

# Using Testimonials

## How To Get And Use Testimonials To Compel Prospects To Buy From You

By  
Terry Gibbs

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## Introduction

**Testimonial:** (noun) A statement in support of a particular truth, fact, or claim; a personal recommendation.

### ***What is a Testimonial?***

A testimonial is your existing clients recommending you to prospective clients by sharing their experiences with your products or services. It is used to increase a buyer's desire to purchase, and it does that by increasing believability, buyer's confidence, and by hammering home the compelling benefits of your product.

When your clients tell other potential clients how great you are and describe the benefits of using your product/service, the results they achieved from working with you and how pleased they are with the experience and outcome, it is a testimonial. And it has enormous power.

Do not confuse a testimonial for a referral. Unlike a referral, which is when a client sends others directly to you, a testimonial consists of a client giving you the information (either a recorded message or a written statement) that you then use in your marketing message to influence other prospects. Testimonials have leveragability.

As you are reading through this book, and after you have finished the book, start looking at how marketers use testimonials in infomercials, in advertisements, in the paper, and on the radio. This is a fantastic way to begin to apply the knowledge you gain from reading this book.

Remember, just because you see an advertisement does not mean the people are getting sales, so they may not be doing it exactly right. But as the cost of the ad goes up, like those in very expensive magazines or on television infomercials, chances are that they have some really good copywriters and marketers designing their messages.

You will be able to see exactly how others use testimonials and begin to apply this knowledge to your own marketing. As you read through this report, consider how you can use testimonials within your marketing.

## ***The Purpose Of A Testimonial***

There are many different reasons for using testimonials. Many times testimonials have multiple positive effects in influencing potential clients.

Here is a short list of different reasons for using testimonials:

- Lower buyer resistance.
- Increase believability.
- Provide social proof.
- Introduce benefits in a credible format.
- Lower returns.

### ***Testimonials Lower Buyer's Resistance***

Testimonials lower buyer resistance because they are third-party endorsements, rather than seller-generated advertising. When you, as the seller, claim your product does something, prospects frequently interpret these claims as fictional sales materials and immediately “tune out.”

Testimonials lower this buyer resistance, as most people typically perceive those giving testimonials as “peers.” This makes most potential buyers receptive to hearing your message.

### ***Testimonials Increase Believability***

When a third party, or neutral party, gives a testimonial, this increases the believability of your offer. What someone else says about you and your company or product is 1,000 times more powerful and believable than what you say about yourself, even if you are 1,000 times more articulate than they are.

Allowing people to identify with the testimonial, with the specific individual that provided the testimonial, increases that believability. When the audience can identify with the speaker, they immediately say to themselves, “If it works for him, it can work for me.”

As we will discuss later in this book, even if you are tempted to edit a testimonial or clean up the grammar, leave it exactly the way it is. Even if it is not as articulate as you would like, it is much more believable.

## ***Testimonials Provide Social Proof***

Individuals buy things or invest in things when they feel confidence, and social proof helps instill the confidence that will lead to a purchase. Although many people think price is the main selling point, there are studies that have shown that the number one reason that a person makes a purchase from a particular company or individual is because they are confident in that person or entity.

A customer needs to feel confident in you, your offer and your promotion, whatever it is. And testimonials lower buyer resistance, in great part, because you are increasing their confidence by providing social proof.

A person also needs to feel confident that they can achieve the desired results with the product or service you are selling. Show your prospects other clients who have used your product or service successfully and they will relate. Make sure to include testimonials from a variety of clients, not just one category, so potential clients are sure to find someone with whom they can identify.

Causing prospects to feel that they can get the same results is very important. We will talk more about this in the section on selecting testimonials.

## ***Testimonials Introduce Benefits in a Credible Format***

If you have a regular sales letter, where you have the sales material intermixed with testimonials, the testimonials can be a great way to introduce the benefits in a more believable format. For instance, on my Profitable Guarantees Website, the uppermost testimonial is actually the story of one of my readers who purchased the book, realized that he had made a serious mistake in his marketing, and changed it as a result of the book.

When you use the testimonials, you should always use them in coordination with the other parts of the sales letter so there is a natural flow. Copywriters call this the “slippery slope,” where people come in, read the headline, and then slide down to the bottom of the hill, which is where they order. The point of the sales letter is to present so much evidence that your prospect, the reader, feels absolutely compelled to order your product.

A great example is Piranha Marketing, a company that does seminars, three-day boot camps for carpet cleaners. In the sales letters they send out, they say that the average person who attends boot camp makes \$40,000 extra.

Then, immediately after that in the sales letter, they provide testimonials. For example, from Steve Cameron: "I averaged \$122,000 per year in my business for 22 years. I went to Piranha Marketing's boot camp. The next year, I made \$289,000."

Saying that the average person will make \$40,000 extra, and then introducing Steve Cameron, who made \$177,000 more than his previous average, introduces the benefits in a believable format and allows the reader to identify powerfully with another customer. "If they can do that, so can I!"

