

SELLING POINTS

Creating persuasive customer testimonials

Good companies know how to utilize testimonials to build customer trust. Testimonials help satisfy the “proof” factor in selling, reassuring potential customers that you can in fact deliver the goods. No matter how effective your advertising, there’s nothing you can say that’s as credible and convincing as what your customers say.

The best testimonials are:

- **Believable.** Good testimonials talk about real benefits experienced by real people.
- **To the point.** Each one should highlight only one main benefit.
- **Natural.** Keep the testimonials as unedited as possible. Clean up the spelling, but for the most part keep things just as your customer has written (or spoken) them.
- **Detailed.** The best testimonials aren’t vague. They include details, specifics, processed data, juicy numbers, facts, etc.
- **Authentic.** Include the customer’s name and where they live. The more information the better: “K. Smith, Round Rock, TX” is better than “K.S. from TX” But “Karen Smith (Owner, Styles Dress Shop), Round Rock, TX” is best of all.

No bull: effective business stories can help close sales

by **Connie Brubaker**

I love a good story, so at 5:30 PM on most weekdays, you’ll find me listening to radio legend Paul Harvey along with 22 million other listeners from around the world.



Connie's Comments

His simple, folksy touch, even at age 88, is virtually unequalled.

In my training and speaking, I often tell stories, often based on personal experience, to help impart a lesson to my audience. One of the most consistently popular has been the tale of how I invented the KFC chicken strips. I’ve often later encountered folks in the audience who laugh and say, “You’re the Chicken Lady!”

Even the words, “Let me tell you a story” makes both sides of your brain fully alert and receptive. That’s why they’re such a wonderful way to persuade, educate and connect with your audience.

Stories are inherently more memorable than numbers, names or dates. Surprisingly, they are also usually more persuasive. Listeners lower their resistance when they hear about a problem followed by a solution or a mystery

For three decades, Harvey has shared little known facts about famous people or historic events, always with a little twist at the end — what he calls “the rest of the story.”



solved with a twist. Often, they unconsciously may visualize themselves in the situation described, which helps them see your point or understand your way of thinking.

Success stories can be particularly powerful tools to make or reinforce a point during a sales call. To create an effective story, tell the “how” and “why” behind a particular business accomplishment — helping a previous client increase their sales by X%, for instance. Cite “before and after” information. What was the secret to your success? Stories that reveal secrets captivate.

All of us all have stories to tell, both personal and professional. Find those that embody your philosophy, passion and commitment — and make an emotional connection with your listeners.

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Use real-life business stories to build trust and win clients

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Stories are great vehicles for subtly and non-confrontationally overcoming objections. I often encounter hesitancy to use my training services because of the 8 follow-up sessions — clients are unsure about making that kind of time commitment. I've cited facts and figures showing the benefit to retention and culture-changing behavior, but usually people are still reticent.

So I tell them about a client who had sent their sales people to numerous day-long sales clinics. Despite a

hefty cost to the company, they simply didn't see any lasting benefits. Behaviors didn't change; sales didn't improve.

They decided to try the Integrity Selling approach. That was 5 years ago. Since then, they have landed several million-dollar contracts thanks to the needs-focused sales approach learned and reinforced during the training and its 8 follow-ups. Unlike previous seminars, they saw a noticeable — and obviously beneficial — change in attitude. They still send every new hire through the training to preserve that cultural change.

When I tell that story — and especially when I mention “million-dollar contracts,” the barriers begin to erode. My listeners begin seeing the potential for their companies, and they're sud-

denly more receptive.

Creating powerful business stories takes focus and creativity. Good stories don't scream, “We are great! Buy our services now!” Rather, they leave the reader with positive feelings and a desire to know more. They help plant the seeds of a relationship.

Keep your stories short and *always* true. Don't overwhelm with detail, but make them detailed enough to reflect their authenticity. Practice using them internally as well as externally.

Use stories in your brochures, sales letters and website, as well as in face-to-face sales presentations. More than anything else, use them to help differentiate you from your competition. Keep collecting them, polishing them and practicing them — and keep closing deals as a result.

WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR SALES TO WOMEN? Sign up for one of Connie's informative, insightful and fun workshops on *Women's Role in the New World Market*. Choose from:

- *The Difference Between Men & Women and How They Buy*
- *Marketing to Women*
- *Selling to Women*

Connie Brubaker is a certified Integrity Systems® business consultant and professional speaker who focuses on sales, customer service and leadership.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“You have to understand, my dears, that the shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story.”

— Anthony de Mello, *One Minute Wisdom*