bold the one word or phrase you really want your prospects to see.

12: Titles

You can put a title at the top of each testimonial to grab attention. Something super short, snappy and straight to the point works well.

12.5: Your best testimonial

Do you have one testimonial that outshines the rest? Maybe it's simultaneously credible, relatable and aligns perfectly with your sales message.

What should you do with that testimonial? Well you certainly don't want to bury it down deep in your page. Instead, place it very near their top, perhaps just under the headlines, or at least within the first block of text.

We've got one last thing to cover on testimonials...

Testimonials and Avoiding the Long Arm of the Law

There are a few things you need to know to stay on the right side of the law when using testimonials.

First, you need to disclose any relationship you have with the endorser. For example, if you provided a free review copy, if the endorser is your cousin or employee, if you are business partners, etc.

Rule of thumb – when in doubt, disclose.

Second, the FTC tells us that endorsements must reflect honest opinions, findings, beliefs or experiences of the endorser.

Here's an example straight off the FTC's website that shows how honesty about products should be conveyed:

"An advertisement for a weight-loss product features a formerly obese woman. She says in the ad, 'Every day, I drank 2 WeightAway shakes, ate only raw vegetables, and exercised vigorously for six hours at the gym. By the end of six months, I

had gone from 250 pounds to 140 pounds.’ ... Because the endorser clearly describes the limited and truly exceptional circumstances under which she achieved her results, the ad is not likely to convey that consumers who weigh substantially less or use WeightAway under less extreme circumstances will lose 110 pounds in six months.

“If the advertisement simply said that the endorser lost 110 pounds in six months using WeightAway together with diet and exercise, however, this description would not adequately alert consumers to the truly remarkable circumstances leading to her weight loss.”

Third, if results aren’t typical, you need to disclose that fact. For example, “Kelli lost 55 pounds on Nutrisystem.” And the right underneath in smaller print: “Results not typical.”

Now you might be thinking that just about no testimonial reflects ‘typical’ results, since everyone’s experience is different. And

you're right, which is why you should talk about this in your sales copy or sales video.

Fourth, get written permission from your customers to use their testimonials. And yes, an email is sufficient for these purposes.

Keep a file of all the emails granting you permission, just in case anyone ever wants to see them. You know... like those pesky FTC guys.

Another reason to keep written permission on file is to protect you in case a customer wants to retract their testimonial.

Optional: Include a clause in your Terms of Service or Privacy Policy that says any user review or testimonial submitted to your website can be used for marketing purposes.

Fifth, don't 'lift' testimonials from other sites. If you see a good testimonial for your product on a review site, don't just copy and paste it without permission. Most review sites clearly state that

user-generated content is owned by the user and licensed to the website.

Instead, contact the original poster and ask if you can use their testimonial on your site. Or better still, ask for their feedback using the questions we talked about earlier to get a new and even better testimonial.

The sixth and most important thing to know is that I am not a lawyer, I don't play one on TV, and nothing in this article should be construed as legal advice.

In conclusion, testimonials are one of the most under-utilized tools we as marketers have.

Once we start putting as much effort into getting great testimonials as we do in writing sales copy, our sales will go through the roof.

That's because everyone wants to hear from real life product users before they purchase a product.

Social proof works like gangbusters, but only if you learn how to work it.

