CHAPTER 8

TESTIMONIALS: THE WORDS OF SUCCESS

Testimonials are an extremely important part of the success of your business and your relationship-building journey in real estate. They will elevate your reputation, your visibility, your credibility, and your trustworthiness. Not using testimonials in their marketing is a big mistake most real estate agents make, even though they are not that hard to obtain.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A TESTIMONIAL?

Testimonials are written or recorded statements that support your credibility and level of expertise. They also strengthen your reputa-
tion by expressing the trust that other people have in you and your business. They can help you attract deeper interest from prospective clients and existing clients that will make your business increasingly more successful.

**WHY ARE TESTIMONIALS SO IMPORTANT?**

When it comes to all businesses, large or small, the success of the business depends heavily on word of mouth. Testimonials are a formal form of expression that supports that concept. They are a powerful tool in strengthening your brand and the credibility of you and your business. As I have stated repeatedly, people do business with who they know, like, and trust … and find to be credible. You will be surprised at how many valuable testimonials you will be able to collect just by asking your clients directly for them.

**WHAT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO OBTAIN TESTIMONIALS?**

Anytime you have a positive interaction with a buyer or a seller in a real estate transaction, that is a perfect opportunity to ask for a testimonial. You can ask for these testimonials right at your initial client meeting or anytime during your interactions with them. At the listing presentation, ask for a testimonial by saying, “If and when I do a good job for you, I hope that you will tell your friends and family members the same, so I am going to make sure that I do a good job for you.”

As we are going through the process of the transaction, I’ll talk about obtaining a testimonial from them. “I really want to continue
doing a good job for you. Selling you a home is the highest priority for me so that you will recommend me to your friends and family.”

Approximately 90 percent of the testimonials that I receive are either done at the closing or just after the closing has occurred. I bring a camera with me to get a picture of that client out in front of their home with a sold sign. Sometimes, I take a picture at the closing table that includes their family as well. If I am able to do so, I will also get in the picture, so people can connect me to that success story.

At the end of one client’s closing when everything was done and everyone was shaking hands, and the check was exchanged, we went outside the conference room and found a nice background. My client, his wife, and their three-month-old baby held a “Sold” sign up, and we took a picture. It was a very happy time for them with a newborn baby and their first home, and that joy showed in the photo.

I let them know that I wanted to use their photo in my marketing and promotions for my company, if that was acceptable to them. They agreed, and I told them I would send them a copy of the photo as well. I then asked if they could give me a couple of kind words to use in a testimonial and provided them with some bullet points that reminded them of our transaction together. With that information, they typed out a nice testimonial for me and gave me their permission to use it in future marketing promotions.

Once I received that testimonial, I used social media to share it. Twenty years ago when the Internet wasn’t available, testimonials were all word of mouth. Now, whether it is buying a pair of shoes, buying a new car, or going to a restaurant, everyone is online searching for endorsements. They want to see the reviews that are posted there. It is just as imperative to have positive reviews in the real estate business. In this situation, I posted their photo on Facebook and asked them if it would be okay if I tagged them, so the photo could go out to all
of their friends. It also goes out to my network, so all of their friends and my friends would see it and know they had bought a home and had a positive experience with me. When I uploaded the photo, I added a post saying, “Congratulations to Mark and Mary Jones for purchasing this home at 123 Main Street. It’s their first home, and I know Mary will love cooking for Mark in their new custom gourmet kitchen.” Once I posted that, I asked Mark and Mary to comment on it. By doing so, it started the conversation with their friends and family members online.

The best part is that I was attached to that conversation, so I was able to view all of those comments. People posted, “You’re so lucky, we can’t sell our home, we’ve been on the market six months,” or “We’re next, and we want to find a nice home as well.” I could then pick up on those comments and find leads in them. The idea is that it allowed me to penetrate their personal relationships just by putting a testimonial out there. The volume of testimonials that I am able to post on social media indicates the frequency with which I sell homes.

In 2003, I did a lot of television marketing of my listings. I would buy ten to fifteen minutes of air time on a local cable station and post all of my homes on there. I would show a picture of one house and the price and then go to the next house and the next one. My phone number would be shown for the entire time, and I would get calls from perspective buyers looking to see those properties.

Three years later, the cable station that I used no longer provided that service, so I decided to buy a 30-minute infomercial. In the infomercial, I talked about how I did business with our clients. I went over my listing presentation and talked about my marketing strategies and services. But I also wanted to utilize video testimonials. I wanted the audience to relate to my clients who were giving me the testimonials. If I were pursuing the senior market, I would
have one of my older clients give a great testimonial about how I was able to help them downsize their home. If it were a family that owned a home they were outgrowing and wanted to move up to a larger home, then I would have a client I had helped with a trade-up situation tell their personal experience.

