



## **Building Rock Solid Testimonials**

Strategies to build, leverage and measure recommendations

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**The Scenario:**

The Internet has changed the way we do business in more ways than one. It's not just how we communicate with others or how we find business; it has changed how we choose businesses or individuals for (goods and or services that) things we need.

Never before in our history have recommendations been so easy for consumers to find; and research has shown they're extremely influential to the purchase decision process. Now that nearly all information is online, consumers have resorted to places like Google Local Listings, Amazon.com, and eBay.com to view product and company reviews. These consumer reviews and recommendations are the one of the single most important aspects to online purchase behavior.

**The Problem:**

Consumers are savvy in today's marketplace. They have information readily available online and consumers are able to research and compare products, before they make a decision. The result of this increased level awareness is higher levels skepticism.

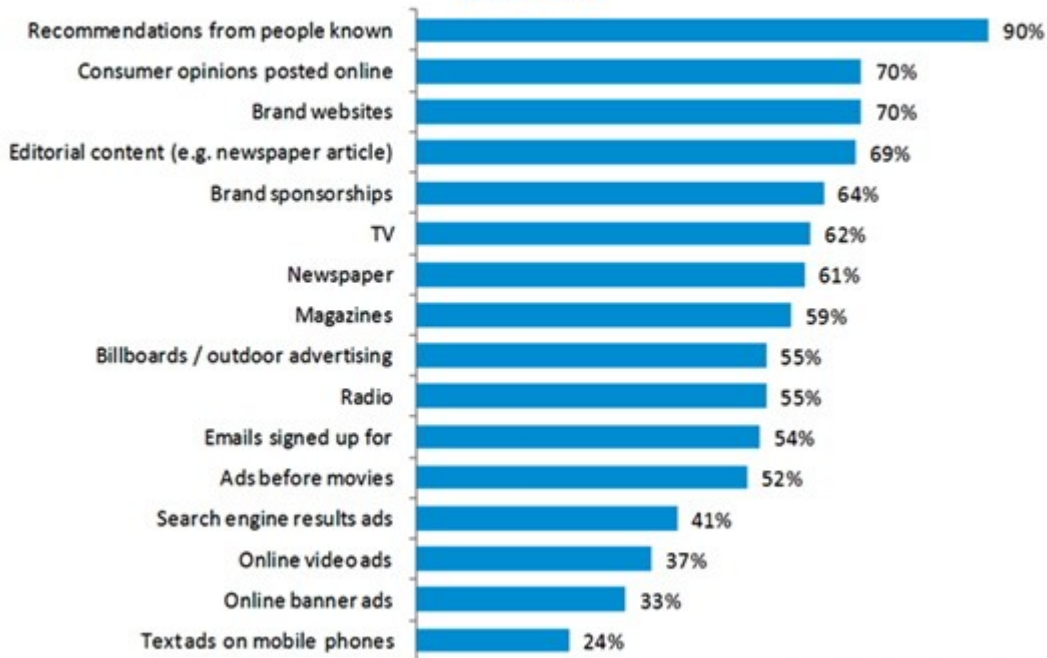
According to the latest research from Nielsen Wire, consumers are relying more and more on people they know for recommendations, but also other people; more specifically other people online. Nielsen Wire found that 90% of individuals trust individuals they know, and 70% of people trust online recommendations and testimonials online. This is why testimonials are absolutely necessary to persuade others online, since 70% are likely to perceive testimonials as credible.

***This means that testimonials can have a huge impact on perceived trust and credibility; especially online.***



According to the latest research from Nielsen Wire, consumers are relying more on people they know for recommendations, but also other people; more specifically other people online.

Have some degree of trust\* in the following forms of advertising  
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Source: The Nielsen Company

\*E.g. 90 percent of respondents trusted "completely" or "somewhat" recommendations from people they know

**The Solution:**

The solution to this problem is to understand what people respond to best in testimonials. The Revived Group has created this paper as a resource to help you build effective testimonials and how to use them.



## About Testimonials

Although there is no such thing as a right or wrong testimonial, it is important to understand that there is a format that is to be expected by consumers. A testimonial must be: **1)**. From an actual customer **2)**. Inform others what the experience was, good or bad **3)**. Be authentic and genuine.

Do not try and attempt to have friends or family write a testimonial (*unless you've actually done work for them*). If you do this it ends up sounding like this (*These are actual testimonials on Google*).

