



TOP 10

MARKETING MATTERS BOOST YOUR FIRM'S BRAND

DOWNLOAD PDF

« Previous

Next »

The Top 10 Rules for Client Endorsements

"Ross is the smartest, most creative marketer I know." — Bill Gates



ROSS FISHMAN, JD
CEO, Fishman Marketing

Boy wouldn't it be great to have that testimonial? From someone as well-known and well-regarded as Bill Gates? You may not know me, but I'll bet you already suspect that I might be pretty good. You know and respect Bill Gates and by virtue of his willingness to publicly put his name behind me, I'm immediately imbued with some of his credibility. *That* is the power of testimonials. (Of course, I completely made up that testimonial; Bill Gates has no idea who I am, but you see the point.)

Testimonials, recommendations and endorsements* from credible sources are extremely persuasive. As such they should be a vital part of your marketing arsenal.

Consider two marketing approaches. You can: A) Tell me that you're awesome. B) Have a giddy client or credible third party say the exact same thing.

The first one is bragging, it's icky and it lacks credibility.

The second one is persuasive, professional and trustworthy. Fundamentally, in marketing, don't tell me you *can* do something; show me that you've *done* it — and ideally have a happy client or trustworthy professional to prove it.

1. Name the source. If you don't tell me exactly who said that wonderful thing about you, I doubt it's true. *Specificity creates credibility.* Here's a quick test — if you saw this on a law firm website, which of the following signatures is more convincing?

"Dave is a terrific lawyer!"* [signed]:

- "Client"
- Tiffany, Fortune 500 company
- Tiffany R. Jones, Associate General Counsel, General Electric

It's the last one, because it identifies the specific person, title and company. It makes me feel like I could contact this person to double check if I wanted to. And the better-known the recommender, bigger the title, and more prestigious the company, the better the endorsement.

2. Tell them what you want it to say. You might want it to focus on a particular feature, style or brand attribute you want to convey. Detailed guidance makes a testimonial easier to write. For example, "Can you talk about how efficiently we handled your case?"

Most satisfied clients are happy to do this. They're most likely to simply respond, "Sure, just write something for me to sign." That's ideal; this way you can get precisely what you need.

Testimonials, recommendations and endorsements from credible sources are extremely persuasive. As such they should be a vital part of your marketing arsenal.

3. Use simple English. Make it sound like something people might actually say. Take out the marketing fluff and puffery. Don't make me suspect that it was written and thrice-edited by a large, dull marketing committee.

4. Shorter is better. Many well-intentioned endorsements you receive will be entire paragraphs, with unnecessary specificity. Edit it into a single tight sentence or two if possible. Think in terms of active blurbs: "Brett understood our industry better than any lawyer we've ever worked with!" Just because a client wrote it doesn't mean you must use the whole thing, verbatim. But be sure your edit remains true to the original. In my experience, most testimonials will arrive with a friendly "feel free to edit it" comment from the author anyway.

5. If they say it, get it in writing. Often, you'll receive a gracious comment from someone, like "You really did a terrific job negotiating the deal!" If you know that they sincerely mean it, you can respond "Thanks, that's so nice of you to say. Would you do me a favor? Could I quote you? I'm supposed to collect some quotes for the firm's marketing. Would it be OK if we put that on the website?" They're usually happy to let you turn their comments into quotes.

6. Get explicit permission. Always get the recommender's approval to use the quote. A client might have said something nice to you face-to-face or in a private email but have a strict corporate policy against providing public endorsements.

Don't anger good clients by using their name without explicit permission. First, it's simple courtesy.

Second, lawyers have a high duty of confidentiality regarding their client representations ([Rule 1.6](#)), including revealing client names and examples. Check your state's ethics rules, too.

7. Spread it across the internet. Don't forget to add it to your website biography and LinkedIn profile. (You can ask for a recommendation on LinkedIn with a simple click, and you want prospects who are looking you up to see them.)

Once you have a few positive endorsements, start asking satisfied clients to post them to the review sites that Google ranks highly, such as Yelp, Merchant Circle, Avvo or Martindale.com. If these sites are going to show up anyway when someone searches for your name, they might as well show up with a comment from someone saying you're fabulous.

8. Reciprocate. There's no obligation to immediately write something nice about the client, but it would certainly be nice to return the favor. They have careers, too, and would likely benefit by having their boss and professional connections see a prominent lawyer recommending them. Simply go to their LinkedIn profile and click "Write a Recommendation." You may even tell them that you're going to and ask them what they'd like it to say. Just be sure you mean it.

9. Don't write your own. It can be tempting to short-cut the process and write your own awesome endorsements or have your family and employees secretly do so. Don't do it. Both the Federal Trade Commission and bar associations frown upon this deceptive conduct, called "[astroturfing](#)."

10. How to request a testimonial. Just ask. It's a simple and common request given the omnipresence of social media. But many professionals won't ask, because it feels demeaning. So, here's what you do — blame marketing.

Try this: "I'm sorry to ask, but marketing has been asking us to get client testimonials. Can you do me a favor? Can you write me something short about how practical our approach was in this deal? I'd really appreciate it."

It's that simple. Blame someone else if asking makes you uncomfortable. If they were happy with your work, they'll be happy to dash off a quick sentence or two for you. Really, it's no big deal.

Once you get in the habit, you'll find that seeking endorsements is pretty easy. And please get in the habit of giving endorsements, too. It's nice, and it helps build stronger relationships. ■

**Note that client testimonials, endorsements and reviews had been prohibited in some fashion by [Rule 7.1](#) of the [American Bar Association Model Rules of Professional Conduct](#) in roughly half the states as a potentially "false or misleading communication." The ABA's recent update has helped many states loosen up their rules, permitting truthful testimonials. Check your state's rules.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ross Fishman, JD, specializes in branding, websites and marketing training for law firms. A former litigator, marketing director and marketing partner, he has helped hundreds of firms dominate their markets. Fishman was the first inductee into the Legal Marketing Association's Hall of Fame. He's written two books on branding and associate marketing, both available on Amazon.

[Email](#)
847-432-3546
[LinkedIn](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Blog](#)

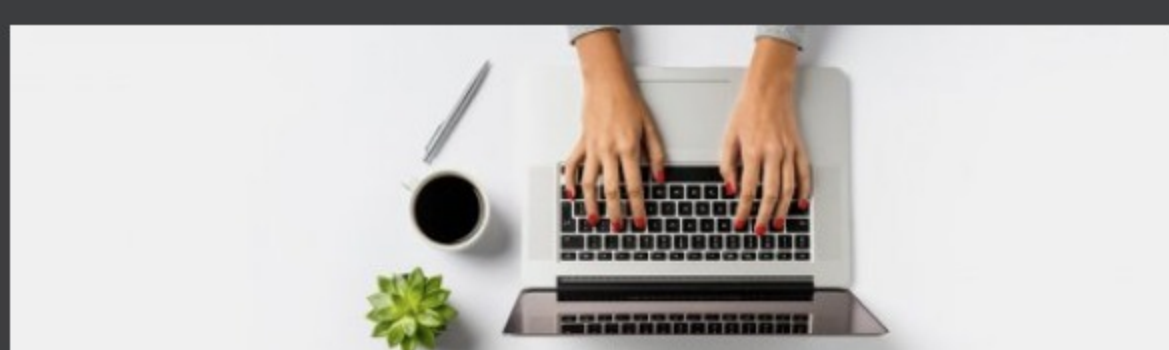
« Previous Article

Next Article »

Read More



[How to Craft a Meaningful Parental and Caregiver Leave Policy](#)



[The Legal Industry Enters the Gig Economy Age](#)