



common sense

sales and marketing

newsletter

TIPS AND TACTICS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS, ENTREPRENEURS, SALES PROFESSIONALS AND MARKETERS

The Power of Testimonials

We all know customer testimonials have a power of persuasion unmatched by any other marketing tool. They dispel uncertainty and build trust in your company and its products or services. But, not all testimonials are as effective as they could be. Read on to learn the secret of how to collect the most powerful, persuasive testimonials on the planet.

Testimonials create instant credibility, trust and a sense of security. They have a unique magical power to persuade other people to buy your products. However, not all testimonials will deliver the same results, even though they say good things about your company and its products. Let's take a look at 2 examples.

Example 1: "My name is John Smith and my company has used Acme whirligigs for a long time. The whirligigs last a long time, and they're easy to operate. Also, the people at Acme are always very friendly and helpful."

Example 2: "I'm John Smith, Sr. VP of Industrial Product Manufacturing for XYZ Corporation. Before we started using whirligigs from Acme, we were losing over \$5,000 a week in production downtime caused by whirligig breakages in our plants. It was very frustrating; we had to wait several days for replacement parts because the parts we needed weren't

always in stock. Since we switched to Acme whirligigs, our downtime has been reduced by 75%, and our production costs have gone down by 25%. Acme whirligigs are the most reliable whirligig we've ever used. On the rare occasion when we need a replacement part, we usually get it the same day. Switching to Acme has saved XYZ Corporation over \$300,000 to date, and helped us speed up deliveries to our customers. The bottom line is that using Acme whirligigs has helped our company increase production, save money and give our customers better service. Thanks to Acme, we're staying way ahead of our competition."

Any testimonial is better than none at all. But, obviously, the second testimonial is much more powerful and persuasive. Why? Because there's a big difference between just asking your customers for their comments and carefully structuring their testimonial. The second example follows a proven formula that you can use to collect powerful testimonials. On the back of this newsletter, we talk about how to collect video testimonials. But, the same formula will work for written testimonials, too.

Exhibit Signs That Really Work

At trade shows, exhibit signs are the first contact you have with potential prospects. If your signs have the wrong message, they won't attract your target market, and the success of your entire exhibit will be jeopardized.

These days, most products are a commodity. People can buy the same goods and services from a variety of sources. It's very rare to find a product that actually stands on its own in the marketplace. Most of the time, the difference is in service, guarantee, price or other benefits.

What is it about your company, products or services compels people to do business with you rather than your competition? What do you do better than your competitors? Faster delivery time? Lower prices? A stronger guarantee? Longer durability? Largest selection? Whatever it is, it's the message that should be on your exhibit signs.

Think in terms of billboard advertising, not bulletin board announcements. Billboards use one large graphic; bulletin boards use several small graphics. What can you say in five to seven words that will:

- capture your prospects' attention
- create an interest in your products
- cause them to take specific action?

The message should only speak to your target market: people who would use your products and are qualified to buy them. If your sign was a newspaper headline, would your prospects pick up the paper and read it? Your signs must

compel your target market to come inside your booth and find out more.

Your graphics should be as effective as your signs. If your graphic was in a newspaper, would your prospects pick it up and read the caption?

When you introduce a new product, always have a separate sign with the word 'new'. Don't make "new" part of the product announcement sign. Notice how the word "new" stands out as its own message in the examples below.

NEW Acme whirligig. Now 3 times faster!

NEW! Acme whirligig. Now 3 times faster!

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ABOUT LEE AND VANESSA LENTZ:

Lee and Vanessa Lentz are the authors of the top-selling book *Crush the Competition, Dominate the Market, Count the Money*. They are among the most popular trade show marketers, lead generators and brand communicators in the United States. They consistently deliver record-breaking results for companies across America at trade shows, conferences and customer events. Lee and Vanessa's client list includes leading corporations such as AT&T, HSBC and SAS Software.

How to Capture Powerful Customer Testimonial Videos

It's very easy to capture powerful customer testimonials on video, if you know a few tricks and techniques.

