

Testimonials - powerful selling tools

Are you missing out on a powerful selling tool - testimonials?

Testimonials - those lovely things customers tell you about your business. Are you making use of them to attract more customers? Never got a testimonial? This article is going to explain: what they can do for you, why testimonials on your website or promotional literature can bring you more enquiries and how you ask for them.

How can testimonials bring you more business?

However well you write your sales copy, we know (and so does everyone else) that it is just what we think about our business and we're hardly going to be objective? On the other hand, when a customer says that our product or service is really good, now that has real impact. If you tell me that your free range poultry tastes just fine, I might or might not believe you, if your customer comes up to me and says, "hey you should try these chickens, I know they're cost more but just wait until you taste them, they're out of this world." Quite persuasive isn't it?

Why? Because genuine testimonials come from independent, satisfied customers who don't have an axe to grind.

Can testimonials ever harm your business?

Yes - testimonials that are vague and don't give details of the person giving the testimonial may seem planted. In fact, in a workshop on "Writing for The Web" that I ran recently, one participant said she didn't believe testimonials on websites because she thought they were all fabricated. We need to be aware of this and make sure that we provide enough information about the person and their company so people can check them out, even contact them if they want to. For businesses selling direct to the public, a physical book is more authentic. If you run a farm shop or farmers' market stall you can have this prominently on display somewhere.

Some people say, "oh but I don't like asking people for a testimonial, it makes me feel uncomfortable."

Okay, well let's look at how this might work. You probably already get emails complimenting you on your produce especially just after Christmas. If someone has taken the trouble to put finger to keyboard, they obviously like what you do. Surely others will too? Next time someone compliments your produce, ask them if they would write it down on a testimonial card (see below)

How can you start getting testimonials?

If this article has convinced you to ask your customers for testimonials, now you just need to find a system that suits your business. Here are some quick suggestions for different types of businesses.

Customer comments book - buy an off the shelf visitor's book and have it displayed in your farm shop or at the side of your market display or even next to your money pot if you do farm gate sales. The fact that others have left comments encourages people to give you a testimonial. Type them up and add to your website or brochures.

Testimonial cards - if you're good in Microsoft Word you can simply create a form that asks for a comment, and put in a space for name, address and email address. Add your business logo and then hand out whenever customers compliment you.

Invoices - if you give out invoices or receipts, a gentle prompt can encourage testimonials. "Are you happy with our products? Are you unhappy with our products? Either way we'd like to know, please send a note or email us."

Face to face testimonials - if customers compliment you but you are too busy serving to note it down or give out a testimonial card, you could thank them and ask if you could phone them later so that you can hear more about e.g. how they cooked it and take some notes. Be up front, say you would like to let potential new customers know what you're existing customers think about your products. This is particularly good, because you are then building your relationship with that individual customer. When you finish the call it would be a nice touch to offer them a voucher to say thank you for their time.

So don't be shy, when people like something they are usually happy to let you know.... but only if you ask.

Juliet Fay, farm based food marketing specialist.

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If you want to find out how to get really powerful testimonials check out Testimonials with Testosterone , a 25 minute audio explaining exactly how to get powerful testimonials.

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