

Attract More Clients by Using Testimonials

The use of testimonials can be a touchy subject for counselors and other healing professionals. However, testimonials, when used effectively, can be one of the most powerful aspects of your marketing message. They can be the thing that encourages a hesitant potential client to take action and contact you.

Why Testimonials are Essential in Marketing a Practice

The goal of an effective marketing message is to convince your prospective clients that you can help them solve their problems and/or fulfill their desires. After you have shown that you understand what they need and want and indicate the benefits of your services, you must convince them that you are the best person to serve them. You need to eliminate any fears or concerns they have about hiring you. Testimonials are one of the best ways to do this.

Testimonials add credibility to your message and show prospective clients that if others have had positive results because of their work with you, then it's possible that they will have good results as well.

Content and Structure of Testimonials

The best testimonials begin with the specific "problems" clients were having at the time they made contact with you and then describe the concrete solutions/outcomes/benefits they received through using your product or service.

The more specific the testimonial is, the better. For example, instead of saying, "Susan helped me with the problems in my marriage," a well-written testimonial might state, "When we first saw Susan, my partner and I were on the verge of splitting up. I was really scared that we would not make it. Over the course of a few months, Susan helped us learn how to communicate better. We now understand and listen to each other a whole lot more, and, as a result, our constant bickering has stopped. In fact, I can't even remember the last time we had an argument! We are so much happier and are again envisioning a future together."

Types of Testimonials

Most often, testimonials appear in written format on your promotional materials. However, with the various technologies now available for the web, increasingly people are using audio and sometimes even video for their testimonials. This gives your website visitors the added option of listening to a voice and perhaps even seeing a live person, which can add even more credibility.

How To Get Testimonials

The best testimonials are "unsolicited." Unsolicited testimonials are those you get from clients and customers naturally without asking for them. For example, through the course of your work together perhaps a client spontaneously expresses how he or she is benefiting from seeing you.

When this happens, you should write down what the client said about how he or she benefited from your service and then ask permission to use these statements in your

promotional materials. When you use unsolicited testimonials, you can identify them as such because they will often have more credibility than solicited ones.

While unsolicited testimonials may have more credibility, solicited testimonials are still very common and effective. When gathering solicited testimonials, it is best to ask for them during your work with clients or immediately at the end of your work together. If you leave it too long, clients will tend to forget the details of their experiences with you.

You can also ask clients to write testimonials for you—although this method can be problematic in that it creates work for them and some clients may not be particularly skilled at writing. As a result, you risk getting a poor testimonial even though a client may have benefited greatly from your service.

Where to Place Testimonials

Testimonials can be used on all of your promotional materials (brochures, websites, brochures, flyers, etc). They can either be woven into the copy (text) and/or you can designate a particular section on your website or brochure to place them. I like to weave them into the copy in order to back up points I make about my services. Used in this way, testimonials add credibility and help break up the copy so that it is easier and more interesting to read.

Ethical Concerns About Using Testimonials

Some Counselors and healing professionals have ethical concerns about using client testimonials as a tool for marketing their practice. This is a valid concern, and in some cases, professional and regulating bodies don't permit members to utilize client testimonials in their marketing materials. Obviously, you will always want to follow the guidelines outlined by your professional association or regulating body.

Even if your professional body does allow for the use of client testimonials, as a healing professional, you still need to choose your clients carefully and make sure they don't feel pressured or obligated to provide a testimonial for you.

Always get permission before using client testimonials. While using full names of the client is always best for credibility purposes, if your clients are uncomfortable with you using their full names, you could use their initials or allow them to remain anonymous. There are also situations where it might be best not to use the names or initials of clients at all. For example, most counselors and therapists avoid using names or initials because of the sensitive nature of their work with their clients.

If you are not comfortable using client testimonials or are restricted from doing so by your professional association or regulating body, you might want to use testimonials from employers, colleagues and referral sources.

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compelling promotional materials, and write attention-grabbing website copy designed to get results.

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