First, and most importantly, DO NOT:

- × Hire a film crew
- × Use a commercial video camera
- × Have special lighting, microphones or any other related equipment.

We know this sounds strange, but trust us, and read on.

Avoid deer in the headlights stare

You'd be amazed at how many people freeze up in front of a video camera and forget what to say. You want the customer to talk from their heart and speak naturally, so the testimonial seems genuine, not rehearsed or memorized. To accomplish this, you need a video camera that's practically invisible, plus the ability to be mobile, wireless and spontaneous.

Our little secret, exposed

We use a bit of "James Bond" technology. It's a tiny, yet powerful pocket camera that films DVD quality video and takes excellent high resolution photos. The camera is a [Sony Cybershot, model DSC-W90](#). You will also want to purchase a few [4 gig SanDisk Ultra II memory cards](#), so you'll have plenty of memory to store the videos. The camera's small size is not intimidating, so capturing good quality, spontaneous video footage is very easy.

How to film a testimonial

First, "feel out" the customer by asking what they like about your company and its products. Use questions to narrow down specific benefits. For example, a customer might say, "I like this stair railing because it's easy to install."

To quantify the benefit, respond with a question like, "You're saying that because our stair railing is easy to install, it saves you time, which equates to reduced labor costs. So really, by using our stair railing, you have been able to reduce your labor costs. Is that right?"

Identify as many benefits as possible, and help the customer translate them into quantifiable data such as dollar

amounts, percentages, hours of saved time, increased production and so on.

Give direction

The next step is to act as a movie director and "direct" the customer. Before the camera starts rolling, help them form an outline in their mind of what they want to say. You need them to talk about the challenges they faced before using your product, and how your product solved their problems. Also, remind them of all the benefits they described about your product.

Be sure to instruct the customer to introduce themselves and give their job title and company name at the beginning of the video. (This makes the message more authentic. Also, if the person or company carries a high-profile in their industry, it grabs the interest of others in that same industry.)

Repeat, if necessary

After filming, if the testimonial didn't

come across as strong as you'd like, ask "Are you happy with it, or would you like to do it over?" Usually, they will want to do it again, sometimes several times. As long as they are willing to talk about your company, keep the camera running. The more footage you have, the more you can edit and produce a really good testimonial.

Effective ways to use testimonials

1. Videos captured at a trade show can be used in follow up e-mails to booth visitors. It's even better if the e-mails can be sent out while the show is still going on.

2. Send testimonials in a follow up e-mail after a sales call, or to "ping" a prospect. E-mail the video to prospects in the same industry as the customer on the video and to prospects who have something else in common with the customer.



LEE'S TECH TIPS (aka the geek corner)

Video Editing Made Fast and Easy!

Now that you've filmed some fantastic customer testimonials, it's time to edit the videos and take out breaths, stutters or pauses, and perhaps make the video shorter. You could invest over \$1,000 and spend hours learning the art and science of video editing, like I did.

Or, you can just use Windows Movie Maker, the free software from Microsoft. It's so simple to use, anyone can do it. The software is part of Windows, so if you use a PC, it's probably hiding on your computer right now, and you don't even know it. Here's how to find it on your computer:

1. Go to Start - All Programs
2. Click "Accessories" and you'll see Windows Movie Maker in the drop down list

If, for some reason, you don't have Windows Movie Maker on your computer, you can download it free from Microsoft. Go to www.microsoft.com and search for Windows Movie Maker. If you want to type the link in your address bar and go directly to the download page, here it is:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/updates/moviemaker2.mspx>

I also made a short video for you. It shows me editing in Movie Maker, so you can see how easy it really is. To watch the video, go to our website (www.leelentz.com) and click on "resources" in the top right hand corner of the home page. You'll see the video listed under "Coaching videos from Lee and Vanessa". We'll be adding more coaching videos packed with time saving tips and little-know techniques, so check back in a few weeks.

Coming Next Month . . .

How to upload your testimonial videos to Google for free hosting and publicity.