

PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.

You know, the problem with keeping a books to read list is that it grows faster than I can read. Every time somebody recommends a book, or I hear about it on a podcast, or I read about it on a blog. If it sounds interesting or insightful or like something I might want or need to learn, then I add it to my list. And if I add them up, I'm sure that there are more books on my various list, 'cause I keep them in lots of different places, and I'm sure that I have more books on those lists, then I will have time in this lifetime or the next one to read.

So how do I decide what's next how do I decide which book I'm going to read? Well, one thing that really captures my attention is the endorsements. Those short quotes at the front of the book, they're typically from other authors that tell me how good this book is and why I should read it right now. I mean, after all, if James Clear loves this book and I enjoyed his book, then I'm going to. I'm likely to like this one as well, right? That's the power of an endorsement or what is known as a blurb in publishing. In business in online business especially, we know them by another name we call them testimonials.

But no matter what you call them, they all serve the same purpose, and that is to persuade a buyer to make a purchase and to do it by borrowing the reputation of other people. In other words, to say, well, James Clear liked this book, so it must be good. Social proof and testimonials are powerful stuff, and not just in publishing, but also in sales, and maybe especially so in the online business world where there is so much competition and so many fantastic products and courses that we have to do what we can to let potential customers know that we have the right offer for them. This is episode 103 of the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, and today we're talking about testimonials.

We're going to look at what makes a really good testimonial, how you can get good testimonials, and more importantly, what to do when you or your product are so new that you don't have any testimonials yet to share.

Hey, it's Cindy, and thank you for spending a few minutes of your day with me. You'll find the show notes and the recommended resources for this episode at [tiny course empire dot com forward slash one zero three](http://tinycourseempire.com/103). While you're there, be sure to hit the subscribe button. New episodes drop every Thursday morning. Next week I'm going to teach you how to create productive workflows in your business so you can work less and earn more.

There's a simple four step process to follow and I'll tell you all about that next week. But like I said, that is for next week this week is all about social proof and more importantly, what to

do if you don't have any. So let's dig in. Let's start with what makes a really good testimonial or really good social proof, because some is a lot more meaningful than others. Looking at my book list, one of the books that has my attention is called *Indestructible* by Near a all. It's all about how to be more focused so you can get the important things done right on the cover, there's a short blurb or testimonial or endorsement from Greg McEwen, who wrote the book *Essentialism* and Greg wrote being *indistractable* is the essential skill for our time.

Now that testimonial, that endorsement's really not saying too much. I mean, OK, so I should resist distractions that seems pretty obvious to me if I'm looking at a book about how to be less distracted i mean, I already know that I need to be less distracted, right? But then compare that to this endorsement from Shane Snow, who wrote this book has done more to change the way I see the world than anything I've read in the past several years.

The actionable insights from *Indistractable* have helped me reduce my daily time spent on email by 90 % of the two. The endorsement from Shane Snow is much more powerful i think you'd agree right now, I can't know why the publisher chose Greg McEwen's blurb for the front cover. Maybe it was name recognition, or maybe they had limited space, or there was some other factor going on who knows it's not really important. The point I'm trying to make here is that just like there are really good book endorsements and less good endorsements, there are also really good testimonials for your products and courses and less helpful testimonials.

Here's the difference between the two. Good testimonials are really specific they're not general they don't state the obvious. They tell your reader, your potential customer, what the problem was that your student was facing, what exactly your customer or your client or your student learned or implemented and what the results were. I saved 90 % of my time on email that's a pretty stellar result just from reading this book. Actionable insights inside the book.

That's what they got in the online course world or in the online business world. Really good testimonials also have two more things they have photos and they have real names and locations or UR LS of your customer. Or even better, they include video. Here's an example of a testimonial I received from Angela Wills about my Tiny course Empire course. What she wrote is Cindy's tiny course empire has blown me away as soon as I saw it i went through the entire course because I wanted to know how she creates so many successful small courses.

