

How to Get (and Give) a Killer Testimonial

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Table of Contents

Two Must-Have Types of Testimonials	9
Benefit Backing Testimonials	9
Objection-Defusing Testimonials	10
5 Ways to Get Killer Testimonials	12
What if I'm launching a new product or service?	14
Tapping the Power of Testimonials	15
Choosing the Best Testimonials to Use.....	16
Exercise A: Proof Testimonials	18
Exercise B: Defusing Testimonials.....	19
Testimonial Questionnaire.....	20
More Testimonial Questions to Consider	21
Meet Me	22

Do you know what the number one reason is that people DON'T buy something they're interested in?

It's not price.

It's because they don't believe you'll deliver what's promised.

That's why you're seeing so many shopping sites adding sections for comments and reviews these days.

Prospects want undeniable proof that your product or service does what you say it will do. (*Especially* for something as intangible as a service.) And one of the most powerful ways to provide that proof is to share opinions from someone other than you.

Studies on persuasion call this “social proof”—people who are unsure about an action or decision tend to look to others around them for guidance. They assume if someone else was happy, they probably will be too. And it's **even more powerful if the reader has some affinity with the people being cited**—even when the similarity is as weak as having stayed in the same hotel room.

So showing them proof of others' satisfaction makes them much more confident about hiring you.

So it's time to get over feeling shy about asking clients for a testimonial. After all...

- Most happy customers really don't mind providing one—they usually just get hung up on figuring out what to say
- And if they're a fellow business owner, giving you a testimonial helps spread the word about their business as well

Unfortunately, most testimonials end up being tepid, vague statements that wouldn't convince anyone other than your own mother to buy from you.

What you want are “killer” testimonials that wow your prospects with details and specifics—and get them *excited* about buying from you.

Killer testimonials are:

- **Results-driven.** The more specific and tangible the results you include are, the better because it makes it easier for the prospect to picture how they'll benefit. It also makes your testimonials more...
- **Credible.** It doesn't matter if you have the greatest testimonial on earth if the prospect doesn't believe it's real.

So here are some tips for doing that:

Numbers count a lot. Show how much their sales or traffic increased, money or time they saved, or whatever way they benefited.

The example below would have been a pretty good testimonial without the sentence in bold. But the specific results Jackie cites in that sentence knock it out of the ballpark.

I had been studying several experts who teach how to write web copy, and had developed a landing page I thought was pretty good. But then I hired Tracy to re-write the copy, and the results blew me away!

The number of people opting-in to my list doubled, and my conversion rate went up 55%...with the same traffic! She has spent years studying all the nuances and details of good copy, and clearly knows what she's doing. I highly recommend her copy services and am getting ready to have her do more.

--Jackie Kelm, Author of The Joy of Appreciative Living

Show before and after. Weight loss ads have been raking in the sales for years by featuring before-and-after photos of their customers. If they just showed the after, many people would skeptically assume the person didn't have that much weight to lose to start with. But it's much more motivating when they can actually see the change that took place.

Also, showing the before often makes it a lot easier for the prospect to relate to the person giving the testimonial.

Below you can see how Marc thought the copy he sent for a [Copy Critique](#) was pretty much good to go. After all, he was very much in the same place as his target audience at one point. And then you see his total surprise that the new copy was better able to capture his own thoughts and feelings—and those of his audience.

"Wow, I have to tell you that you have convinced me to stick to something that I know--and it certainly isn't writing!"

I thought I nailed the Home page and didn't think there would be much done to it. Man, was I wrong and boy am I glad I found you! I found myself saying exactly what you wrote as I was reading it and remembering just how I felt when the first college bill arrived--YIKES!

You have quite the gift and I consider myself fortunate that you are sharing it with me."

-- Marc Hill

Reduce My College Costs, LLC

Show the “how.” Before and after is great, but you've struck gold when the client describes *how* they implemented a particular strategy you shared. It not only removes any doubt whether the person actually got those results—but shows the reader precisely how they can implement your strategy to get those same results.

It's also great when people are frequently concerned that what you're offering will be too complicated or time consuming for them.

The following excerpt talks about one strategy out of a 30-page Marketing Action Plan for my [Kickstart Marketing Program](#):

So I signed up for the monthly SEO packet you recommended and started on April's backlinks yesterday. Literally OVERNIGHT I went from having no appearance on Google to a PAGE ONE, top five ranking.

That ONE suggestion from you is likely to be worth everything I paid for your program-- and then some.

*--Lisa Young
Home Party Solution*

Provide full attribution. A potentially killer testimonial can quickly become a killed testimonial if you attribute it to "A.G., Tulsa" or "J. Smith." No one believes those people actually exist. So you should avoid it at all costs unless you're in an industry where this is common practice because of privacy concerns. And even then, I'd look for some additional tidbits you can provide that wouldn't reveal anyone's identity.

