

5 Strategies for Soliciting New Testimonials

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If you're a new business and don't have many (or any) testimonials yet—or if what you've found online and in your private correspondence isn't exactly "testimonial-worthy"—it's time to cultivate and curate affirmations from your customers. While these won't be as organic as the [found testimonials](#) we discussed in the previous section, you'll have a lot more control over which features of your business, product, or service get highlighted... which can be a big benefit.

For those of you who are dragging your feet on requesting testimonials from your customers and clients, we've heard all the excuses: Asking feels salesy, slimy, or like you're fishing for compliments. Your clients have *already* paid you for your services; asking for more feels uncomfortable...and so on.

But here are some truths:

- Asking for a testimonial is only awkward if you *make* it awkward, and you're probably taking the wrong approach if it feels that way.
- When done well, asking a client for a testimonial demonstrates to them that their opinion matters to you. This perceived confidence can go a long way toward cementing a lasting relationship.
- What's more, the psychology of testimonials is so strong that the customers who advocate for you often end up working with you longer... so what may *feel* like an uncomfortable ask can result in increased customer loyalty.
- There *are* methods of collecting new testimonials that don't require you to directly ask your client for anything. (We'll discuss two of them below). So you're not necessarily *asking* your clients to go above-and-beyond for you... though we bet you've got some clients who'd be willing to do so if you *did*.

Your relationships with your customers are personal and particular to your business, so you'll have a better sense than we do of which strategies will work best for you. But here are some techniques for soliciting new testimonials.

Technique #1: Send a direct email asking for business reviews

Okay, this is the most unstrategic strategy, but there's a reason it continues to work: We all appreciate a little forthright honesty. Tell your customers that you're building your testimonial base and would love a good word or two from them on business review sites or social media platforms. In your email, remind them that you value their opinion, that your business couldn't exist without them, and that every review that gets written helps prospects who were once in *their* position. This last reminder taps into your customers' goodwill.

Give your clients a range of options for where to respond, since every client will have a different favorite platform. [Yelp](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Google My Business](#), and even [LinkedIn](#) are valuable platforms for receiving reviews and connecting with your clients. Be sure that your email includes links to individual review sites so that your clients don't have to do the work of looking them up.

Pro tip: If your customers shout you out on Twitter, [embed](#) the tweet directly into your website. Embedding adds an additional air of authenticity, since the embedded tweet links directly back to the original.

The ideal customer type for this particular scenario is any customer *except* your most loyal and long-standing ones: *Those* customers should receive more personalized asks—and they're the ones you may be able to ask more of.

Of course, to whatever degree it's possible, you should always personalize the ask. If you're a smaller business with the ability to send individual emails and mention the clients' most recent interaction with your company, do so. Businesses who deal with a larger volume of customers won't necessarily be able to personalize every interaction in this way—though email campaign applications like [Zoho Campaigns](#) and [MailChimp](#) allow you to address subscribers by their first and last name with a single click.

Our recommendation is to include a few of your business's best testimonials in your email ask. This gives your clients examples of what a compelling review can look like, helping them shape their own.

Showing your clients example testimonials also has a psychological component ("social proof"): They'll feel more assured when they see others' testimonials, and will be more motivated to submit their own.

Technique #2: Repurpose your customer satisfaction survey

A [customer satisfaction survey](#) is something you should already have as part of your sales cycle. After every transaction, you should be asking for customer feedback—whether you're requesting

that feedback over email, through your website, or offline. (Response rates will ultimately indicate to you which method is most effective.)

If you use a customer satisfaction survey in your business, it's probably helped you improve your product, enhanced your customers' experience, and boosted customer retention rates. But what you may not realize is that the customer satisfaction survey is *also* an excellent opportunity to collect testimonials.

If this survey concept is new to you, there are plenty of applications out there to help get you started. [Zoho Survey](#), [SurveyGizmo](#), and [Survey Monkey](#) all allow your business to [curate surveys with questions specific to your product or service](#).

Here's the survey we'd send out to readers of this content if we wanted to gather testimonials about Zoho Academy:

Pro tip: Although many online survey products offer [ready-made templates](#), you should always customize the questions for your business and personalize the inquiry where you can.