### ***Testimonials Lower Returns***

If you can get a testimonial from your purchasers and force them to think about the benefits of your product, they will be much less likely to return the product.

I personally have knocked my returns down by more than 60 percent by doing that.

### ***Legal Considerations***

Before we talk about how to get and use testimonials it is important to consider the legal considerations. Because of the compelling nature of a powerful testimonial, the government regulates the use of testimonials in order to protect consumers.

These regulations should not effect you much, but knowing the rules will help prevent problems in the future. Rather than go into a legal explanation, I will summarize the rules.

1. A testimonial has to be real.
2. You must archive all your testimonials. This is pretty simple. Either keep them on disk or in file folders.
3. All claims must be substantiated.
4. Testimonials given in exchange for anything must be noted as compensated testimonials.
5. Disclaimers need to be positioned so any reader will see them.

6. Disclaimers will not protect you from rules violations and enforcement actions.

Lets go over each of these basic rules in turn. A testimonial has to be real. You cannot just make up testimonials and use them in your marketing. In order to document your testimonials, you should archive them.

All claims must be substantiated. For example, if you get a testimonial from a client telling you he made \$1200 dollars using your system, you need to get proof of this from him before you can use the testimonial. You should also save this proof.

Testimonials given in exchange for anything must be noted as compensated testimonials. For example, in the back of some of my books, I offer a bonus report. If I required a testimonial for the report, the comments would be a compensated testimonial. I used to require a testimonial for the bonus, but later I learned I would have to put a disclaimer adjacent to the testimonials. So rather than putting the disclaimers into my sales letters, I removed the requirement.

Many marketers interpret the FTC rules to say claims must be substantiated or noted as "results not typical." This is not true. All claims need to be substantiated, and untypical results need to be noted with a statement like "results not typical." All anecdotal claims need to be substantiated. Claims that are not typical need to be noted as such.

Some marketers even go so far as to use this as a rational for making up outrageous claims. They incorrectly believe a disclaimer will protect them from enforcement actions. This is not the case. You cannot make up a testimonial, or make false statements within your sales materials.

Remember, I am not a lawyer, I am a marketer like you. So if you are confused about these rules, contact a lawyer or do additional research.

## **Why People Give Testimonials**

### ***Happy with Product***

People give testimonials because they are happy with the product and they like what it has done for them. When you deliver a product that people are happy with, they are pleased to offer their personal endorsement.

### ***Happy with You***

People also give testimonials because they are happy with you – basically, because they like you or they like your company. This is a powerful influence in getting customers and, in turn, their testimonials.

### ***Notoriety of Being Featured in an Advertisement***

Another powerful motivation for providing testimonials is notoriety. Many people are very impressed with the idea of their testimonial being included in an ad or promotion. Called advertorial marketing or advertorial advertisement, these ads frequently feature photographs of the clients actually using the product.

Advertorials read like an editorial and are very powerful marketing mechanisms, but they also give clients a desire to provide a testimonial for use in one. Few of your clients will reject an offer to be featured in one of your advertisements.

For example, Cy Sperling with the Hair Club For Men and his famous, “I am not only the Hair Club President; I am also a client.” This \$100-million-a-year company was literally built on testimonials. Here are individuals who are bald and very sensitive about it who, ultimately, gave testimonials that are aired on national television -- because they are impressed by the fact that they are featured in an advertisement.

They want to do it, in spite of the fact that it is an embarrassing topic, an embarrassing product, and the fact that they are not getting paid to do it, because they are impressed by the notoriety.

I encourage you to take a camera with you when you make professional calls. Take a “before” photograph and an “after” photograph. Then show the

client and ask if you can take their picture, as well. Everybody wants his or her picture taken. We like having our pictures taken. So, again, impressing themselves with being featured in an advertisement starts by having a camera with you at opportune moments.

### ***Build Name or Brand Recognition***

Other marketers and business owners will also frequently give testimonials for your product in order to build name recognition or brand recognition for their own product. This is quit common online. Like if you are looking to purchase a product about Internet marketing, it is very common to see a whole list of other predominant, well-known Internet marketers who have provided testimonials about the product.

### ***Joint Ventures***

Another reason that people give testimonials is because of joint ventures. This is an example of collaboration. For example, on Joe Polish's Website, TheGeniusNetwork, Brian Tracy did an interview with Joe for the site. You can actually listen to the interview of Brian asking Joe all these questions and the two of them discussing TheGeniusNetwork.

Brian Tracy, a famous individual, works together with Joe Polish to promote Joe's products, but it also works to promote Brian's products. They both benefit from the collaboration.

### ***For Money***

People also give testimonials for money. That's right, you can actually pay people to provide you with testimonials.

Now, you do not want to pay the average person on the street to give you a testimonial, but perhaps you can get someone like Suzanne Somers from the TV show Three's Company to promote your Thigh Master. Or find another celebrity related to your product or service. These are actually paid endorsements, where the celebrity endorses the product and allows their name to be used in conjunction with promoting it.