I wanted to get about 15 or 20 testimonials like this for my infomercial. So I decided to have a client party in a very upscale restaurant. I called up my clients and invited them, saying, “I’m having a client appreciation event from 5 to 7 p.m. on Thursday night. I’d love for you to come down, have a glass of wine, and eat some good food. I’d also like you to help me in updating my marketing efforts.” I then explained that I would have a videographer there to tape the event and that he would be available to take them off to the side and get a personal video testimonial from them. All I asked is that they shared some of their best experiences working with me and my team.

I was surprised that all 20 of the people I invited to the event that night agreed to do the video testimonial. I know some people are shy and not all that comfortable on camera, especially if it was going to air on television. They each gave great testimonials that I was able to use in various different media outlets, and I also created a 30-minute video for my website.

That 30-minute video says a lot about my marketing and what I do to get homes sold fast at top dollar with the least amount of stress. But let’s face it; if I were just saying that, there would be a fair amount of skepticism out there. It would have a very “salesy” feel if I just talked about how great I was and what my company can do for our clients. But with video testimonials from real clients, it gives my message credibility. It says, “This is the real deal, because these are real life people.” I feel real estate agents make a big mistake if they don’t use testimonials in their business.
You can also use those video testimonials on your website, on your Facebook page, and other social media platforms. You can use them in what we call a series of email drip campaigns. For instance, I had recorded ten seller video testimonials and ten buyer video testimonials. I put them in a sequence in a drip campaign for any buyer prospect that came to my website. I would send them emails over a ten-week period. Each week, for ten weeks, they would get a different testimonial. I would give them some information and then say, “Hey! Take a look at what the Bahndaris had to say about our marketing, or take a look at what the Delgados had to say about our services.” When they would click on that link, the video testimonial would pop up and play right over their computer or smartphone.

Postcards are probably one of the best print media formats that you can use to drum up real estate business, especially new listings. Instead of sending out a regular “Just Listed” or “Just Sold” postcard, I also incorporate a testimonial. I want it to be as specific as possible. For instance, there is a case study that I did where I was sending out a lot of information to a certain neighborhood and only getting one or two listings from that neighborhood per year. When I switched my marketing efforts and added testimonials to the marketing that I sent out, I saw my business more than quadruple in the number of sales within one year. The testimonials were from people whom I had done business with in that specific neighborhood.

The reason the marketing became more credible when I added a testimonial done by one of their neighbors was that it tied me to that community. People thought, “If Willie sold that house for the Smiths in only 17 days, Willie could probably sell ours as well.” I have done a lot more sales in that neighborhood by using testimonials.
If you do a good job for your clients and are sincere about what you do, your clients can become your biggest raving fans. As a result, they can return thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars of increased revenue to your business.

Testimonials can make or break your business. The modern-day consumer goes online to look for information about you and your company. Therefore, it is vital to make sure you are giving exceptional service to people, because you cannot delete a lot of the written reviews that are done online. You have no control of them.

Yelp, Zillow, and Trulia are just a few websites where once the consumer posts something on their site about your company, you have no ability to remove that post. I had a situation a few years back where a seller was unhappy because one of my agents included their washer and dryer in the sale of their home. I was unaware of it, but my agent did know and never did anything about it.

This client was irate but instead of calling me, he tried to reach out to that agent numerous times and the agent said, “I’m sorry, the washer and dryer were included in the contract, and there’s nothing I can do about it. Call your attorney.”
Unfortunately, this upset individual went online and posted on 20 different consumer real estate websites on how awful his experience was with our company and how the company misrepresented the seller by including in the sales transaction personal items that belonged to him.

Given this information, I reached out to him to ask him as to why he was posting these negative comments and added that the agent was no longer at my company. He explained what had happened, and when I investigated the file, he was correct that the washer and dryer had been erroneously included in the sale of the home. I felt we owed that client a credit or reimbursement of that washer and dryer, and I took care of that for him.

The client appreciated the fact that I had gone above and beyond to take care of this issue for him. In return, he went back to all the different websites where he had posted negative reviews, took the reviews off, and replaced them with positive comments.

In every closing and every interaction that you have with a client, you should obtain a testimonial from that client. All you have to do is ask, and most clients will be more than happy to give you good testimonials as long as you did a good job for them and they felt they received excellent service. Getting testimonials is the most inexpensive marketing technique that you can use to enhance and grow your business multiple times over. Because once again, people want to do business with who they know, like, and trust, and testimonials are by far one of the best ways for them to articulate that to the average consumer who does not know you.