Including their full name and photo is a MUST. Other things you may want to include, if relevant:

Businesses	Consumers
Job title	Age
Business name	City and State
Book title	# of children
City and State	# of years in hobby
Web address	# of pounds lost
Contact info	

Consider going multi-media. It's getting increasingly cheap and easy to make audio and video files so these types of testimonials are becoming more popular. Adding either will up the credibility factor and increase response—although studies show video blows audio out of the water.

The good news is no one expects you to be Steven Spielberg. In fact, customers find do-it-yourself videos *more* believable than ones that are slick or professionally produced.

But if you're going the audio or video route, the **smartest strategy is to add a text quote that highlights the most important part** so visitors don't have to hit "Play" to get the gist.

Two Must-Have Types of Testimonials

Benefit Backing Testimonials

Ideally, you want to have one strong testimonial for each key benefit of your product or service—someone else talking about getting that same benefit and (hopefully) fairly specific result.

For example, I could tell you that my [7 Steps to Creating Copy that Sells](#) guide will make it easier to write web copy that's much more effective at selling your products and services. But it's more convincing when Dan says it...

*Your guide has taken the nightmare out of writing good copy and turned it into a step by step process for me. It's **amazing how easy it can be when someone takes the time to show you how to do it. Side by side, the copy I am now writing easily out performs the copy I was paying for and waiting ages to get delivered.***

*--Dan Hughes
Triangle Response Marketing*

Having a testimonial that specifically discusses one benefit is much more powerful than a testimonial that has a hodge-podge listing of everything they liked. It'll also make it much easier to know where to place the testimonial in the rest of your copy.

For testimonials you already have, you may want to just use excerpts that address a single benefit.

So use [Exercise A: Proof Testimonials](#) to track which benefits you have or need testimonials for.

Objection-Defusing Testimonials

We're often afraid of objections—and silently hope if we avoid the topic, they'll just forget about their concern.

But has ignoring something *ever* made it go away?

I can clearly recall ignoring a “cold” that dragged on for a month before I went to the doctor—and discovered whatever mild malady I'd had had become walking pneumonia...

...and ignoring a toilet that kept running in my college apartment—until we got the \$200 water bill...

...and I could go on—but I think it's safe to say the head-in-the-sand strategy rarely works.

But even more important...

Objections are actually our friend.

People don't bother raising objections if they're not interested. They just click away.

So when prospects have objections, remember that they *want* to say yes. They just need you to alleviate their concerns first. Sometimes it's not even THEIR concerns—but the things they know they're going to have to justify to their spouse or friends.

(Okay, there are some pain-in-the-you-know-what types who like to object to everything so they have an excuse for never buying anything. But trust me--you don't want them for clients anyway.)

Using a defusing testimonial alongside your copy countering the objection lets you **defuse the objection twice**—in a very subtle way. So you should also have a selection of testimonials aimed at resolving specific anxieties or questions.

The testimonial from Marc Hill you saw earlier is a good example of defusing testimonial. I know some prospective clients wonder if hiring me will actually make THAT much of a difference, so when he says...

"Wow, I have to tell you that you have convinced me to stick to something that I know--and it certainly isn't writing!

I thought I nailed the Home page and didn't think there would be much done to it. Man, was I wrong and boy am I glad I found you! I found myself saying exactly what you wrote as I was reading it and remembering just how I felt when the first college bill arrived--YIKES!

You have quite the gift and I consider myself fortunate that you are sharing it with me."

-- Marc Hill

Reduce My College Costs, LLC

...they can see he had a similar one and but was thrilled with the result.

You can use [Exercise B: Defusing Testimonials](#) to identify which objections you have or need testimonials for.

5 Ways to Get Killer Testimonials

Great testimonials rarely happen accidentally. Most people are not in the practice of regularly giving testimonials, so they're not sure what to even say. Even if they've raved about your service over the phone, when it comes time to put fingers to keyboard they freeze up. So here are 5 ways to get killer testimonials.

1. **Question them.** "Can you write a testimonial for me?" is usually NOT going to give you the results you want. Instead, you need to ask questions that will prompt them for the specifics you're looking for.

And, of course, ask them to be as specific as they can about their results. See [Testimonial Questionnaire](#) and More [Testimonial Questions](#) for ideas of what to ask.

2. **Send a sample.** Another option is to send them a short sample of a killer testimonial. You could even make up the sample since you'll never actually be using it. Just say you've included it to help them get started.

