

Your Patient's Stories Can Get You More Patients!

*How to get and use patient testimonials to attract new patients into your office.
Turn your testimonials into a powerful and convincing marketing tool.*

One of the biggest barriers in marketing anything is the prospect's natural inclination to disbelieve the seller. This is a defense mechanism that goes up the instant they see any marketing message, including yours.

Why is this?

Two reasons. One is that your message is competing with nearly 7,000 other marketing messages (8,000 if you live in a metropolitan area) PER DAY! That's just too many. People are forced to tune most of them out.

The second reason the prospect's defenses go up is because they've been ripped off before. And they're sure it will happen again! Of course you're not going to rip off your prospects. *But how do they know that?*

Prospects are nervous. They are anxious. They don't believe your claims. Even with proof, people are often not convinced. They need something else. They need someone who is just like them to help them overcome their aversion to being sold.

It's your responsibility to provide that person (or his/her words) who will soothe your prospects anxieties and concerns. If you don't, and another dentist does, then you could lose a new patient.

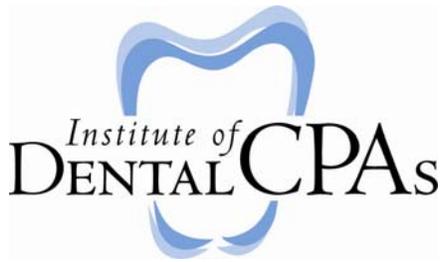
One way to do this by having someone that's just like them, who once had the same problems they now have say to them, "Hey, it's OK. This guy is good. He's honest and he'll help you."

Patient testimonials are the remedy. But most testimonials I've seen are ineffective and fail to soothe anyone's anxieties. In fact, just like any other marketing message, they should sell your services. If they don't sell then what good are they?

But how do you get them? How do you use them? And what must they say to be effective?

*By: William Howard Horrocks
DentalTown Magazine
New Patients Inc.*

<http://www.newpatientsinc.com/articles08.htm>



What A Good Testimonial Should Say...

Let's start with the essential dos and don'ts for an effective patient testimonial and then how to get them and use them.

1. Don't Have it Contain Claims or Assertions Only, Even If They Are Glowing

Like: "Jones Gentle Dental Office was great!" Or "I highly recommend Dr Jones", Or "Thank you for doing such great work!"

What's the matter with these? Aren't they positive? Yes, but they are not convincing. They're just someone else's claims or assertions. Remember claims or assertions by themselves, sell nothing.

2. Do Illustrate and Prove Any Claims or Assertions

Like this: "My experience at Jones Gentle Office was better than any other office I've ever been to. The staff was friendly and genuinely cared about me. This was apparent from the warm reception I got and the excellent dental care. And I have a beautiful smile once again."

Doing it this way will help to remove your message from the thousands of others that are mere assertions.

3. Don't Have It Written by a Nameless Person or Someone Who Signs With Initials Only

This makes it look and sound fake, even if it isn't. The reader needs to feel identification with the writer.

With no name, or merely initials, you can't bring about this identification.

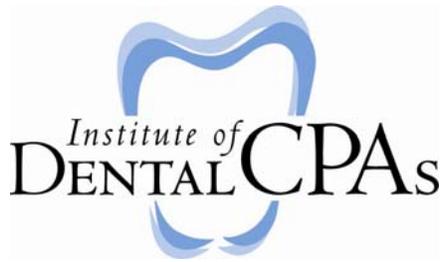
4. Do Have Your Testimonials Signed Along With Any Occupations or Titles Noted

Testimonials should be signed with full names and titles or occupations of the writer. Like "Jim Johnson, Carpenter". Or "Laura Smith, President of Greater River City Association".

This allows the reader to identify with the writer, to feel a certain kinship. Thus it will have a greater impact.

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5. Don't Have Generalities or Mere Allusions to Benefits

"Dr. Jones was just wonderful", "You guys are just great!" are too non-specific. This leaves the reader wondering, "Why was he so wonderful? What's so great about this office?" "What's this got to do with ME anyway?"

6. Do Have It Contain Specific Benefits

It should say specifically WHY Dr. Jones is wonderful. Like this: "Dr. Jones was so reassuring. Even though I used to dread going to the dentist his certainty and competence made me feel at ease right away!" Or: "The cosmetic dental work I got from Dr. Jones improved my appearance 100%. He made me look like a million! I can now smile with confidence."

Mentioning specific benefits received rather than vague allusions to benefits is much more effective.

The best testimonials say in effect, "I once had this specific problem just like you have now. I was nervous about it as you are now. I was concerned over costs, just like you are. But I got this specific solution and these specific benefits and as a result I'm very happy."

7. Do Have It Allay the Reader's Anxieties and Concerns

To know that someone else once felt the same way and had these concerns banished helps to allay the reader's anxieties.

Like this: "When I found out I needed two crowns I nearly fainted. I was so worried that I wouldn't be able to afford it and that the pain would just keep getting worse. But after talking with Linda, the Patient Coordinator, we found out I could afford it after all and it wasn't nearly as expensive as I thought it would be. Now my mouth doesn't hurt and my smile looks fantastic! Thank you so much." Lois Jones, Teacher, Clearview Elementary

This helps get rid of the reader's fears because a real person with a real name and occupation, who once had the same or similar fears is now saying that his or her concerns were groundless.