## **Contests**

Very few marketers use contests, and even fewer use them correctly. A great example of the successful use of a contest is when Bill Phillips ran his Physique Transformation Contest a few years ago.

Bill had a magazine, Muscle Media, but his main business was selling supplements, weight loss formulas and training materials. He decided to run a contest to become the Muscle Media spokesman. People had to take a “before” picture, document everything they did within the 16-week duration of the contest, and then write an essay at the end and include a picture of the final result after using Bills’ products.

The people who signed up for the contest tended to use almost two times as much of Bill’s product as people who were not in the contest. So all of a sudden, all of the people who had joined the contest became better consumers and purchased more of Bill’s products.

Also because they wanted to win the contest they went to the gym, worked out, and followed their exercise and diet regimens religiously. Because of this, they achieved better results and were very happy customers. At the end of 16 weeks, Bill selected a number of finalists, whom he called Grand Champions, and gave them all Corvettes.

What Bill Phillips did was create super-champions for his business. They are all out promoting his products and showing off the dramatic transformation that is possible with his products.

It was also very smart to base half of the judging on the essay. The essay becomes the testimonial. When you look at the types of essays people wrote, you could not pay people \$100,000 to write a better testimonial for you. They were absolutely phenomenal, because each was motivated to catch the judges attention and stand out by saying the most wonderful things they could possibly say.

So when there is a contest tied in with getting testimonials, it drives people to open up their hearts and reveal things that would not otherwise share.

At the same time, when individuals are writing testimonials, the very act solidifies in their mind that you have done a great job for them and that they absolutely love your product or service. It is reinforcing their decision to do business with you. So the benefits are at least twofold in doing a contest with testimonials.

## **Asking for Testimonials**

### ***How to Ask for Testimonials***

If you already have a product, you are probably generating some testimonials without even asking for them. People are always happy to comment on things that have helped them. Unfortunately however, you are more likely to get complaints because people have a much higher tendency to complain and find fault.

So, the easiest way to get testimonials is to ask for them. My father taught me years ago that the only way to get something you want is to ask for it. People are not mind readers. Unless you actively seek out testimonials, you are probably not going to get many of them.

If you are just starting out and either do not have a product yet or do not have a body of published testimonials that will drive others to participate, you are going to need to ask.

The way to do this is simple: just ask.

### ***When to Ask for Testimonials***

The best time to ask for a testimonial is immediately after you have delivered the product or completed the service. At the time that the product is delivered is when people's expectations are most satisfied and when people are absolutely happiest about their decision. That is when you need to ask them.

### ***Offer a Bonus or Rebate for a Testimonial***

Another way to get testimonials is to offer a bonus or rebate in exchange for a testimonial. First of all, never offer a discount in exchange for a future testimonial. If you tell people, "I am going to give you this introductory price of \$19.95 for my e-book instead of \$49.99 if you will agree to give me a testimonial later," you will sell a lot of e-books for \$19.95 and few buyers will end up sending you a testimonial. After all, they have no incentive to give you a testimonial once they get the book. Remember, this is a *compensated* testimonial.

A better way to do this is by offering a bonus or rebate *after* they have completed the obligation of providing you with a testimonial. Done correctly, this will also lower your return rate because it forces people to reexamine the product and emphasize the positive aspects, the benefits of the product, because that is what they are writing about in their testimonial. They are going to make a list of what is right with the product and what is good.

### ***Include Testimonial Comment Sheet With Product***

You can also ask for a testimonial as part of a feedback survey or comment sheet that you give to your client at time of service. As part of asking for feedback, which customers love to supply, ask the person what is good about your service.

Every sheet of paper you hand to a client should include an easily submitted request for a testimonial, like a survey or comment sheet that people can easily fax or mail in.

## **How To Get A Testimonial If You Have No Sales**

When I go into a bookstore, the first thing I do when I find a book that looks interesting to me is to look at the back cover and read the testimonials. Generally speaking, they have about five different testimonials, some from big names, some from regular guys just like us.

These individuals are all saying that this is a wonderful book; it is awesome. But it is the first printing, so how did they know this was a great book before it was even published?

Simple, they asked. More specifically, they asked the right people. Here are a few ways to get testimonials if you have no sales.

### ***Offer “Review Copies” in Exchange for Testimonials***

If you have no sales for your products, it is important to get testimonials in order to maximize and jump-start sales right from the start.

The easiest way to do this if you have no sales yet is to offer review copies in exchange for testimonials. I do this with my e-books very successfully. I randomly pick past clients, basically past buyers of my other e-books, and send them an email saying, “I have a new book and I would like to give you a copy of it in exchange for your comments, feedback and a testimonial that I can use in my marketing.”

This is a great way to get testimonials. This method generates a wide selection of testimonials so it does not look like it is the same five people supplying testimonials for all my products. I send out a few dozen emails, I always get at least three or four testimonials back from past clients. That is plenty to get started on your sales letter. You can later add more testimonials.