You'll note that the questions in our survey are posed in such a way that the customer (or, in this case, the site visitor) *has no choice* but to give specifics if they're really going to answer the question. Remember, the more detailed your testimonials are, the more believable they'll be, and the more your prospect will be able to identify with them.

To this end, we've compiled [a comprehensive list of valuable survey questions](#) that will get you those detailed customer answers.

The ideal customer type for this scenario is any customer with whom you've recently had a business interaction. Asking a customer or client if they'd be willing to complete a survey after they've purchased a product, or after you've finished a job, is a common practice, so it's nothing to feel weird about. The only difference here is that you're rewriting some of your survey questions so that they can serve a dual purpose: gauging customer happiness *and* getting you testimonial content.

Indeed, customer satisfaction surveys are among the best ways to assemble content for your testimonials. Why's that? Because you're not *calling* what they're writing for you a "testimonial."

Your clients won't feel the same kind of anxiety filling out a survey (which will only be read by you) as they would writing a testimonial (which they think needs to be "polished" because it's going public). Once they dispense with that anxiety, they'll be more honest—and more like themselves—in

their answers. And that's precisely the kind of authenticity you want in your testimonials.

That said, your customer satisfaction survey should include something like a check-box at the bottom that lets your client tell you whether it's okay to use their responses on your website. Your clients' words should never go up on your website (or *anywhere*, for that matter) without their permission.

Technique #3: Ask your most loyal customers for a written (or recorded) testimonial

In this scenario, you'd reach out to your most long-standing and intimate customers to ask them if they'd be willing to write you a testimonial. Not a *business review* (as we described in Technique #1), but a *testimonial*.

Here's the difference: Your most long-standing customers will be better equipped—and have more reason—to actually sit down and write you a testimonial than your other (newer, less loyal) customers will.

In the first place, they've got a longer history with your company, which means they've had more time to experience the long-term benefits of your product or service—which makes for a stronger testimonial narrative.

In the second place, because they're in a more intimate relationship with you, they're less likely to feel anxious about the tone or language the testimonial "should" use: They'll be writing about your business like the old friend it is, and this sense of ease is bound to make the testimonial appear more authentic.

Finally, a testimonial is something that inherently *feels* like it takes more energy to write than a review does, so you may only want to ask your most loyal customers to undertake this (seemingly) more "labor-intensive" task. In other words, you don't want to ask too much of your new customers—that relationship may still be fragile—but you've probably transformed the lives of your longstanding clients radically enough that they'd be willing to go above and beyond for you in return.

That said, don't feel that you have to limit your most loyal clients to text-based testimonials! Video testimonials are the ultimate in authenticity. They provide your prospects with a clearer picture—not only of your business, but also of the kinds of clients you work with. And because prospects are more likely to resonate with the client telling her story directly to the camera than they are with the Gravatar beside those few lines of text, they're more likely to be moved to contact you thanks to this multimedia approach.

[ChowNow's testimonial page](#) offers a number of authentic and compelling video testimonials from

their most loyal clients. Here's one example:

If your business has a YouTube channel, the videos can reside there, and you can encourage your clients to add their own videos anytime. (We recommend occasionally going in and embedding the best of these on your website). A prospect wondering if your product or service is worth it will undoubtedly be pleased to find a playlist of loyal customer reviews—a veritable assemblage of encouraging information.

Pro tip: Hosting a video testimonial contest is a terrific way to get your customers enthusiastic about talking about you. Offer a prize to the customer who submits the best video. Production value doesn't have to be a limitation: Your clients' computer webcams are good enough to get you exciting and shareable testimonials.

Finally, keep in mind that one other significant advantage of video testimonials is that they can be repurposed: You can transcribe them and use text excerpts for your other marketing materials. In other words, every time you get a video testimonial from a client, you've essentially got a marketing tool that can do double-duty.

Technique #4: Solicit testimonials on your website

For those of you who still feel some discomfort around the direct ask, another method of testimonial collection that doesn't require you to request anything directly of your clients is to include a link on your website inviting clients, customers, and site visitors to submit feedback.

If you've already got a testimonials page on your site, visiting customers may wonder how they, *too*, can share a testimonial. Provide the link there. It could say something as simple as "Tell us how we're doing!" or "Let us know what you think!"