*"I love the \_\_\_\_\_. They have a great selection of beer and food to choose from and games to play. Take the family or meet friends, either way you will have a good time."*

*"Fun for everyone! The \_\_\_\_\_ has many different specials ranging from free Kids meals to An AWESOME new happy hour 7 days a week! The staff is friendly"*

Most likely, these hardly make you want to visit this restaurant or place of business. You probably also believe these testimonials are suspect. Now here is a testimonial that appears to be legitimate. (*Actual testimonial on Google*)

*"Now, just so we're clear. I'm not somebody who goes around posting bad things about places. Honestly, bar food is great, a drink is a drink, hamburgers are always good. I'd say I'm fairly easy to please. If there is decent service, decent food, I'm good. To say the least, this place was NONE of that..."*

All of those testimonials are for the exact same restaurant, and all can be found on Google Local Listings. Now, if you were trying to decide what restaurant to go to, these testimonials would probably be enough to send you somewhere else; but now ask yourself, what if this why my restaurant or business?

The good news is this problem can easily be avoided, and it all starts with you asking your customers or clients to write good recommendations for you. Ask for feedback; don't just wait until others do it for you; or you may end up with a bad review that outweighs the good. And hopefully, you can identify problems before someone says something like the third testimonial.



## *Building Testimonials*

Before you even consider building testimonials it is important to recognize that you have to offer a service or product that consumers are *willing* to recommend. If your product doesn't please its users, or it offers little to no value to consumers, don't count on this strategy working for you.

### *Step 1: Identifying the Target Audience and Understanding Values*

One of the most critical things to make solid testimonials is knowing exactly *why* your customers or clients use your products or services. There are probably many reasons, but you have to be familiar with *exactly why* customers choose you and *what separates you from the competition*. This is what needs to be reflected in the testimonials.

Do your customers use your company or product because it is cost effective? You offer the highest quality in town? It's ease of use? Typically, this is your company's competitive advantage. Once you know what your customers value most, you can use this as a testimonial strategy.

### *Step 2: Generating and Asking for Testimonials*

Do not be afraid to ask for testimonials. If you do good work or offer a great product, people are happy to give you their seal of approval with a testimonial. There are numerous ways to generate testimonials; but two most common are; simply asking them (via phone / email / face-to-face) and customer surveys (online and offline). If you can tell a customer or client is satisfied, ask them.

Customers and clients are rarely offended by a request for a testimonial, especially if it was a good experience. Don't be afraid during the follow-up to ask for a testimonial. And if they are unwilling to give you one, this is a perfect opportunity to get some feedback on how to fix a problem. It also shows consumers that you take feedback seriously, and you're willing to listen.

We also recommend giving customers or clients an easy outlet to provide feedback. There are simple online surveys available that can be customized and placed on a website.



### *Step 3: Guiding the creation of testimonials*

Surprising to some, many customers will ask “what do you want me to say?” when you request a testimonial. Again, there is no right and wrong to what people say (unless it’s negative, obviously), but there are simple ways to make testimonials that reflect what the business wants to be known for.

#### ***When your customers ask for testimonials, have them...***

**Tell a story** – People are attracted to stories. Simply have your customers write or speak about their experience with the organization from their point of view – the customer. It’s easier for consumers to relate to actual accounts of their problem and are then more receptive to the solution.

Example (on Google Listings): *“I had a 1995 Bayliner with Force Outboard. I’ve had so much trouble with this boat. I won’t name any names, but I had brought this stupid motor to 3 different places in the metro and every time it seemed worse than when I brought it in. The summer is short already and I was ready to burn the thing down. A friend of mine recommended \_\_\_\_\_ so I loaded up the boat and brought it in. **THESE GUYS NAILED THE PROBLEM!** Ever since then motor runs like a watch. To add to it all, these guys service everything. I’ve got a Polaris ATV and a Yamaha motorcycle at home and finally I have one place that can service all them”*

**Use examples** – If people have a simple example of how you helped them, have them write about it. This gives potential customers a better idea of how you have created value for others.

Example (on Google Listings): *“I really like the quality \_\_\_\_\_ provided. They’ve always been great. Plugged up carb they fixed it. Trailer wiring problem, fixed. I needed a part, they had it. No problems here!”*

**Problem / Solution** – If consumers don’t have a very good story or example, have them simply state the problem they were having, and how your organization has provided a solution.

