



Sightings

A publication of



The Longview Group, LLC

October 2008 Vol. 6, No. 9

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The hidden power of client testimony

by Dennis Schrag

“In my opinion, testimonials are totally underused in our industry. This is a tremendous opportunity for creating a competitive advantage and differentiation.”

– Thomas Boogher, executive vice president of PSI
Oakbrook Terrace, IL

I was getting my car fixed the other day. After kicking tires on the new cars for 10 minutes (and being badgered by three different sales people) I went inside the service waiting room. There on the bulletin board were at least 25 hand written notes from happy customers:

“They got my car fixed on time – just like they promised.”

“They called me frequently about the status of my car.”

“The service manager talked in a language I could understand... and I am 86 years old.”

The Society for Marketing Professional Services Foundation has just released eight new white papers. (Free for just a short time at: <http://smps.org>. Select “foundation,” then select “research”.) While all eight studies are compelling, I want to focus on one researched and written by Ron Garikes and Karen Roch. It’s good stuff.

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INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

The paper provides a short history of testimony. If you thought that Bob Dole's Viagra commercial a few years ago was special, think again. R.V. Pierce published *The People's Common Sense Medical Advisor* in 1875. The book was published and republished for 40 years. It contained hundreds of testimonials promoting Mr. Pierce's remedies. Today we have Sally Field doing the same thing.

The paper goes into some depth on what persuasive techniques testimony uses:

Social Proof

We look to others whom we respect to help us make decisions.

Similarity

People trust people who are like them.

Conforming to Groups

Your decisions are highly influenced by your peers.

Listening

People listen unquestionably to authoritative figures. Read this section in the white paper; for those unfamiliar with persuasion, this is a great start.

The authors conducted primary research. They visited 500 architectural, consulting engineering and construction services web sites. The results were scary: Only 17 percent of the web sites included client testimony. (Construction companies were by far the largest users with a 32 percent average)

The researchers also polled the same audience, to find out how they use testimony.

58% use testimony in proposals

50% use in qualifications

42% use it in project interviews



How do firms get testimony?

(Now this is tough – you have to ask for it.)

50% ask clients verbally

50% use a written survey

A few firms are now using video clips from clients embedded in their web site. The clips are short and powerful... hear it in their own words. (Check out the web site for BSB Designs, which has an office in Des Moines, www.bsbdesign.com, for a great example of using streaming video on your web site.)

The white paper wraps up with three mini case studies that provide testimony on the use of testimony.

The use of testimony is powerful. It helps client garner trust in their professional service provider. The technique has been around a long time; we have 50 years of business research that says it works!

So why do firms not use it? How does your firm stack up? How do you use comments from happy clients?

WHAT IS THE LONGVIEW GROUP, LLC?

Seeking more efficiency and effectiveness in your professional service business? The Longview Group, LLC provides you INSIGHTS through training, on-the-job coaching, expert counsel, and extra-hands services.



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