
Social proof.

How to help people feel good about choosing you, and show them they can trust you, without looking arrogant.

Social proof.

You have probably heard of, or experienced, buyer's remorse. It is that uneasy feeling that you just bought the wrong thing, or could have found something better.

When you are asking other people to part with their hard-earned money, it's important that you provide a way for them to get over their own buyer's remorse. Prospects can get the same feeling after giving you their contact information, especially if you've asked for more than their junk email address.

So it's important to reinforce their decision and make them feel good about trusting you, by providing proof that you truly are the trusted expert. Social proof that you're the trusted expert comes in two different forms: implied social proof and stated social proof.

Implied social proof.

When it comes to social proof of your expertise, and letting people know they can trust you, you've got to be able to enter the conversation people are having in their head. But you've got to enter it like the friend who is a good listener, who agrees with you and nudges you, but doesn't come right out and say, "Well, duh, you should obviously just do X, Y and Z."

Use the pains and problems your customers have to do this. For example, let's say you're selling weight-loss aids. What exact thoughts will your customers be thinking as they're shopping for a solution?

They might think:

- I'm so sick of being overweight.
- No one is as big as I am.
- But I don't want to do one more program that doesn't work for me.
- I wish someone understood what this is like.
- I feel so alone.

How can you design your website around their concerns? Here are some ideas:

- Use their concerns to help name your website's menu items (for example, "Am I ready?").

- Literally enter the conversation in their head by talking to them with a video.
- Show them they're not alone by giving them access to a community of people just like them, and show how many people are in that community.
- Associate yourself or your business with a well-known local or national figure.
- Resolve their concerns with images, feelings, opportunities and reassurances, but without the words that tell them what to do or how to feel (for example, "you could win a trip", "you can create circles of friends", "286,073 members").

Stated social proof.

This kind of social proof is easier to understand and acquire. That also makes it easier to use on your website. But you can also overdo it and make yourself look like the arrogant expert. So be sure to provide enough to position yourself as the trusted expert, without going overboard.

And remember to connect with the emotions your clients need to feel. If you connect with them emotionally, that will often be proof enough. Here are a few tips about how to collect or enhance your information.

Testimonials

Not everyone you wish would submit a testimonial does. People are just too busy. So if you have a friend or client you're sure would be willing to give you a testimonial, why not write it for them? This is not to suggest you just make something up. That wouldn't be right. Rather, send them an email that says:

"Dear Mr Client, I'm working on improving my website and would like to include some client testimonials. I know you are very busy, so I've taken the liberty of writing a short testimonial that I hope represents your point of view. If it does, would you please reply to this email and simply include the word 'Yes' with your email signature? I'd sure appreciate it. If it's not quite what you'd say, please feel free to make any changes you like and send it back at your earliest convenience."

If you send out a number of these, you're likely to get at least a few back that you can use on your website. If you are a business-to-business person, you might also offer to exchange testimonials.

Awards

If you've received an award from a significant organisation or publication, ask them if you can include their logo on your website (for example, a magazine or newspaper masthead, or an industry association's logo). Like creating an icon that looks like a book to represent the value of an e-book, an

organisation's logo gives more credibility to the award you've been given.

Ratings and rankings

Like an award, try to get permission to use any logos or icons from the publication or organisation doing the rating or ranking. If the results are online, you can also link to the ranking list, especially if it provides more third-party information about why they think your business is so terrific.

Credentials

If you have credentials that make you an expert, by all means put them on display. Many professions and trades have letters and logos you can put after your name.

But the key here is to make sure the general public (or your target audience) knows what your credentials mean. Putting 100 groups of letters after your name won't do any good if the reader has no clue what the certifications are for. So if your prospects won't understand your credentials, either translate them into something they will understand, or stick with something simpler, like client testimonials.

Publications by you

This doesn't mean the free guides you give away to attract leads. What you want to reference are items you've had published in magazines, on other websites, in the newspaper, by book publishers and so forth. The social proof is in the fact that someone besides you recognises the value in what you have to say enough to publish and promote it themselves. This can also include a list of publications that have referenced your work.

Press about you

If you've had articles written about you, or reviews of your services or publications, you can include all or part of them. If you've never appeared in the media but would like to, contact your local paper or news site and find out who covers the type of story you'd like to tell, or the type of event you're planning. Offer them an interview if they'd like to write an article about you.

Media appearances

If you've appeared on TV, radio or a podcast, cite your appearances if it adds to your expert status, and if it went well. If you have access to audio or video clips, you can get permission to use those as well. Because copyright laws protect the ownership of media appearances, be sure not to use them without specific written permission from the producer of the show.

Client list

This can be a valuable tool in positioning yourself as the trusted expert, depending on who your clients are and how long your list is. If you have clients with recognisable logos, by all means try to get permission to show their logos on your website.

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Importance.**
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