3. **Write it for them.** This should be a last resort option. First, writing it yourself means it's missing the client's "voice"—which makes it feel a little less real to the reader. And if you do this too many times, all your testimonials will start to sound the same. Second, it's just flat out awkward to write your own testimonial. (*Or I find it to be anyway.*)

If they insist, send them something "to start" and invite them to "improve it" so it says what they'd want to say.

4. **Quote them.** A better alternative is to ask them what they think of the results, jot down their words exactly as said, and then ask if you can quote them on that. Even if they say yes verbally, you should type it up and send it via email for their ok. Sometimes they'll elaborate on what you have. Of course, you can do something similar if someone spontaneously praises you.

But most important...

5. **DON'T wait.** The best time is when they're still in the initial state of wow—even if you're not completely done with the job yet. Ways to do this:
 - ✓ Have an **email** questionnaire prepared to send out as soon as you hear back from them with their initial thoughts.
 - ✓ Set up an **autoresponder** a few days after a digital product purchase asking for their feedback or giving them a link to an online form or survey to fill out.
 - ✓ Have someone else **call** and survey them a day or two after the project ends. (People are always much more open with a stranger than with you.)

- ✔ Send a questionnaire by **mail** (with self-addressed stamped envelope for its return) when you send the final invoice.
- ✔ Take a **voice recorder or video camera** with you to your next meeting with them or even seminars they may also be attending. (The Flip Video Camcorders make it super easy and affordable to do relatively decent videos these days).
- ✔ If you use something like [Audio Generator](#), give them the option of calling and leaving a testimonial message.

Quick Tip—

You should ALWAYS try to get a written OK from your client before using a testimonial. (*Especially* if they're making big claims about their results.)

But generally, it IS ok to tweak their wording or just run an excerpt of their testimonial—if it doesn't change the meaning of what they said—without an OK.

OK, so you might be wondering...

What if I'm launching a new product or service?

Of course, if you're just launching something new, you won't have any testimonials to go through. So here are three options to consider until you've got those testimonials coming in ...

1. **Use other testimonials you've gotten that reflect your work in the topic area.** These aren't as strong as ones specific to that product or service—but you can certainly start with them and replace them after the launch.

2. **Giving free samples to a small group of people in exchange for their feedback.** The trick here will be getting their feedback. As well-meaning as they may be, everybody's busy. So you may want to position it as an opportunity to be featured on your website.
3. **Make a testimonial a condition of sale.** You can explain that you're giving a discount because you'd like some feedback to know whether you should really go whole hog with this new product or service. But in exchange for the special pricing, they're committing to giving you their opinions and suggestions afterward. If you're very clear about it upfront, most buyers will be good about honoring that "obligation."

So now that you've got a slew of killer testimonials, here's how to put them to work for you...

Tapping the Power of Testimonials

I can't think of a single situation where using a testimonial would work against you.
(Unless, of course, it said their experience was awful!)

In fact, there are MANY ways to leverage your killer testimonials for growing your business beyond just sprinkling them throughout your marketing copy.

You can turn testimonials into...

- ✔ Headlines
- ✔ Postcards
- ✔ Ads
- ✔ Case Studies

- ✓ Emails and autoresponders
- ✓ A Raving Fans page on your website

Or you can use the information in your...

- ✓ Media Kit
- ✓ Social media profiles
- ✓ Speaking bios
- ✓ Teleseminars

ANY time you're marketing your business, you can make it more effective by using a testimonial.

Choosing the Best Testimonials to Use

At some point, you should make a list of your testimonials--noting who gave it and what each focuses on-- to make it easy to find the right one when you need it.

There are two key considerations when choosing which testimonials to use on a web page or in a marketing piece.

The WHO

In our eagerness to show off the most spectacular testimonials, we often forget to think about how our audience will relate. But WHO has given the testimonial can be just as powerful as WHAT they said.

For one, you want to choose testimonials **from clients who are most similar to your target audience** instead of the "best" ones.

It's a lot easier for prospects to see themselves getting those same results when the testimonial giver appears to be someone like them. Otherwise, they'll read it and think, "That's nice, but he has 20 years more experience than I do." Or, "That's great but I couldn't do that working just 20 hours a week like I want."

The WHAT

This is where those benefit-backing and objection-defusing testimonials come in. You should choose ones that address each of the benefits and objections for your product or service—and then place the testimonial very nearby in the copy.

So if you're talking about how much time your program can save clients, put the testimonial that raves how much time your client's now saving each week in or near that section.

If people are often concerned how long it will take to get your product, put the testimonial praising how fast the customer received it by the copy that talks about what they need to do to order.

In the end, remember that testimonials are a high-octane marketing tool that can help build **a rapport with the prospect, underscore your credibility, overcome sales-killing fears** and **significantly boost your bottom-line...**

...IF you know how to get them and use them most effectively.