On my latest ebook I took this a step farther. I sent an email to my newsletter subscribers offering them the first half of my next book free if they purchased one of my ebooks. I told them I would send them the first half free and provide instructions for getting the second half of the book.

Here’s the section of the newsletter explaining the offer:

### **Want a free copy of my next book?**

My next book is called Auction Revolution. After reading the first HALF of Auction Revolution, you will know more about eBay than 95 percent of eBay sellers. In the Auction Revolution, I share everything I have learned as a result of running over 12,000 auctions on eBay.

Did you know 67 percent of eBay sellers throw away profits in every one of their auctions? I wrote a few months ago about eBay arbitrage. This is where you buy items on eBay and then resell them on eBay for big profits.

I will tell you the secret of how I do that. I prey on the sellers who leave profits on the table when they start their auctions. I prey the people who are in too big of a hurry to list their items to learn how to do it correctly before they start selling. I prey on the lazy know it alls who actually know nothing.

Don't worry, I will teach you how to avoid selling your items for less than their actual value in the first half of the Auction Revolution.

In the second half of the manual, I will show you step by step how to take your eBay business to the next level.

You will gain the knowledge you need to become one of the top 1 percent of eBay sellers.

I will send you the first half of the Auction Revolution free when you buy the Collectible Buying System. If you already have the Collectible Buying System send me an email right now, and I will add your name to the list. (You see, I do reward my long time readers who took the leap earlier.)

After you have read the first half of the Auction Revolution, I will send you the second half free. Just follow the easy instructions in the back of the first half.

\* \* \*

Here's the email I sent telling them how to get the first half of the book:

Subject: [FIRSTNAME] - Here is the Auction Revolution book

Hi [FIRSTNAME],

You can download the first half of The Auction Revolution book at:

LINK WAS HERE.

Complete instructions for downloading the book are on the webpage.

This is a draft version and there may be some spelling and grammar errors. Please look past them and concentrate on the information contained in the book. My proofreader will correct them.

Everything pertaining to eBay is covered except eBay's Checkout system. I left out the section on Checkout by mistake. Checkout will be covered in the final version.

After you have read this material, you will be able to get higher bids in your auctions, and spend less time on your listings.

This is only one piece of the Auction Revolution package. In the second half of the manual, you will learn how to streamline your eBay business in order to save even more time.

In the second half, I will cover:

- \*Finding items to sell.
- \*Advanced eBay techniques.
- \*Taking your business beyond eBay.
- \*Leveraging your auctions.

I am currently working on the second half of the manual. I should have it done in the first week of June.

If you would like to get the second half of the manual, please send me an email with comments about this half of the book.

In your email, please answer at least three of these questions:

1. What is the most important thing covered in the book?
2. Does the book cover areas you never thought about?
3. Has the book changed the way you look at eBay?
4. Have I opened your eyes to mistakes you are making?
5. What is the biggest thing you learned from reading the book?
6. Will you change the way you run your auctions? If yes, how?

After you send me an email with a few paragraphs about the book's impact on you, I will add your email address to a list so I can send you the completed book when I get it finished.

Thanks for you interest,  
Terry Gibbs  
05/18/2004

This email went out through my autoresponder. I soon began getting emails from readers. I had never seen a 6 page testimonial before, but as a result of this technique I got two of them.

A week later I sent out a follow up email. Actually the autoresponder sent it automatically, but you could do it manually.

Here's the second email:

Subject: [FIRSTNAME] - Have you read the Auction Revolution yet?

[FIRSTNAME], I am following up to see if you have read the Auction Revolution book I sent you last week.

If you want to get the second half of the manual, you need to send me your comments before June 1st.

If you have already sent me your comments, ignore this message unless you have additional comments. The questions are below.

Thanks for helping me make this book the best it can be,  
Terry Gibbs  
05/26/2004

In your email, please answer at least three of these questions:

1. What is the most important thing covered in the book?
2. Does the book cover areas you never thought about?
3. Has the book changed the way you look at eBay?
4. Have I opened your eyes to mistakes you are making?
5. What is the biggest thing you learned from reading the book?
6. Will you change the way you run your auctions? If yes, how?

\* \* \*

The second email generated additional testimonials. Interestingly, I also got emails from the people who had already sent me notes with additional comments.

A week later I sent out a third version of the second email as a last attempt to get testimonials from the people I had sent the book. The third email was similar to the second, but contained an additional warning that needed to answer three of the six questions by a specific date to get the second half of the book.

An odd, but good, result also happened as a result of this effort. A few of the people sent long lists of misspelled words and grammar errors. This allowed me to save considerable time on the editing chores.

Also the comments about the book allowed me to tailor my sales letter to feature the most compelling parts of the book, and make revisions to the book

itself in order to increase the accessibility of the information. I am sure this has had a positive effect on both my sales and my refund rates.

### ***Frequent Board Comments***

Another way to get testimonials, especially if you are selling ebooks or digitally delivered products, is to go onto some of the larger discussion boards within your niche. Find people that are talking about topics related to your product. Approach some of the people posting and offer them a peek at your book or product in exchange for their comments, feedback and testimonials.

