

HOW TO INCREASE RESPONSE TO YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS BY 30% TO 50%... INSTANTLY!

...by *Thom Reece*

Testimonials...The Single Most Powerful Marketing Tool Ever Discovered!

Among the variety of techniques available to you as a marketer, there is one that is virtually *guaranteed* to increase your business...**testimonials!**

To clearly understand why testimonials are so powerful we must first look at the basic perceptions of our audience.

Here's how "John Q. Customer" might describe his attitude:

*"In addition to making me an enticing offer, you must prove to me that you are okay to do business with. You must eliminate any fear that I have about doing business with you. The basis of my fear is **doubt** and **skepticism**...two essential components for survival in today's tough business marketplace.*

I come by my fears honestly and from experience. I have been conned before. I have been lied to before. The quality of products and services that I have purchased in the past have not always lived up to the claims made for them.

Hardly a day passes that the nation's press doesn't reveal some major breach of ethics by business and political leaders. Dishonesty and misrepresentation are commonplace. So why, in the face of all this negative experience, should I believe your advertising claims? "

These are sobering conditions in which to operate. It's easy to understand why customers temper their buying decision with caution. They don't want to lose money and, more importantly, they don't want to feel foolish. *Eliminating this natural fear and skepticism is the job that testimonials do best.* The reason is simple: If you say you are good, people ignore your self-serving back-patting. When others say you are

good...it's credible. This goes to the very heart of why testimonials are so powerful...they give us **credibility and believability**.

When you deliver a good compelling offer that is both credible and believable, your sales and profits will increase.

TYPES OF TESTIMONIALS

There are four different types of testimonials. They are:

Customer: By far the strongest category of testimonial is the satisfied customer. In consumer offers a 30% increase in business is not unusual, and business-to-business offers often double or triple results through the use of good customer testimonials.

Celebrities: Celebrities are not as believable as customers. They are not credible because they are paid. I may not like the celebrity which could negatively affect my attitude towards your company or product. They generally increase awareness, but it may not be good awareness.

Experts: If you are selling artificial hearts, then a testimonial from Dr. Denton Cooley would probably boost business. Even though he might be paid, he is so credible that it would probably work. Your expert must be an expert in a relevant field.

Expert Organizations: A trade association, a magazine in your field, a chamber of commerce, a newsletter, etc. Expert organizations carry a lot of weight because people believe that their opinion cannot be bought.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CUSTOMER TESTIMONIAL?

To maximize the selling power of testimonials, you should keep a few tips in mind:

Tip#1...Be Specific: Testimonials phrased in specific terms pull more weight than more general statements. For example...

"I increased my companies profits by \$78,350 last year using your advice!"

is a lot more effective than..

"I enjoy working with your company."

Tip#2...Cite Complete Attributions:

"Mr. John Jones, President
SMITH MANUFACTURING
Chicago, IL

rather than

" J. Jones, Chicago"

The more complete the attribution the more believable the testimonial.

Tip#3...Use Customer Terminology and Phrasing:

Resist any temptation to rephrase you customers' words. You'll generally lower the believability factor.

Tip#4...Use Photos of the Testimonial Writer: You will triple the believability and selling power if you print a photo along with the words. Photographs of the person *using your product* work best.

How To Collect Usable Testimonials...

Collecting usable testimonials should be an organized and on-going marketing function.

*First...*Read the in-coming mail carefully and keep a file of customer comments. Follow-up on those with potential and put them in usable form.

*Second...*Analyze your customer list and develop a sub-list of your top 10% of customers by sales volume and frequency of ordering. Carefully craft a letter to this select list "Asking for their help". Suggest to them what you are looking for in the way of comments and then let them provide you with the raw material. The important lesson here: You can't sit casually back and hope for testimonials to come your way. You have to go out and get them.

The reward, however, is always worth the effort. The time you spend nurturing your testimonial program will result in increased sales and profits, an improved image, more sales leads, lower sales costs, shortened selling cycles, and improved cash flow