So many people struggle with this, and she's just made it so simple. This will help me, my customers and my clients. From creating the transcript to the consistency of products to the templates for easier workflow, she has covered everything someone needs to know plus made it easy with Trello boards laid out and ready to use. Now this is a really good testimonial because Angela talks about the course itself and what it contains and also what she sees people struggling with that can be solved by this course. The only thing it's missing is the results of taking the course, but it's still a really strong testimonial and I am super proud to have received it.

Of course, we're talking about the gold standard of testimonials here these are what you are striving for they're the best of the best and they are ultimately what you want. But when you're brand new or when you have a brand new course, any testimonial is a win. So let's talk about some ways that you can get that social proof for a brand new launch. The first thing that most people are going to think of is to run a beta launch.

This is a really good option, and I highly recommend it. The way that you do this is you're going to want to choose your beta users really carefully so you create your course, you create all of the assets, you record all of the videos, you write all of the worksheets, whatever it is that you're including in your course. And then you hand pick your beta users and you want to make sure that they understand enough so that they're going to be good users of your course in other words, you don't want to get a beta user for your horse training course.

If it's someone who's never owned a horse or has no interest in owning horses, you know they're not going to be a good judge of what you are creating they're not going to be able to put that information to use so you want to make sure that you hand choose people who can actually use your course, and you want to make sure that they're actually going to complete it as well and return the testimonial that's the goal that you have. You need to get a testimonial from them, and lots of people will tell you that they'll be happy to write a testimonial, but it's going to slip through the cracks of their To Do List so just make sure that when you're choosing people for your beta users that you choose people that you know that you can count on.

You also need to tell your beta users what specifically you need testimonials about. Make sure that you tell them what a good testimonial includes what you expect from them, and you should also plan to meet with them to refine their testimonials. Or at least expect a little back and forth emails to kind of hammer out the details to really create those best of the best testimonials if that's what you're after.

But there are also other things that you can do even if you don't want to or cannot run a beta launch. You can also get creative. Some things that I've done is you can use testimonials about you instead of about the product now this is going to be super useful if you are new and you don't have people that you can count on as beta users. Or if you're getting into a new niche, you can use things like the praise that your boss gave you, your former boss gave you in an annual review or something that someone wrote you remember resumes we used to write resumes and you used to get a cover letter and an endorsement from a former boss or from someone else in your community that you know You can use that information it is Testim it is a testimonial about you.

It's not necessarily about your product because maybe they didn't see your product, maybe they didn't see your course, maybe they haven't seen your membership or wouldn't know anything about it if they did. But they know you. They know that you are a good teacher they know that you are good at following through they know that you are creative and that is good information to put on your sales page even if you don't have testimonials about that specific course, those testimonials about you and your personality will work in a pinch. You can look at former bosses, Co workers, clients, people in your mastermind group, maybe accountability partners, maybe people in a forum that you belong to that you are, that you participate in.

Again, you have to know these people because they are endorsing you. They're not necessarily endorsing your work, they're endorsing you personally, so you want to make sure you know them you're not going to ask strangers for this type of testimonial, but when you know people personally and they know your personality and they know your traits, then those can serve in place of product testimonials. You can also use testimonials about your other product so maybe you've got three or four courses out there and people have said good things about your other courses. You can put those testimonials on a brand new sales page for a brand new course that does not yet have any testimonials.

You just want to make it clear that those testimonials are about your courses in general, not about this specific one and you can do that with something as simple as a header that says what your students are saying about your other courses so if you look at my sales pages, you will quite often see when they're brand new you will see a headline that says what Cindy's students say about her courses. They're not saying it about that course because that course has just launched, but they are saying it about my courses in general. So look at your other testimonials if you have a brand new course out there, look at other testimonials from other courses, other programs, maybe your coaching program, whatever it is, and see if you can use those on a brand new sales page.

