

In our industry, success involves promoting yourself as the manifestation of the service you provide. As a member of the great American service industry, you don't have inventory to tout. You—and every other agent out there—are the personification of the product (real estate representation) that you sell.

What dedicated small business owner wouldn't advocate (at least within their market niche) that they're the best at what they do. ...That they're loyal, hardworking, knowledgeable and caring. That's all well and good but how do you prove it? In particular, how do you *pre*-prove it to prospects that don't yet know what a great person and exceptional professional you are? How do you answer the question, "Why should I hire you?"

My suggestion: third party testimonials. Now, this may seem old hat to some, but for those of you who have been too meek or bashful to try it, get over it! Honestly, no one else is going to honk your horn for you and as a recent article on "Secret Agents" pointed out, if you don't let it be known, no one will know!

A short, to-the-point statement of support from someone who knows you; anyone who's walked through a transaction with you and is willing to recommend you does wonders to prove your worth. A third party quote sends a message to the reader that they're just like the person offering the recommendation. That person was happy with you, impressed with your professionalism, stunned by your go-the-extra-mile-attitude, and so they might be as well! This is true regardless of the media (promotional flyer, newspaper or magazine ad, website content, etc.).

Testimonials can be powerful and effective. Cultivate them—actively seek them out! Call up your last 10 clients and ask them if they would be willing to help you out with a couple sentences as you ramp up a campaign to expand your practice. What a wonderful excuse to reconnect with past clients and remind them you're still in business and welcome referrals!

If you're new to the business or want to take different spin on it, contact some of your closest colleagues. Ask lenders, inspectors, etc. who have really seen you in action to briefly describe what most impresses them about the service you provide.

If someone you approach is shy about it, offer to draft a couple sentences they could tweak or suggest a couple talking points you wish they'd focus on (tip: ask different people to comment on different points such as professionalism, industry knowledge, service, etc.). Be sure to ask for permission to use their name and city or their preference in how their name appears (IE: the Jones vs. Jane and John Jones vs. Mr. Jones, etc.).

Again, be brief. A couple sentences is all you really have room for on most marketing materials. If you receive a heart-warming letter-length response, that's wonderful! Frame it or put it in your scrapbook, but pick out just a few key sentences to use on your materials. Collect several and use different quotes on different marketing pieces, on different pages of your website, at the bottom of business letters, ...

As always, if this seems overwhelming ask for help, but keep trying! Before long you'll get the hang of it. In the meantime, *hang in there!*

Jo Becker, BA

Jo Becker has eight years of licensed real estate experience. As a former broker, she knows how important, and sometimes scary, technology and self-promotion can be. Jo has provided personalized one-on-one marketing consultation and computer software training to the industry since 2002.

Call or write for a free monthly eLtr full of helpful marketing hints and computing tips!

Services include relationship selling tips and techniques, data entry, software application training, custom marketing campaigns, design of collateral pieces (newsletters, flyers, presentation books, etc.), and website content design. 503/493-6883; JoByEmail@yahoo.com

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