



BIZMORE BEST PRACTICE



Customers Love You? Get Them on YouTube

Customer testimonials are the best advertising money can't buy. But how to make them heard? Get those happy customers to sing your praises in a YouTube video.

by [Pat Olsen](#) Tuesday Mar 30, 2010

The Company:

PrintingForLess.com, a Livingston, Mont.-based online printing company with about 150 employees, produces newsletters, stationery and other marketing materials for small and medium-sized businesses.

The Practice:

PrintingForLess.com recruits customers who send in unsolicited, written testimonials about the company's service to videotape their endorsements and post them on YouTube. The result? Employees are thrilled to see their service praised in such a highly visible forum. And customers who produced the videos — among PrintingForLess.com's most valuable buyers — are ordering more and talking up the company to prospective customers.



The Formula:

1. **When money is tight, get creative about advertising.** For a small business on a shoestring budget, marketing is often an afterthought. "Businesses like ours are extremely reliant on word-of-mouth from other small businesses," says PrintingForLess.com CEO Andrew Field (pictured above). In fact, customer referrals are the company's biggest source of new business. For years the company tried leveraging customer endorsements by posting them on Internet bulletin boards and its website, which was nice for employee morale and made for good website dressing. But it wanted an even bigger payoff. That's when it decided to try to leverage the power of YouTube. "There's an emotional connection when customers talk about the quality and service they get" that doesn't exist with written testimonials, explains Field.
2. **Give customers an incentive to help you.** Slaps on the back from happy customers are great, but how to ask for more without turning a nice gesture into a huge inconvenience? Make it worth their while. At PrintingForLess.com, that means buying and shipping \$70 video camcorders to customers as gifts. About 65 customers — or 90% of those contacted — agreed to participate. "The ones that didn't either were camera-shy or had policies about promoting products," says Jessica Cooper, the marketing manager who's overseeing the video project. Since the campaign began last summer, the videos have received nearly 6,000 views. More important, orders from customers who produced videos have increased, and the company is now showing the videos to potential customers. Existing customers also benefited as the videos let them put a human face on their own businesses.
3. **Encourage customers to have fun — then back off.** PrintingForLess.com understood that its video play wouldn't work if their customers sounded like teleprompter-reading drones. So, along with the cameras, the company sent customers fun tips on filming. "We told them to speak loudly, for example, and that it was fine to have their dog in the photo because we're a pet-friendly workplace," says Cooper. The instructions also included steps for uploading the videos to YouTube and adding tags so search engines could find them, thereby generating even more traffic. But the company didn't edit them and asked customers to post the videos from their own YouTube accounts, making the tributes seem more real. "When we sent the cameras, the first response we received was, 'My camera just arrived and I feel like a kid on Christmas morning!'" says Cooper. "That's when we knew people were excited and they'd do a good job."

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Pat Olsen is a New Jersey-based freelance writer who covers business and health.

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