If you don't have that, you can also screenshot words of praise from other places so maybe you have a Facebook group, or maybe Instagram you get comments about the amazing things that you're doing or maybe you have LinkedIn comments or maybe you have comments on your blog, or on your podcast, or on your YouTube videos. Or maybe you ran a webinar and you got great feedback there. You can screenshot those snippets of text and use them in place of testimonials again, these people are saying good things about you they're not talking about this particular product, but because you created the product, because you created the course.

Then you get to reap the benefits of that testimonial because they are talking about you and your personality, your traits, and what they admire about you. Now you may want to know if you are screenshotting a testimonial from say, Facebook, or from a blog post comment, or from a LinkedIn comment, do you need to get permission to post that on your website? I'm going to say if it is posted in public, if somebody publicly stated in LinkedIn, on your blog, on Instagram, on Facebook, wherever it may be, if they posted it in public, you do not need to get permission to reprint that because they've already put it out there in public so there is an expectation there that other people are going to see it they didn't send you a personal email, they posted it in a public place so no, you do not need to get permission to repurpose that as a testimonial.

I would not, however, change any words. I wouldn't. I wouldn't take the words, I wouldn't take their photo, I wouldn't use any of that or change it in any way and post it that way you want to make sure that you are sharing exactly what they said, not an edited version of it, and you definitely don't want to post their photos. But that being said, it's always polite to ask and especially if you want to use that photo, then definitely do reach out to them and ask and you can say something like hey, I saw you posted this in the webinar chat or I saw you posted this on my LinkedIn article, you posted a comment, would you mind if I use that as a testimonial and can I use your photo as well? And most people will say yes, especially if they posted something publicly.

They know that other people have read it already so it doesn't really matter if it goes on your sales page most people will say yes, but it is always polite to ask. There's also other types of social proof that you can use not everything has to be a written testimonial, so there's some other types of things that you can use on your sales pages or on your website that provide that social proof. Some things like as seen on We've all seen these logos where somebody has been featured on a podcast or they have been featured on the news or they collaborated in a book or they wrote a guest blog post and they're using the logos on their website underneath a headline that says as seen on.

It's not a testimonial, but it is an endorsement. I mean after all, if you were good enough to appear on a podcast or guest post on a popular blog, then you must know your stuff. So if you have those as seen on logos, those can serve in place of testimonials on a sales page on your website wherever you need them. You can also say how many clients or customers that you have. Etsy displays the number of sales that every seller has made and they do that for a reason. It is a form of social proof.

If an Etsy shop has made 12,000 thousand sales, then they must be doing something right, and people are more likely to purchase if a lot of other people have already purchased. That's why McDonald's brags about the number of burgers that they've served on every single one of their signs i don't even know what they're up to now billions of burgers served right, and they brag about it on every single sign because people like to know well, lots of other people are purchasing this, so therefore it must be good.

You can also mention how long you've been in business longevity is a testimonial of sorts, because when you're aren't good at what you do, you probably aren't going to last so if you've been in business for five years or 10 years or two decades or however long it's been, if you've been serving clients for that long, then definitely brag about it. That forms as a sort of social proof as well. You can think about your testimonial collection to, you know, a lot of people think, well, i don't have very good testimonials all I've got is a few screenshots and my former boss, and that's not really meaningful.

So I want you to think about your testimonial collection as kind of a living document it's going to grow and change over time and you'll replace your boss's endorsement or that text chat screenshot with something better and more impactful. But for right now, just start collecting anything that mentions you or your products in a good light. That's where you start, and that's good enough for now. And because I know that some of you will ask.

My favorite tool for maintaining that testimonial collection is Trello. It is the perfect choice because it allows you to add text and photos, it's searchable, and you can organize it in any way that makes sense. You could also use something like Evernote or Notion or Error Table if those tools work for you. But the point is to get in the habit of not just finding, but also collecting and curating those testimonials, and to get creative about what you think of as a testimonial.

