

HOW TO BUILD TRUST AND CREDIBILITY WITH THE RIGHT CONTENT MARKETING MIX

Did you know that [97% of B2B buyers](#) consider user-generated content such as testimonials and reviews more credible than any other form of content? Then, consider that customers [spend up to 31% more](#) with businesses that have excellent customer testimonials, and the power of the external, unbiased advocate of your business becomes obvious. Why is this other voice so powerful? Because it builds trust with your target market and your customers love to know what their peers think.

This is not a new concept. The case study has long been a staple of old-school marketing and PR strategies. Traditionally, it's the point where marketing collateral becomes interesting to the sales team. They would take glossy print outs with them to prospect meetings, to add the gravity of an external, compelling voice to their sales pitch.

Your business might have a cracking editorial content strategy, with great articles and eBooks that get shared far and wide - and that's great for raising the profile of your brand as a thought leader. But when it comes to converting a buyer from awareness stage to lead, you need a different kind of content – one that is proven to work.

This kind of content works by building trust in the buyer at the point when they are already interested in your business, they've identified with your positioning statements and key messages and know you could potentially help them. They probably have a short list of companies similar to yours and now they are ready to narrow their search.

Testimonials and reviews are so powerful at building trust because they come from sources outside your business. Your happy customers become your evangelists. Think

about how you buy things on Amazon. Has a customer review ever swayed your decision between one product and another?

So, the question is, are you using customer testimonials on your website? Have you got a process in place for gathering them and using them to inform other campaigns? If not, now is the time to begin developing a broader content strategy that harnesses the power of the trust element.

Taking testimonials seriously – why you should be focusing on them

They're good for your website's SEO

According to Search Engine Watch, online reviews or testimonials can account for up to 9.8% of the total ranking factors used by Google to rank your website in its index. This is because they can provide a steady source of highly relevant, user-generated content, and because the language used is usually filled with industry-specific words likely to be used by your target audience.

What does this mean? You'll see excellent examples of long-tail keywords present within them that'll aid your rankings. These long-tail terms can also help inform future topic clusters.

They harness the power of social proof

As mentioned previously, your potential consumers are more likely to trust their peers than the word of a potential supplier alone. Word of mouth and the reassurances of others carry significant weight with the consumer. Social proof, the idea that your peers' assurances or testimonials affirm an idea, service or product, is invaluable in securing business.

People are more likely to follow the crowd, and if they perceive that your company is well-received by others, they're more likely to enter a relationship with you.

They increase your company's credibility

Credibility is what happens when enough people trust you. You can't just become credible overnight, it takes time. Every positive testimonial or review your business receives is another building block to add to your credibility.

Once you have credibility you will eventually earn reputation. A word of warning here: don't be tempted to pay for good reviews if your products or services require work to bring them up to the expected industry standard. A few glowing reviews will not protect you from the tide of negative feedback you'll receive if customers feel they have been misled.

They offer opportunities to learn and grow from consumer feedback

Even businesses fastidious about providing high standards of service will not receive 100% positive reviews 100% of the time. And that's fine. While no business would want to promote a negative review, they provide invaluable feedback and the opportunity to turn things around with a show of great customer service.

How you respond publicly to negative publicity is vital. It sends out a message about how you treat your customers and what future customers can expect from you. Use these opportunities to shine as a company that cares about its clients' concerns and rectifying issues.

Five quick tips for ensuring your testimonials are terrific

1. Develop a testimonial-gathering strategy

Timing is crucial. There's little point to asking a brand-new customer for a testimonial on your service or product. They need time to experience it and to be able to generate feedback that is authentic and accurately reflects their experience.

Take the time to develop a strategy that includes following up with clients at specific intervals to see if they'd be prepared to give you a testimonial or a comment. Make a point of approaching the customers you feel are the most likely to be willing, and when you do, have a prepared approach in place for creating your testimonial.

Make it easy for them. Create a set of questions that cover specific areas and points of interest that you feel would draw in future customers. You're looking for content that either refers to a specific problem you've solved or to a specific service you offer. This will help you get found on search. Otherwise, you may end up with "Great service", which while flattering, isn't useful to you or future readers.

2. Ensure design plays a role in developing your testimonials

Wherever you intend to include your testimonials, ensure they look sleek and do credit to your business by being well-designed. Every interaction a potential customer has with your brand is going to help them form an opinion of you. Every contact counts.

3. Consider including them in your blogs and case studies

Whether as an insert in your case studies or a sidebar in a blog, make sure your testimonials are visible across your website.

4. Incorporate them into your website cleverly

Display testimonials wisely across your site. There will be places that lend themselves to holding testimonials: on the pricing page, for instance, near CTAs and on your About Us page to name a few.

The exact placing should be planned using any data you have that shows how users interact with your site, whilst paying particular attention to areas that convert well.

5. Use different formats

Perhaps not for everyone, but if you can, why not consider gathering testimonials in audio or video format, as well as text? Video has taken over the internet, and is an excellent medium for testimonials, as it adds an even deeper layer to the authenticity by feeling more personal.