Example (on Google Listings): *“I, like many people, hate working on boats. Every single time something breaks, I bring in it, and they fix it. Very reasonable too.”*



**Important note:** Unless they ask for help, do not interfere or modify testimonials. Don't get frustrated when the testimonial isn't up to your standards. Good testimonials take time and everyone values something different; so they won't and shouldn't all be the same.

### *Step 4: Utilizing Testimonials*

Now that you have started building your testimonials and recommendations, it's time to utilize them. There are endless ways you can use testimonials, here are some easy strategies;

**Website** – Create a page dedicated to testimonials and recommendations. Also, if it is appropriate have a few on the home page. This shows users instantly that you have offered value to others. Remember that according to Nielsen Wire, 70% of individuals trust recommendations by people not known, and 70% of individuals perceive the company website as credible.

**Brochures / Literature** - Whenever the company creates literature for the business, include the best testimonials or the ones from the most credible sources. Again, research shows that people generally trust testimonials, so it's important to utilize them everywhere.

**Social Networking** – If your organization is involved with social media, this is a perfect place to place testimonials. This builds credibility, but also offers a great forum to get more. When people see other testimonials, it encourages them to make their own. A crowd draws a crowd.

### *Step 5: Measuring Response*

It is extremely important to try and measure response rate to testimonials; especially online. At first glance it may seem difficult; however, there is an easy technique to check to see how people react to your testimonials. **Website analytics** is a vital tool to understand how potential customers or clients are reacting to testimonials and also other aspects of the website. We recommend to our clients to create a separate page for testimonials. That way, by looking at the website analytics, you are able to tell how many people continue browsing after viewing the testimonials. If there are a lot of visitors going to the testimonials, and they are quickly leaving, chances are there is a problem.

It is important to understand that there are numerous ways to measure testimonial and case study effectiveness, however, website analytics seem to be generally accurate, and other measures can become too expensive or impractical for some businesses.



## *Notes on Testimonial Formatting*

Again, there is no wrong or right way for presenting testimonials. We recommend having multiple formats to appeal to all users. However, you may find that changing the format may impact the reactions and effectiveness of the testimonials.

*Here are some different ways to make your testimonials / recommendations stand out*

**Recommendation Letters** – Recommendation letters are the ultimate standard in testimonials. When a recommendation letter contains genuine letterhead, a detailed case study, with a signature at the end; it really says something about the company. Recommendation letters are always desired, but a lot of times, then can be impracticable. It's extremely important that it's written well, and unfortunately, not everyone is a skilled writer.

**Video** – Without a doubt, video is gaining popularity. With YouTube gaining tremendous traffic and usage, companies are beginning to use video as a means of sharing information. Video testimonials seem to be viewed as “more credible” since it adds ‘face-to-face’ element to the communication. However, not all clients are open to being filmed, and it can be expensive.

**Pictures** – Pictures can also add to the effectiveness of testimonials, as long as they aren't stock photos replacing the people who actually wrote them. If it's possible, take a picture of the person who gave the recommendation and include it online.

**Case Studies** – Case studies are similar to testimonials; however, case studies add elements about the specific product or service provided by the organization. We recommend, including a testimonial with every case study. Case studies are a great way to inform others how your company has specifically impacted other organizations.

**Audio** – Audio recordings of actual testimonials is a great way to demonstrate its authenticity. This signals to listeners that the testimonial is authentic and credible.

**\*Note about Testimonial Length** – Unfortunately, not much research exists in the realm of testimonial effectiveness. However, it can be assumed, just like all communication mediums, length is important. Be aware of testimonial length – too short seems to suggest lack of authenticity, and too long loses audience attention.



## ***How the Revived Group can help with Testimonials***

Simply, building trust with clients and consumers is not as easy as it sounds and understanding what people trust online and offline is something that is a hot research topic.

The Revived Group focuses on helping business develop strategies and systems that simply build trust and convert visitors – all while measuring the results with the latest Web Analytics technology.

### ***The Revived Group Currently Specializes in:***

- *Analytics*
- *Market Analysis*
- *Web Effectiveness*
- *Usability Testing*
- *User Behavior*
- *Website Design/Development*
- *Graphic Design*

## ***Contact us today or visit us at [RevivedGroup.com](http://RevivedGroup.com)***

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