Then the next time you launch a product or a course, you can open up your Trello board or your Evernote or whatever, and you can find what you need for your sales page. Here's what I really want you to know about social proof and testimonials specifically, though

You're going to need to actively work for them a little bit. Remember those blurbs that I read on Near Ale's book? They didn't just happen. Shane Snow didn't just pick up *Indistractable* and be inspired to send a quick email to the author about how that book changed his life.

What actually happened was that Shane Snow was sent an advanced copy of the book and he was asked to write a blurb about it. In other words, the publisher organized a beta launch they hand picked the people to reach out to, and they asked if they could send an advance copy of the book, making it clear that the goal was to get an endorsement. When it comes to testimonials, you have to be prepared to ask.

Very few people will be inspired to write you an unsolicited testimonial. And here's what else you need to know. Of the people you ask, very few of them will follow through so be prepared to knock on a lot of doors, as they say in sales, because only a small percentage of people will provide a testimonial of any kind, and an even smaller percentage will provide something that's really good. Now the good news is you can automate a part of this process.

Here's how we do it. At the end of every one of my courses is a page called Next Steps. This page serves 2 purposes. The first thing it does, and maybe even the most important thing it does is it gives my students the next thing that they should focus on. This is really important for six figure systems members who are working through the curriculum so that they know where to go next. The second thing that page does though is it asks for feedback. I want to know if the course helped you, and most especially I want to know if it didn't. So I ask a simple yes or no question.

Did this course or tool kit live up to your expectations? If my student says no, then I ask why. If they say yes, I also ask why and I invite them to upload a photo and leave their name so that I can use what they said as a testimonial. Now, this is a really good start, but it doesn't exactly flood my inbox with gold standard testimonials. See, most people don't really know how to write a really useful testimonial most people will say things like, yeah, the checklist were really useful, or I really liked how you made writing a sales page so simple or I never understood how to use Trello until you showed me how you're using it.

Those are good feedback, but they're not great testimonials. They have promise though, and they can be fixed with a little effort. Again, this is going to require you to reach out personally and to ask better questions than to help your customers create a really meaningful testimonial. So for example, I could ask which checklist were useful what

specifically did you use? How did you use them? How did their business change as a result? I would want to know what the sales pages were like before they took my sales page writing course, and how many sales were they making? What changed after they use the strategies that I taught? Then I can take those answers that they give me and I can put them into clear language with complete sentences and get their permission to use that version as a testimonial.

Again, this is going to take some work on your part it's going to take some back and forth, but it is totally worth it to have those really outstanding testimonials on your sales page. But I don't want you to worry if that's not where you're at yet in your business. Instead, go back to the basics that we talked about earlier. Run a beta launch handpick people to join and make it clear what you're asking for in the exchange. Make sure your beta testers are willing to put your course or your product to use so that they can give you meaningful feedback.

And if a beta launch isn't in the cards for you, that's OK too. Then you can use the other strategies that we talked about you can get creative. Look for other ways that people are endorsing you and your products. Maybe it's former or current clients maybe it's your former Co workers, or your mastermind or your accountability group, or people in your Facebook group who post about something that something cool that you said or that you did or that you created. And don't forget that indirect social proof as well things like how many customers you've had or how long you've been in business or where you've been interviewed, all of that is social proof too, so don't get hung up on I don't have any testimonials.

Just because it's not in the form of a written testimonial doesn't mean it's not useful when it comes to attracting a wider audience and making more sales. Now I would like to ask you for a testimonial about this podcast. If you're enjoying the show, if you're getting value from it, if it's helping your business or your mindset around business, would you pop over to Apple Podcasts or wherever it is that you listen and leave me a rating and review? That helps the algorithms know that you value this content, and it also helps other potential listeners know that it's worth listening to.

And that is the best way to help us grow. That's it for me this week i'll be back next week with my four step plan for working less and earning more by creating more productive workflows. In the meantime, have a terrific rest of your day and I will talk to you again next week.