This is not very productive, but doesn't cost much or take up much time. If you do get feedback, it will have a positive effect.

With both past clients and the people you are approaching on the discussion boards, it is important that you set it up as a one-time special deal. Here's some example text:

"I value your opinion and it sounds like you know what you are talking about. I would really appreciate your feedback."

Talk them up a bit when you are contacting them, and use a little bit of flattery to get them on the right track. Do not send them your product without confirming that they will give you a testimonial first. You want to get a commitment from them that, yes, they will look over your product and send you back some feedback. If you do not ask for that commitment first and just send out your product, you will not get a high rate of response.

### ***Offer Early Affiliate Promotion in Exchange for Testimonials***

Another way to get testimonials if you have no sales, and this works especially well online, is to offer early affiliate promotion in exchange for testimonials. I do this with all of my products that I sell online, because everything that I sell has an affiliate program.

What I do is I actually give some of my better affiliates advance copies of my materials and say, "This is next. It is going to be coming out on the 15th and I need some testimonials about this. If you spend the time to look this over and provide me with your feedback and testimonials, I will let you be one of the first people to promote this to your list."

Because many of my affiliates have lists with large overlap, this is a powerful incentive. For example, one newsletter may have 30,000 subscribers, one may have 20,000 subscribers, but between the two of them there may be only 35,000 total subscribers after duplicates were removed.

This large overlap makes it very important to be one of the first people to promote a hot product. Offering early promotion in exchange for testimonials benefits both parties.

This helps you get testimonials from people who are active in the market with name recognition, but also increases the early promotional effort. Having more affiliates promote a product in the earliest stages of release helps build sales momentum.

### ***Offer a Link Exchange for Testimonials***

Another thing you can do online is offer a link in exchange for a testimonial. You do not want to do this too frequently or post actual live links, however, because in a sales letter you do not want anything that creates a distraction, or will allow your prospect to leave and go somewhere else.

You do not want to have someone's testimonial and then a link to their site, so a person might read it and go, "Hey, what does this guy sell?" click on that, and leave your site. That means you just lost a sale.

I include the URL for their website, but do not make it a live, or clickable, link. That is enough for a lot of people who want links, because link exchanging is a big thing online. Some search engines treat these as links; some don't.

### ***Touchstone Testimonials***

Another way to create a testimonial if you have no sales is with a touchstone testimonial. This is a very interesting subset of testimonials. A touchstone testimonial refers to the fact that it is not actually a testimonial for your product, per se. It is a testimonial about the general commodity, or the general area, or benefit that applies to your product.

You see these very commonly in advertisements for companies that are selling gold coins, where they are saying, "Gold coins increased in value by 180 percent last year." Well, the gold coin or gold-plated thing they made might not

increase in value at all, but by taking a similar product, or similar category, and claiming those benefits, they create a touchstone testimonial.

You also frequently see this in nutritional supplements and some medical products, like the copper bracelets that were popular a few years ago. When they first started selling the copper bracelets, they did not have anyone who could say, "I have been wearing my copper bracelet for 16 months and I feel great. It has reduced my arthritis," etc.

So what they did was found studies where people had taken copper sulfate, copper-based vitamins, or had experienced other positive results using copper, and used it to describe the results they were claiming for their product.

That is why it is called touchstone, because it is very closely related, but they are not actually talking about your product, just a general class of products.

### ***Press Releases and Newspaper Articles***

The final way to get testimonials if you have no sales is through press releases and newspaper articles. When I did my first book, *The O Gauge Source Guide*, I mailed the book to every magazine in the toy train niche with a short press release.

One magazine took my press release, which was actually a story about the creation of the book and what the book would do for people who bought it, and ran it as an article.

For no cost at all, I got hundreds of sales out of this. And I got the added bonus of being able to say, "As reviewed in this magazine."

Other magazines read the book and wrote their own articles, so I was also then able to say, "This book is a fantastic resource for every toy train operator – *Model Railroad News*." These review excerpts are powerful testimonials.

With just a little work stuffing envelopes, I got some testimonials about my book from famous magazines, plus the added advantage that every one of those articles they ran free-of-charge resulted in sales of my book.

## How To Use Testimonials

### ***More is Better***

The most important thing to remember when using testimonials is: **more is better**. The social proof, validity and compelling evidence provided by a testimonial can never be too strong.

If you use too many of them, you might distract your prospect and lose sales but, for the most part, if you have a concise sales message you cannot have too many testimonials.

A good way to pound home the importance of using many testimonials is to consider your reaction in this example.

Consider being up on charges for murder when you did not do it. If your attorney came to you and said, “Hey, we have got four people who are going to be character witnesses. I think that is enough.” Your response to the attorney would be, “No! Forget it! I want all of them. I want my kindergarten teacher; I want my third grade teacher; I want my Spanish teacher and my baseball coach and my pastor. I want all of them paraded before the jury. I do not want just three or four.”