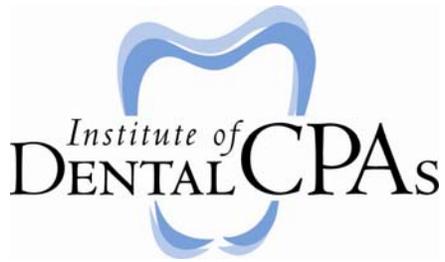
How to Get the Right Testimonials...

This is all well and good you say, but how do you get a patient to say those things? You can't put words into their mouths can you?

Well, no, not exactly. But you can ask the right questions.

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If you know how to ask you can get the kinds of testimonials you need.

One way is to always keep your ears open for any patient who says anything at all complimentary about you, your work, your office, or when you hear such a statement simply respond this way: "Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Smith. Would you mind if I quoted you on that?"

Of course Mr. Smith will say that it's OK. Then as soon as you can WRITE DOWN what he said. Great testimonials can be lost simply because they weren't written down. Don't make this mistake.

Sometime later let him know you are going to be assembling a patient testimonial book for your office and would be very pleased to include his comments and would that be OK with him.

Of course it will be OK.

Then you ask if you could get a bit more information from him. This will also be OK. Then you do the **Patient Questionnaire** below. It takes three minutes and will get you the words you need.

After this is done the next time you see Mr. Smith, show him the quote you've constructed from his answers to the Patient Questionnaire. Ask him what he thinks, make any minor changes and thank him profusely for helping you out.

Another way to get the right testimonials without waiting until you hear a compliment is to outright solicit them. Just be honest about it. "We are preparing a promotion for our upcoming 'Kid's Scrub Day.' You mentioned last week that you were pleased with the work we've done so far. I was wondering if you'd be kind enough to let me use your compliment in one of our mailings?"

Who could possibly say no? People love to help. Believe me you will get the help you need if you just ask.

Remember though, you want specific information that conforms to the guidelines above. To get these kinds of testimonials you must ask the right questions, ones that elicit specific comparisons and specific benefits.

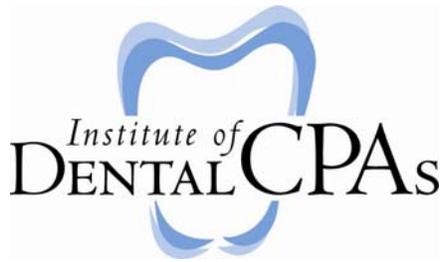
Here's what you need to ask the patient after he has agreed that you can use his comments:

PATIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you feel about your dental work? How does this compare with dental work you've had in the past?
2. How do you feel about the way you've been treated here in our office? How does this compare with other offices you've been to?
3. What problems were you experiencing before you came in? How were these resolved? How do you now feel about your dental health?

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4. How affordable are our services? How does this compare with other offices you've visited?
5. Do you have any other comments about your dental care or our office?

I give permission to use my comments above for promotional purposes

Notice that each question asks the patient to "compare." The reason for this is you want the patient to compare your services with other similar services they've had in the past. This is how you will get the really great comments like: "Dr. Jones's office was the most professional dental office I've ever visited. I've been to lots of dentists before but this office gave me the best service I've ever had."

Give people that spend time answering your questions some kind of a small gift. Don't let them know you're going to do this beforehand, you don't want it to appear as a bribe. Just do it afterward.

Get the right testimonials, be sure to write them down and ask permission to use them.

Then use them!

How to Use Patient Testimonials

Some states have restrictions on how you can use testimonials, in some areas it's not legal to appear to promise cures or specific results. If this is the case in your area you need to ensure your testimonials don't make promises.

But a person who is merely reporting what he got from you is not promising a cure. It's simply a description of how good the service was. As long as you conform to this rule you should be OK and can use testimonials even if there are some restrictions.

Also if there are such restrictions these usually apply only to mailings or Yellow Page ads. Using them in-house is OK. Some areas require you get the testimonial signed and gain approval for its use. This is easy enough to do.

You Can Use Patient Testimonials in These Ways

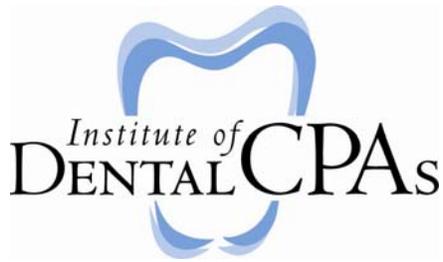
1. In-house

Have a large and impressively bound book, about the size of a photo album, in your reception area. In it have the testimonials along with your practice brochure, office resume, and various photos of your patients. A photo of the person who wrote or said the testimonial positioned right next to it will lend impact to the words.

Quite a bit of creative work can go into this book. You can make it into an impressive and effective presentation.

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This can be especially effective with cosmetic procedures. The patient who is there merely for a couple of fillings will see and read about how others got their beautiful cosmetic work done and will want the same for themselves.

2. In Your Mailings

When you mention a particular benefit of your office, have a testimonial that also mentions the same benefit. This adds believability to what you're saying. You should have several testimonials for each benefit of your practice.

3. In Any Referral Packs or Handouts For Your Patients

4. On Your Bulletin Boards

5. Framed On the Walls of Your Office

6. On Your Postcard Mailings

7. In Your "Welcome To The Neighborhoods" Kits

In short, anywhere you can think of!

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