Exercise A: Proof Testimonials

In the first column, list the most important features and benefits of what you're marketing. In the second, check off whether you have a testimonial that addresses this.

Most Important Features & Benefits	Test
Saves time since they're no longer hunting for needed items	√

Exercise B: Defusing Testimonials

In the first column, list the most common objections or questions you get. If you're unsure what they are, ask others what concerns they'd have.

Then in the second column, enter how *you'd* respond (i.e. the main point(s) you'd cover if someone raised that objection during a conversation). This will make it easier to find what you're looking for. In the last column, check off whether you have a testimonial that covers this.

Common Objections & Questions	Your Response	Test
I kind of waited until the last minute, how fast can I get my CD's made?	We can actually burn and deliver the CD's with a standard graphic cover within 2 business days.	√

Testimonial Questionnaire

Asking questions can make it MUCH easier for your clients to provide testimonials—and encourage them to provide the type of strong, results-oriented testimonials you're looking for.

Here are the questions I recently sent to clients past and present. My goal was to get both testimonials and ideas for future copy points.

I mailed them in a blue envelope (so it stands out in the mail pile), on letterhead, accompanied by a handwritten note and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. My thinking is that a real letter will avert the clutter of their email inbox.

The one thing I'd test next time is a statement at the bottom asking if I could use any of the info as a testimonial so I don't have to go back to them for approval later. On the other hand, I'm concerned it will give them a bit of "stage fright." So it'll be interesting to see what happens.

I might also try emailing the request first, and then following up by snail mail as I had two people who said they preferred to type than write.

1. What were your perceptions about hiring a copywriter before we started? (i.e. how you would benefit, what your concerns were, etc.)
2. How has that perception changed?
3. What did you like best about my copywriting services?
4. What would you say are the three biggest benefits of hiring me?
5. How many sales, opt-ins, responses, and/or appointment requests were you receiving prior to our work together?
6. How did your sales, opt-ins, responses and/or appointment requests change after using your new copy?
7. What would you tell another client about hiring me?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

More Testimonial Questions to Consider

There are a million questions you can ask, here are a few that should help you get strong, results-oriented testimonials that address the items you need to cover...while reflecting your clients' individual voices and personalities so readers know they're authentic.

- Before you hired me/bought my program – what did your business/personal life look like? (Be specific as to the results you were getting.)
- And how has your business/personal life improved? What specific results are you seeing in your business/personal life today?
- What is the biggest personal/business benefit to this change? (Use the one you didn't use in the first two)
- In dollars or profits what do you think this change has been worth to you?
- How long did it take you to reach your goal?
- How has your thinking changed? What was your biggest 'Ah-ha' from our work together/the material?
- What would you tell someone who was unsure if they should hire me/buy this program?
- Were you skeptical when you first ordered? Why?
- What happened after you ordered? (Did you get your product on time? In good condition?)
- Did it work for you? And if so, how well?
- How did you implement/incorporate/use the tips/strategies/product?
- What was the best part of the experience?
- What would you change?
- What other alternatives have you tried before this?
- Who else would you recommend this product to?
- What were the three most significant improvements you received?
- Was (common objection) an issue for you before buying/hiring me?
- What was it that really made you want to buy/hire me?

Meet Me



Hi, I'm Tracy and for more than five years I've been helping entrepreneurs market their business.

I specialize in **writing web copy and marketing materials that do the selling for you**--by getting your prospects' attention, showing them you have the perfect solution for their problem, and persuading them to take the next step.

I can also show you ways to attract more clients and sales using marketing strategies that make better use of your time and money.

I founded Compelling Communications, LLC, in 2003 after more than a decade in marketing communications—following a brief and rarely glamorous career in politics working for a Congressman, presidential candidate, and group of lobbyists. (But the stories I could tell...)

The one common thread throughout my years in the “real world” was writing and editing. I had my first article “From Graduation to a Job on Capitol Hill” published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1995. It was actually a journalism class assignment while getting my M.S. in Public Relations from Boston University College of Communication—which I submitted on a whim.

I am also a co-author of [Conscious Entrepreneurs](#), published in summer 2008. My chapter, “Good for Profit—Your Social Conscious is an Asset to Your Business,” reflects my fascination with companies that do good while doing well for their business.

After living most of my years in the Northern Virginia area, I decided to leave the traffic, terrorists, snipers and other crazies behind by moving to Raleigh, North Carolina at the end of 2006. (OK, it was more about being closer to my sister and her kids, but escaping those things were definite perks!)

Two rescue mutts named Lexie and Roscoe, as well as a rescued lop bunny named Austin, share the company headquarters/home with me.

Where to Find Me...

Websites: www.compellingcomm.com
www.kickstartmarketingprogram.com
 Blog: www.compellingmarketingblog.com