Some business sites are designed with the testimonials page listed in the main menu, and a sub-menu item titled "Submit a testimonial." Providing this menu item lends an air of credibility to the testimonials that are already on your website: Your visitors will assume that the existing testimonials were written by other clients who clicked on that same link.

Here's how [Breedlove Music](#) does it:

Of course, if you decide to offer this option on your site, you won't be able to pose the kind of [specific questions](#) that you can in a customer survey, which effectively inhibits you from helping your clients craft their responses. In other words, you'll have to hope that your visitors simply *know* what makes a good testimonial as they write one for your website. One solution to this is to include a clear link to your testimonials page to provide examples of stellar testimonials. (This is one of the reasons to keep your most exemplary testimonials at the top of your testimonials page.)

If you're using a CMS like WordPress for your website, there are plugins available to help you manage incoming testimonials: [IQ Testimonials](#), [BNE Testimonials](#), and [Testimonial Basics](#) are among them. If you're building your website on [Zoho Sites](#), or an online shop on [Zoho Store](#), you can use embed features to add a testimonial management script (or even a rating system) from a third-party provider. For [online shops](#) in particular, allowing customers to post directly to your site will likely mean you'll get some stellar words about your business' packaging and delivery after customers open your product... assuming, of course, you did both of those things spectacularly.

Most of those testimonial plugins will notify you when a new testimonial is submitted, allow you to approve it before it's published live, and control how your testimonials are displayed on your site. Some of them also allow photo and video uploads... and as you know by now, you'll absolutely want to enable those options.

Technique #5: Propose a testimonial swap with another business

The ideal business to approach for this sort of “ask” is one you’re already in a relationship of some kind with: They're probably in your industry (or in an industry tangential to yours); you probably share clients with them. And they likely have something to say about *you*, too—whether or not they’ve ever said it. The swap you initiate should ultimately be based on mutual respect within your industry and the gains both companies will enjoy by cross-promoting.

Maybe you're a hair colorist who has great things to say about the stylist across town who sends you clients, and to whom you often refer your clients. He makes your job infinitely easier, after all, since when clients arrive to your salon from his chair, their hair is already looking fantastic. Or maybe you run a college admissions counseling service, and some of your students use the test prep company down the street, whose strategies have helped their applications outshine others. Recently, that company has begun sending students to you to help polish their admissions essays.

If you're already cross-referring, there's no reason *not* to contact that business and suggest a testimonial swap. Remind them of the benefits you'll both receive by putting in a half-hour's work to write each other an exemplary testimonial. Maybe you'll even send them the link to our content on [the essential elements of a good testimonial](#) to be sure you're getting something of comparable quality in return... or maybe you'll simply write yours *first* and send it to the other business as a strong example of the genre.

Make sure the testimonial the other business writes for you links directly to their website from yours—and be sure the one you write for *them* links back to *your* site. This way, people who visit one site and read the testimonials will be more likely to visit the other.

This strategy isn't just great for your marketing: It also creates a strong, reciprocal community of businesses that help each other thrive.

Remember the end goal

Keep in mind that the end goal of all your testimonial efforts is to bring prospects into your sales funnel, and to keep your current customers there.

Which of the above strategies you choose will be a matter of your customers' and clients' preferences. You'll determine those over time. At some point you'll have enough data to be able to compare response rates on your customer satisfaction surveys, response rates on your email asks, and the number of customers willing to leave testimonials directly on your website.

The point is this: *You'll choose the method through which you get the most powerful and persuasive testimonials, not the method you're most comfortable with.* In other words, testimonial collection is about the customers' and clients' comfort, not yours. The more comfortable they feel with the process, the more they'll enjoy it—and the more they enjoy it, the more likely they are to spend those few extra minutes discussing their favorite feature of your product. And the more likely they are to do *that*? The more remarkable a testimonial you'll have: one that will drive sales—which means more customers, which means more testimonials...

You get the point. So while we recognize any lingering discomfort you might feel at the thought of asking for customer testimonials, remember that what's ultimately at stake for you in this process is a more thriving business. And hopefully, that'll be worth the few moments of unease you feel after you hit that "send" button.

In the next section, we provide a [list of more specific questions for you to pose in your customer surveys](#). These questions are bound to get you the most detailed, most provocative, and most useful content that you can then shape into testimonials for your website.