

The Power of Social Proof: 3 Steps to Growth Through Customer Testimonials

No matter what sort of business you run, your success or failure all comes down to one thing: your customers. Understanding their needs better than anyone else. Then catering to those needs with the perfect solution.

Simple, right? It is and it isn't.

After all, you can have the best products on the planet. If you don't communicate why they're the best, nobody will use them.

This is where marketing comes in.

Now for many business owners, marketing can be a drag. For some, it feels phony; you know, too salesy. For others, there's too much to know, it's overwhelming.

But I've got a tool that practically markets your products for you. A believable way to let your customers know you're the answer to their prayers.

And it never fails.

So, what is it?

The Power of Social Proof

"I don't have any testimonials yet," Tom told me, squinting in dismay on a September afternoon Zoom call. "I mean, we've got customers, we've been in business two years now but..."

Tom owns a small software company in Toronto. They'd launched a new app recently, and he'd consulted me about strategic growth.

He already had several hundred customers using his apps, so he wasn't starting from scratch.

"Have you asked for any?"

His eyebrows shot up and he shifted in discomfort. "Well, no," he admitted, chewing the inside of his cheek.

"Do you have a good relationship with your customers?" I prompted.

"Yeah!" he sat upright, leaning forward with enthusiasm. "We hear all the time how great our support is and how happy they are."

"So..."

"I worry about harassing them for testimonials," he dithered. "What if they get angry?"

"There are ways to ask for testimonials that won't make them angry," I reassured him. "I promise they won't feel harassed, and we'll make it worth their while."

Tom looked intrigued, despite his reservations.

"Social proof is so influential," I continued. "Think about it this way. Do you react better to an ad telling you what you need or a friend recommending something?"

"My friends," Tom agreed. "No contest."

I explained the three vital steps to gathering powerful testimonials, and how they can actually strengthen the customer relationship.

By the end of our conversation, Tom was excited about the prospect of reaching out. Six months later, he'd collected over 30 testimonials.

What did he do with them?

First, he created a testimonials page (he was shocked at how much traffic it got).

Next, he converted some into case studies.

The rest he used in other marketing materials like his new brochures.

Before long, Tom's testimonials were bringing in new customers.

The Secret to Amazing Testimonials

If you're like most people, reviews are a major deciding factor in your purchases. Amazon is a great example; merchants either succeed or fail based on their reviews.

This is powerful stuff. So what makes reviews so potent?

According to [Trust Pilot](#), 89% of shoppers read online reviews. That's huge!

People trust reviews: 79% of people, according to a 2021 study by [Oberlo](#). Why?

People trust social proof.

But I can throw statistics at you all day; what matters most is how testimonials make potential customers feel. People trust their peers; if their peers trust you, they'll trust you.

Which means they'll be willing to reward your business with their hard-earned money.

If you're new to testimonials, like Tom, you can also use this as an opportunity to forge a stronger connection with your customers.

How?

Don't focus on your needs, focus on making your customers feel like you value their input.

Something along the lines of, "Hey, you're awesome. We value your opinion, and we know everyone else will, too," will do nicely.

Add a little incentive, a \$100 gift card or a gift bag of product, and you'll be irresistible.

So how do you ask for testimonials?

Here are three steps you should consider:

1. Start With Your Fans

If you've been in business a while, you're bound to have some fans. Otherwise, you wouldn't still be in business. In Tom's case, we turned to support calls to find his happiest customers.

Luckily, his team used a CRM with notes on every customer interaction; they were pure gold.

Tom had page after page of customer conversation documented. So, we focused on the ones who were happiest at the end of their support calls to build our list.

These customers were familiar with Tom's business, and they loved it. Reading the notes also shifted Tom's focus; it felt less like cold calling. Instead, it became about reaching out to chat with people he already had a relationship with.

In the end, he had fun; and he got some glowing reviews.

2. Offer Incentive

Customers love freebies; hey, we're all motivated by free stuff. So offering incentive for customers who go out of their way to review you is important.

If you've got an eye on your money, don't fret; incentive doesn't need to be huge.

Sit down and spend some time on your budget. Ask yourself how many testimonials you'd like, and what you can afford. You don't need to break the bank, but you do need to show appreciation and motivate your customer.

If you're strapped for cash, you could offer a chance to enter a draw in exchange for a testimonial. That way you're only giving out a few small incentives to the winner(s).

But do choose those incentives with care; thoughtfulness builds strong relationships. And the stronger your customer connections, the stronger your business.

3. Make it Easy

Making it easy for people to review your business means a higher response rate and better answers.

So how do you guide people through the process?

Consider providing a questionnaire that's quick and easy to fill out.

Example questions may include:

- How did you hear about our product/service?
- What results did you get from using our product/service?
- What specific feature(s) do you like the most about our products/service?
- What are the three main benefits you get from using our product/service?
- If you were to recommend our product/service to a friend, what would you say?
- How has using our product/service changed your life?

Note: Always get permission from your customer to use their testimonials.

If you collect answers online, have a use agreement they can read and check off. If you're collecting over the phone, record in your notes that you asked for and received consent. As with any great relationship, transparency is key.

Testimonials are a sure-fire way to get the word out about how amazing your business is.

So many business owners hesitate when it comes to collecting reviews. Yet with a strong process in place, testimonials can be an exciting (and lucrative!) part of any venture.