

Testimonials and Letters to the Editor

By Marcia Yudkin

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Creative Ways <http://www.yudkin.com/marketing.htm>

Of all the marvelous opportunities offered by the Internet to get publicity without paying for it, two of the least-used methods are writing testimonials for companies, books and Web sites and penning letters to the editor.

Every time you're happy with a service performed for you or a product you've purchased, instead of simply saying "Thank you" or keeping your contentment to yourself, consider writing a blurb expressing why you were satisfied, pleased or ecstatic and emailing it to the company responsible. End your message of praise, "And feel free to quote me on this," and very often the recipient will do exactly that. So long as you follow two additional guidelines, when your testimonial gets added to a well-trafficked Web site, you can count on it generating click-throughs to your site.

First, within the body of your praise, mention what you do or what your company is up to. For example, "Your whoziwhatsit performed like a dream when we used it during our new all-female production of 'Hamlet'" or "For anyone like us who helps recruit college presidents and other educational leaders, your service couldn't be more valuable." Second, include your site's URL when you sign off. Use the full "http://www" format, and anyone becoming curious about you from your comments can easily hop over and visit you, even if the site using your words didn't install a formal hyperlink.

The same tips apply when you read a book that you liked in your professional field of interest. Even if you bought it at a real-world bookstore, you can submit comments about the book at amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com and elsewhere. In your review, find occasion to state how the book was valuable to you in your line of work, namely such and such. For example, "I read this book when our company, WashWorks, was launching our portable washing machine. It warned us

away from so many pitfalls of new product introduction that TravelWasher became an immediate success. Thank you!" Add a few more points that you appreciated in the book so this doesn't sound like bald self-promotion.

When you read an article about or for your industry that hits home, do the same. Write a letter to the editor agreeing or disagreeing with the piece or adding some perspective the writer didn't mention. Such letters must be timely - submitted within a week, usually, of the original distribution of the article. They must also be concise - 100-200 words is ideal. As previously explained for testimonials, they should also contain a substantive and interesting reference to what you do.

Some publications select just a few letters for their print edition and publish more at their Web site, while others receive so little feedback that they use just about everything. When you're responding to an article in a high-circulation print magazine or a Web site read by many movers and shakers in your industry, your letter gets distribution to recipients you might not have had access to otherwise.

Marcia Yudkin marcia@yudkin.com is the author of the classic guide to comprehensive PR, "6 Steps to Free Publicity," now for sale in an updated edition at Amazon.com and in bookstores everywhere. She also spills the secrets on advanced tactics for today's publicity seekers in "Powerful, Painless Online Publicity," available from www.yudkin.com/powerpr.htm .

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