

Best Questions to Ask for Better Testimonials

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Not every customer will know [the elements of a good testimonial](#) (in fact, most won't), so it'll be up to you to help guide them. The easiest way to point them in the right direction is by asking the right questions. *What* you ask and *how* you ask it can make all the difference between a weak testimonial and a provocative, persuasive one.

It's probably clear to you by now that "yes/no" questions and questions that ask your client to rate aspects of your business on a scale from 1 to 5 aren't going to serve you when it comes to testimonials. While these questions may be valuable in other areas of your business, you're looking for detailed and inspiring customer stories... and for *those*, a rating won't help much. This is why it's crucial that you think critically and carefully about the questions you ask if you use an [online survey builder](#) to gather your testimonials—so you get *language* back from your customers, rather than just yeses, nos, and numbers.

A big part of eliciting strong testimonials is getting your customers to be specific. As good as they might make you feel, fluffy adjectives and praise without proof ("Anna does stellar work!"; "Nicola changed my life!") are meaningless as far as your prospect is concerned. Unfortunately, your clients are likely to write about you this way if you don't lead them gently in a different direction.

Ideally, you want your testimonials to touch on an apprehension that was overcome, a fear that proved unnecessary, a benefit that was received, or a goal that was reached thanks to your product or service. *The point is that there is a before-and-after story...* and that story doesn't need to be long. In most cases, it can be told in just a few sentences.

Before we jump into the questions, it's worth saying something about survey length. We'll give you eight powerful questions below (along with the reasons for asking them *in this way*)... but that hardly means you should ask your clients *all* of them.

Indeed, throwing an overwhelming list of questions at your customers will ensure a reduction in the quality of individual answers... or worse, a reduction in response rates overall. So choose the questions below that will work best for your business. The number of questions you ask your clients to answer should be based on two things: the strength of their relationship with your business, and the degree to which you are incentivizing.

1. What was your biggest hesitation about our product/service?

We've discussed [the importance of addressing objections](#) in your testimonials so that the testimonials can go on to disarm them. The answers you get to this question will give you insight into preconceived notions about your product, service, or industry... and these are crucial things to understand.

What's more, including your current customers' initial hesitations allows prospects who feel those same hesitations to connect with the testimonial writers. A prospect reading that testimonial might realize, "Oh, this woman had the exact same concerns I do... and yet this product seems to have worked brilliantly for her—so much so that she was willing to write about it!"

Prospects who resonate with your customers' initial doubts are more likely to trust the outcome of those customers' purchases... and when it's *your* product on the line, that's a great psychological boon.

2. What did you discover as a result of using our product/service?

This question gets at the heart of whether the hesitation in question #1 was warranted, and gives you reasons why the purchase was worth it. It's the "after" to the "before" of question #1.

Asking these two questions together allows you to assemble a story about your prospects' initial fears and concerns, and how they proved needless. It also gives you the language to compare prospects' hesitations with current clients' reality.

3. What problems were you hoping to solve when you purchased our product/hired our service?

This is another way of getting to a before-and-after narrative. Your customers' and clients' responses will reveal what their situation was before they started working with you, as well as the core needs that they were seeking to meet.

The information your clients offer you here will allow prospects who experience those problems or challenges to feel as though they are being spoken to directly. Learning the answers to this question will also help you with your marketing more broadly, as it will inform how you write about and address customer pain points—whether in your web copy, your advertising campaigns, your emails, or elsewhere.

4. Was there a feature or benefit of our product/service that ultimately made you choose us?

Here's where you get to find out what made your customers choose *you* over the competition—and maybe discover unique selling points about your product or service that you hadn't considered before. This question may lead your customer to talk about how you offer a better service, a more robust product, or a more comprehensive strategy than your competition. All of this is great raw material for your testimonials.

Alternate forms of this question are: What convinced you that our product or service was the best option to help you achieve your desired result? Had you tried other products or services before ours; and if so, why did you choose to go with us?

5. How have you specifically benefited from our product/service?

There are lots of ways to pose this type of question, depending on your business:

- What are the results you've experienced through our service?
- What, specifically, have you been able to achieve through our program?
- What are the three most significant improvements you've seen since you started working with our company?

No matter how you ask it, the whole idea is to get *concrete, tangible details*, since these are what sell.

That said, take some care around the wording of this question. You don't want to give your clients a complex by making them think they've had to make enormous strides or experience monumental achievements. Simple solutions to core problems are often what clients are looking for. Make sure they know that those "simple" answers are sufficient.

6. What specific feature(s) do you enjoy most about our product/service?

Again, this question asks for a detailed response. It keeps your client from using words like "fun" and "great," and it prompts them to explain at least one feature with great richness and detail.