Now, if your attorney said, “They’ll get the idea after three or four that you are a pretty good guy,” your response would be, “No! Bring them all on!!” In this case, you need compelling and overwhelming evidence. A preponderance of proof. The same thing is true when you are selling to strangers.

### ***Select Testimonials Based on Their Power***

#### **Prospects’ Ability to Identify with Testimonial**

You want to select testimonials based on their power to provide compelling evidence of the benefits of your product, on their ability to provide a compelling factor within your sales materials.

The first factor in this is that there is power in bulk, as mentioned above, so you want to use as many as possible. The second thing is, and we discussed this earlier in The Purpose Of A Testimonial chapter, you want to use testimonials that your prospects can identify with.

This means that if you are selling to men, you want to have men giving testimonials. If you are selling to women, you want to have women. If you are selling to housewives, you want housewives. All the way down the line, get as specific as you can get in matching characteristics.

This is very important, because when people read your sales letter part of their mind is examining it to determine the benefits. Another part of it is keeping track of negatives. So, if you have a product you are selling to men and all of your testimonials are from women, that allows the reader to pick out negatives and say, "Maybe this does not work for men. Why do they only have testimonials from women?"

You need to actually identify your prospects and use testimonials they will identify most powerfully with. If you are selling, for example, diet products, do not put supermodels up there talking about how they lost two and a half pounds and went from 103 down to 100 pounds. You want the 250- or 300-pound fatty up there talking about how he went down to 180 pounds. The prospects will be able to identify and relate with that.

The same thing goes for advertisements in magazines. If you are advertising in magazines, you need to look at the readership and tailor the testimonials specifically to the readership. If you are running ads in Playboy, you want to use testimonials from men aged 30 to 50, which is the Playboy readership.

While if you are running advertisements in The Star or The National Enquirer, you want to run testimonials featuring women in their 50s through 70s because these are the demographics for The Star and The National Enquirer.

The Hair Club For Men, for example, did a survey of their clients a number of years ago and found that the average age of their client was much different than they anticipated. They were thinking that their average client was probably mid-20s, so their advertising, marketing and the testimonials they had in their marketing reflected individuals who were in their mid-20s.

After surveying their clients, they found that the average client was closer to 38 years old, so they made a change. They said, "Let's start putting testimonials in our ads of individuals around 38 years old."

In the testimonials, individuals speaking in the commercials would actually give their name and then their age. When they actually started using people that more closely matched the type of individual, the age group and demographic,

that wanted to do something about their hair loss, their sales went way up because the audience could identify.

You also want to use testimonials that include as much results-specific information as possible, as we will discuss in greater detail in a moment. It has a tremendously more powerful impact for a reader to see, "Your book has already helped me make \$74,227," rather than simply, "I loved your book. It has helped me a lot." As soon as you start getting specific testimonials from clients, these are what you need to use.

Remember, when using specifics, consider the FTC rules, which are covered in the section about Legal Considerations. The FTC says that you need to say, "Results not typical," unless they are typical. You can see this on weight loss infomercials.

In my sales letters, I try not to use atypical results because I do not want to distract my readers by including the legal language required by the FTC to use those testimonials.

For example, on my Ebay consignment package, I have clients that have used that system, who are making \$12,000 and \$15,000 per month. That is provable, but rather than saying that, I use generic numbers and tell people that they can make thousands.

## **Testimonials Introduce or Reinforce Benefits**

You should also select your testimonials based on their ability to introduce or reinforce benefits. As we discussed earlier in the How To Get Testimonials chapter, my Ebay Success Video is an excellent example of this.

My sales letter was nothing but a series of testimonials from people who say, "Man, this was a great video! I learned how to write the headline," and, "Terry, I have got to thank you. I really learned a lot about putting pictures in my auctions, and I can do these fantastic photos now."

Each one of the testimonials featured an individual reinforcing a specific major benefit or problem that my video solved for the watcher.

It is like a chiropractor who has someone come to them to get help with a sore back. The patient comes in and gets a chiropractic adjustment, so his sore back is no longer a problem, and the adjustment also triggers his immune system. So the patient continues to get adjustments. He does not need flu shots.

He does not get sick during the winter. So he writes a testimonial that says, “Not only did you relieve my back pain – that is completely gone – but you triggered my immune system. This is the first year in 20 that I have not had a flu shot.”

When individuals read that testimonial in the future, they too want to trigger their immune systems. Since many people do not know that chiropractors claim that adjustment triggers the immune system, reading this specific testimonial introduces an additional benefit in addition to reinforcing the existing benefit.

### ***Use Specific Results***

It is always very powerful to use testimonials that include specific results, rather than just atta-boy testimonials. Testimonials like, “With Terry Gibbs’ help, I was able to make an extra 39 cents,” as opposed to, “Terry Gibbs is really bright and I love his book,” really drive home the benefits of your product and increase buyers’ incentive to purchase.

As we discussed in the Select Testimonials Based on their Power section, use specific results when you can get them – specific dollar amounts, specific weight loss, etc.