You may find that your customers' answer to this question is quite different from their answer to question #5. The ways a client *benefits* from your offering may not be the reasons they *enjoy* it. Posing both questions allows your customer to consider your product or service from both a logical standpoint and an emotional one.

7. If your best friend was on the fence about trying our product/service, what would you tell them?

This is a more productive spin-off of the question "Would you recommend our product, and if so, why?" Psychologically, it's an important question to pose. When a customer recommends you, there's more at stake than your product or service. Their integrity is at stake as well. If they don't feel strongly about the product, they won't be likely to recommend it. But if they *do*? It'll be a powerful recommendation.

Asking your client to "speak" to their most intimate friend keeps them from morphing into formal-speak. A formal testimonial rarely sounds genuine. Asking your client to imagine their best friend, on the other hand, will get you conversational language. What's more, if you end up using this answer for a testimonial, your prospects will feel as though they're being spoken to by someone who knows them intimately.

Alternate forms of this question are: Who would you recommend this product/service to? What kind of business/trade/person would most benefit from working with us? Posing the question *this* way will get you an answer that addresses a specific market. This can be vital in helping prospects self-identify, resonate with the recommendation, and see clearly that what you offer is for *them*.

8. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

At this point, you've gotten your customer warmed up and thinking about the course of their relationship with you and your product, service, or business. Any one of your questions may have reminded them of some aspect of your business model, or your process, or some interaction with your employees, that they didn't write down in the moment because it didn't answer that question.

It's always good to leave an unstructured space for them to share that tidbit. You may be surprised at the parting comments you get here.

Getting the most out of your questions

Of course, depending on the nature of your business, there are a hundred other questions you might add to these. If you're a smaller business that does long-term work for clients, you might ask about their most memorable experiences with your company. If your business wants to showcase its excellent customer service, you might ask about specific interactions your customers have had with your team. You could ask if your client can think of ways your company has gone above and beyond their expectations.

In other words, your options are *nearly* limitless. But no matter which questions you decide to ask, be sure you pose them in such a way that your client has no choice but to give you specifics.

Posing the questions we listed above will ultimately get you responses that you can shape into a story: the client's concerns about your product, what about the product made them overcome those hesitations, and how your product has solved their problem or specifically benefited them in some

other tangible way—and all in colloquial speech that your prospects will identify with.

When (and whether) to edit your testimonials

We've discussed [how important authenticity is](#) to your business testimonials, but we've also emphasized how important it is to shape and polish a testimonial so it tells a concise but poignant before-and-after story. So how do you maintain the authenticity of your clients' stories when it's time to take their words and turn them into marketing tools for your business?

This brings us to the oft-asked question about editing (or *not* editing) your business reviews and testimonials.

Here's our take on it:

If your customer or client gives you an amazing shout-out on Twitter (or Facebook, or their own website, etc.) but they've misspelled something or their grammar isn't perfect, *it doesn't matter*. [Embed the tweet](#) or take the screenshot and use it. Don't copy-and-paste it onto your site so you can fix the misspelling.

A prospect will be much more compelled by a screenshot of "the real deal" than they will be by a testimonial that could very well have been written by you.

People's idiolects (their distinctive ways of speaking) only add to the originality and authenticity of the testimonial. So keep the good stuff in: natural language, turns of phrase, slang, and so on. These things will help your prospects connect with the testimonial writer. And connection with a current client is precisely what you want your prospects to feel.

On the other hand, if you're mining the web for "found" testimonials or combing through answers to the questions we've given you above, you're likely to have to do some moving around: extracting the best parts of an answer with some ellipses (...) in between, combining two answers to get the biggest punch, and so on. There's certainly an editorial aspect to what happens once you've gotten the answers to your customer survey.

Because you can't screen grab this stuff, you should edit out any spelling or major grammatical errors (*without* changing their natural language!). Otherwise the testimonial will simply look like you badly transcribed it onto your site. And because you're aiming for concision, you should cut out any excess language—which is to say, anything that doesn't further the point that the testimonial is making. (You might take a tip from our example testimonials when it comes to length: The 2-to-6-sentence range is a good range to stay within.)

The important thing is that you don't "spin" the response. Cut and combine where you need to, fix errors, add a linking word or two (like "and" or "but") so that the testimonial reads like a cohesive

statement from start to finish, rather than a collection of answers to separate questions. But *do not rephrase*. And *certainly* don't take words out of context to make your customers "say" something they never actually said.

You're smart, reader. We think you know the difference. Stay honest.

In the next section, we show you [some of the most exemplary testimonials we've seen](#) this year, so you can observe the elements of a great testimonial in action.