### ***Use Complete Contact Information if Permissible***

Use a complete name, address and occupation for those providing testimonials. Even provide contact information if the individual does not mind being contacted. If you can get people to allow your contacts and your prospects to contact them, you should do that.

Very few people ever contact testimonial providers, but just seeing the information so readily supplied adds an increased level of confidence. People look at it, see the telephone number and mailing address, and say, “The person would not do this if they did not really believe this.” And that is very important.

As we discussed in the Hair Club For Men example, even providing information such as age in testimonials is a great idea to increase credibility and the likelihood of audience identification.

A lot of times you see these testimonials where it says, “I really enjoyed this product and it had these fantastic benefits – anonymous,” or, “— J.S.,” or, “John, Gary, Indiana.” The first two of these examples are pitifully unbelievable, and the third is only marginally better. The more information supplied, the more

believable the testimonial is. “John Dillinger, 28, Wichita Kansas,” is much better because it is believable. It is a real person.

People are skeptical, so by adding and using the entire name and the city/state, or even the street/city/state, you decrease significantly the level of skepticism about the testimonial.

Sometimes using anonymous testimonials can even hurt your response. They can be worse than not using testimonials at all. When testimonials with too little information are used, an immediate red flag goes up and an individual says, “They are making up testimonials. I do not have confidence in this company or this offer.”

Dan Kennedy also suggests that you list the occupation, for example: “Tim Paulson, Salt Lake City, Utah - brilliant entrepreneur,” etc.

In my course on writing and selling e-books, all of the testimonials follow the format of name, author of book, and then domain name. As a prospect goes through them, it gives me added credibility that not only are these people saying how great my book is (which it really is!), but it actually shows the reader that, “Hey, here is somebody that says this book is great and they actually wrote a book from reading it.”

Adding in the occupation or other specific qualifiers provides testimonials with even greater credibility.

### ***Include Call-Out Boxes***

You can use testimonials within call-out boxes, within the body copy, in separate books or case studies, or separate pages in your sales letters, or any combination of these methods.

Call-out boxes are what I use on the Web, and they are called call-out boxes because they do just that – they call attention to themselves. On my site, people read down through the sales letter and there is actually a box with a yellow background in the middle of the sales letter that has the testimonial and the person’s name and address.

One of the major benefits of call-out boxes is they appeal to skimmers. When skimmers read sales letters, they do not read every word. In fact, the majority of people who read a long sales letter do not even read every word. What they do is start at the top and skim downward, their attention captured by

underlined words, bold words, indented words, bullets or bullet lists, and call-out boxes.

So the testimonials have so much power, they provide such a compelling statement for my sales material, that putting them in these yellow-backed call-out boxes draws the skimmer's eyes right in. This is one of the best ways to use them.

### ***Within Body Copy***

Including testimonials in the body copy of the sales letter means including them in the actual text of the letter. For example, "John Smith of Albuquerque, New Mexico wrote in to say blah, blah, blah."

I do this within the sales copy for my O Gauge Source Book and within my Ebay success video, but I am very careful not to distract the reader with them. Remember, when you use testimonials, it is very important not to disrupt or abruptly change the flow of the sales letter. Do not do anything that would stop your reader from sliding down the slippery slope to the purchase.

### ***Separate Booklets or Case Studies***

You may also provide testimonials in separate booklets or case studies. There is a guy in California who has a company that builds sheds. He put together a book and wanted to call it Chicken Soup for the Shed Owner's Soul, and have 101 pictures, accompanied by testimonials, of his happy clients. Although he was not allowed to use that as the title, the booklet was a big hit.

He sends out this booklet featuring different individuals and shed projects, and people get ideas of things they could use a shed for at the same time their confidence in his company is increasing.

If you use separate pieces like this, however, within your sales package, it is very important that every one of those pieces has a contact mechanism, and preferably an order form, as well.

As people go through the packet and the materials in the package get separated, things get lost and, frequently, the order form has vanished by the time they make the decision to order. It is important that there is a quick, easy way to order handy with every piece, so you do not miss the sale.

So if you are doing a separate testimonial booklet that rides with your package, either include an order form within it or include on every page at the bottom: "If you are ready to order, call this number now," so that people can order easily.

This is not a book about order forms, but your order forms should always restate the offer so that they could almost stand alone if they were separated out. That is very important.

### ***Separate Pages***

Another way to use testimonials is on separate pages within your sales letter. This is similar to using call-out boxes online. Your sales letter goes for a while, then has a full page of testimonials inserted, and then resumes for a couple more pages of sales letter.

You may also use call-out boxes within your sales letters that are printed, or put a call-out box or testimonial in the margin, although this is less effective than moving it into the body of the text or inserting an independent, full page of testimonials.

### ***As Sales Copy***

You may also use testimonials as sales copy, which is especially effective in email marketing. I send my prospects or my opt-in subscribers emails that are actually from me (otherwise they would be spam) that tell a story about one of my clients and the benefits that he got from purchasing and reading my book and following my advice.

If you let the user actually tell the story of his success, it is much more effective. It helps my email marketing because it changes it; it provides that added benefit, once again, of coming from a third-party source. I could shout for hours about how great my stuff is, but one guy over in the corner could whisper, "You know, his stuff is really good," and that little whisper has more power than my standing in the middle of the room shouting.

### ***Audio and Video Messages***

Another thing you can do with testimonials is audio and video messages, which you can use online especially easily. We will talk more about using them

online in the Using Testimonials On The Web chapter, but right now we will talk about using them within printed materials.

### **Tapes Sent in Sales Package**

You can use an audiotape included with a sales letter, in order to increase the compelling nature of your sales and push people up the believability mountain. When you are selling something, you need to create an overwhelming desire to buy in your prospects, and the testimonial is one weapon in your arsenal.

### **Call in to Hear Testimonials/What Others Have Said**

You can also use audio testimonials with voicemail. You just set up a voice mailbox, a testimonial line, and tell your prospects, “Do not just take my word for it, call in and find out what others have said.”

When others listen to the messages, they are hearing the actual words, voice inflection, enthusiasm and passion that cannot be detected in a written letter. It is powerful technology.

## **Using Testimonials On The Web**

### ***Use Call-Out Boxes or Columns?***

As we discussed earlier in the How To Use Testimonials chapter, using call-out boxes is a powerful strategy within a sales letter, especially online. A lot of people use a column, usually running down the right side of the computer screen, where they have stacked up testimonials.

These columns are much less effective, because people start looking at the sales letter, they see the path of the headline, subhead, and then down the slope. The column of testimonials on the right is typically ignored, or it becomes a distraction. It is not nearly as powerful as having the testimonial embedded within the letter.

### ***Magic Boxes***

An interesting thing that you can do with call-out boxes, and I have started doing this on a few of my Websites, is to use magic boxes. A magic box is a call-out box that, at the bottom where the credit is posted, has a link that says, "Read more testimonials." When people click on that link, only the little yellow box changes and a new testimonial appears in there. This is some really neat technology that you can use on the Internet that is actually very cheap and easy to implement.

What happens is that, instead of having 100 of these call-out boxes on my sales letter, which might be overwhelming or distracting, I can have four or five of the best, absolutely most compelling benefit-laden testimonials right there on the front. When someone clicks "see another testimonial," it gives him or her a new one right there, in that same box.

I can use more than the five testimonials on the page to provide that overwhelming evidence, without distracting people away from the sales letter.

When you are doing sales, you want to keep people moving down that slippery slope. Imagine a guy at the top of a ski slope. He reads your sales letter and says, "That is interesting," puts his feet inside those ski boots, points himself downhill and start skiing.

If you have a testimonial and it says, "Read more testimonials," the guy clicks on the link and he is on another page, so he has to click back to the sales letter. That is like running into a tree. You have distracted him. He is not going down the slope any more.

So using a magic box keeps them on the page, keeps them moving down the slope, and allows you as the salesperson to control the selling environment.

You can find out more about Magic Boxes at:

<http://www.sboxmagic.com/>

## ***Video Testimonials***

You can also use video testimonials on the Web. These are effective in some situations, and in others not. The general rule for using videotape, and this applies even to product creation, is that if you actually need to show someone something and cannot do it with a picture, use a video. If you are telling somebody something and it requires more than a picture or two, go ahead and use a video.

Many times, the testimonial of someone sitting at a desk and talking is no more effective than the testimonial of someone just talking, an audiotape. So you really want to avoid using video just because you can. If it someone just sitting and talking, an uninspiring image, use audio. It will lower your bandwidth and it is more accessible to the people that are browsing.

Remember, in this day and age, over 60 percent of web users have dial-up modems, and they do not want to watch a jerky video of someone saying, "This ... product ... is ... great ...," as the computer struggles to download a huge file.

They want it quick, with no distractions. So avoid using video unless you are actually going to demonstrate something with moving pictures.

## ***Audio Testimonials***

Audio is much more versatile than video and can be very compelling. There are a number of products out there today, like Sonic Memo, Audio Generator, and others that will easily help you create audio testimonials to post on the Web.

Audio testimonials have been shown to increase sales by up to 20 percent. This is new technology that has only been around for six to eight months, but it seems to be very promising. I encourage you to read the essays in the back of this book about including audio on your Website and consider doing it.

Right now, because it is new technology, it is tremendously effective. In another year or two, however, everybody will be doing it and you probably will not see the same effectiveness. So now is the time to use it.

## **Summary**

This report has surely opened your eyes to new ways of getting and using testimonials. Now it is time to start implementing your knowledge and building your skills.

When I was putting together this report, I did a consultation with a company that had thousands of testimonials, but never used them. Just picking a few testimonials out of the pile, and adding them to their marketing had dramatic results. They thought I was a genius.

The point I am making is you need to set up a system to generate testimonials and then use them in your marketing.