

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Prove It Or Lose It! How To Multiply The Pulling-Power Of Your Ads And Sales Letters With “Credibility-Boosters” And “Believability-Builders”... Or Getting More Response By Making Your Ads More Believable & Credible

Stuffing your ads with believability-builders is probably the most powerful way to get more of your prospects to respond to your advertising. So many advertisers fail to build believability into their ads—it amazes me!

When you make it hard for someone to believe what you're saying is true in an ad, you're going to have a rough time getting them to buy from you.

Your job is to make sure your ad is believable, seems believable—and more than that—you need to make sure it's believable from your prospect's point of view.

The way I see it, there are basically three reasons someone doesn't buy from you:

1. They just plain don't want or need what you've got to sell.
2. They can't afford to buy from you, for one reason or another.
3. They don't believe what you're saying is true.

There's nothing we can do about that first one. If someone doesn't need or want what you're selling, they just don't. These aren't the kind of people you want to be wasting your money on. So, obviously, you need to make sure you target your audience so that you advertise to qualified prospects.

As far as number two goes, if what you're selling is too “pricey”, then you're targeting the wrong audience again. It's a matter of finding out who wants your product or service and offering it to them.

Then there's number three.

Let's face it... people are just flat-out skeptical these days.

We've all been burned “one too many times”. We're especially not confident in ordering from someone we've never met, never talked to, can't talk to, and can't meet face to face. This brings us to how to overcome this prominent skepticism.

Making Your Advertising More Believable

First thing you need to do to sprinkle your ads with believability is to add:

“Credibility-Booster” #1: Use Powerful, Specific Testimonials.

Now I’m not talking about those wimpy testimonials that say:

“Max Robinson is fantastic!” M.F., N.C.

No way! If you ever get caught by me using testimonials like those, I’ll hang you by your big toes in the middle of a snowstorm! Don’t ever do it... even if you have no testimonials!

Testimonials with initials only are worse than no testimonials. Testimonials that are short, with no specific benefits or details are a little better—but not much.

You can do better than both!

If you have no testimonials, follow my ideas in the chapter on testimonials (Chapter 13, “Testimonial Magic”). And, here’s an idea for you:

Send ME Your Product Or Service, and If I Feel It’s Worthy Of A Testimonial, I’ll Give You A Gang-Buster Testimonial—One That’ll Knock Your Socks Off!

I’m serious! If you need a testimonial, I’ll give you a great one if I feel your product or service is “worthy” of it.

Onward.

The kind of testimonial you want is the one I reveal in the chapter on testimonials. Now that kind of testimonial, my friend, is a testimonial that will build believability and motivate your prospect to take action!

“Believability-Builder” # 2: Use Pictures.

- A. Pictures... not illustrations or drawings. You want real live pictures. There are a couple of ways to use pictures as believability enhancers.
- B. You can use pictures of the people who have given you testimonials, and put their picture next to the testimony. This is very effective and enhances credibility.
- C. Also, put the telephone numbers of those people who give you testimonials, along with their pictures.
- D. Use a picture of your product in action to demonstrate its effectiveness; or show your product in action being used by someone. If your product can be shown in-action, this is a very good idea. However, it’s kind of tough to show a service business in action and actually benefiting a customer.

- E. Put a picture of your offices (outside or inside, or both) on your letter or ad to enhance credibility and believability. People like dealing with someone who's in business, and appears to be in business. I think it subliminally lets your prospects know you're serious about your work, and if they wanted to check you out, they could.
- F. Put a picture of you to the right of the headline, or beside your signature. This makes your prospects almost feel as though they've met you.

“Credibility-Booster” #3: Tell The Truth.

I think I've preached about this so much, I'm not sure if I need to dwell on it here. It's too important not to remind you, though.

You must be honest in your ads, let alone in your daily dealings with your fellow man. If you're not, it's just gonna come back and haunt you, or get you in some way or another.

Be honest, that way you don't have to worry about always “covering your tracks.” And remember, don't just be honest, *appear to be* honest.

“Believability-Builder” #4: Use Specific Facts and Figures In Your Ads.

Instead of rounding off numbers like “We've helped over 100 companies save money” say “We've helped 127 companies save up to 38.5% on their utility bills!”

Always try to get specific results from your customers so that you'll have the data you need to create powerful ads. If you're going to use generalities, make the generality **specifically general!** i.e. If your customers tell you they're saving 20 percent, change the 20 to a 19.78 percent. That way you'll be reporting less than the actual, so you'll be more than honest, and yet have a specific to use.

To get those specific results from your customers, you'll need to give them evaluation sheets to fill out. For each benefit you offer, ask an evaluation question to get the feedback you need to create testimonials. You can ask for the testimonial directly on the evaluation form, or you can get the evaluation forms back, and then follow-up by phone and ask for the testimonial.

Most people will be happy to help—they love to see their names “in print”!

These specifics are very valuable to you in your advertising efforts. Being specific is being more believable... and increases your credibility.

“Believability-Builder” #5: Give your exact address, and (where feasible) briefly tell where you are in relation to a notable, credible location.

First thing, always put your complete address in an ad, as well as on each element of the ad. Put it on your order coupon and in the body of the ad. If your ad ran in a magazine

and someone else already tore the response coupon out, your address and other contact information will still be in the body of the ad.

In a sales letter, make sure you put your contact information on the order form, the letter, the lift note... on every separate piece of the mailing.

Reason?

Simply because some prospects will throw the letter away, but will keep the lift note, order form, or another item.

Makes good sense, right?

Using a complete address instead of a post office box enhances credibility and thus, believability.

The next part of using your address I learned from master marketer Gary Halbert. His idea is to indicate where your business is located in relation to the police office, the first national bank, the library, the city hall, or somewhere else that's a credible city landmark:

“We're located just one block east of the Police Office on Chicago's east side— stop in if you're in our area.”

OR

“We're just behind the First National Bank of Salt Lake.”

It “subliminally” enhances the believability of the existence of your company. Prospects feel more comfortable feeling they “know” you really do exist, and that they can call your neighborly bank any time to check up on you.

Which brings up one caveat: If you plan to use this technique on a large scale basis, make sure you talk to the owner or manager at the location you mentioned. Some people *really will* look up the number for the “First National Bank of Salt Lake” and will ask about your firm. Chances are strong that it won't happen often—but when it does, be prepared.

You should have the manager of the bank distribute a memo about your business and what's going on. Build good relationships with these people and go out of your way to be nice... flowers, balloons, etc. go a long way for little investment.

“Believability-Builder” #6: Put Your Office Number(s) In The Ad.

Don't just put your 800 number in the ad, put your office number(s), your fax number(s), and any other numbers you can - as well as your email address.

This makes your prospect feel more comfortable about being able to get in touch with you. I think that subliminally, your prospects rest a little more assured that you are “for real” when you do things like this.

And those little “for reals” add up and go a long, long way to building your credibility and believability.

“Credibility-Booster” #7: When You Are Doing A Direct Mail Package, Include Reprints Of Newspaper Or Magazine Articles About Your Product Or Service.

Again, if someone else tells your prospect that you’re great, it’s more believable than if you tell them. Press coverage can be particularly powerful; as they are seen by a lot of people to have a totally objective view about everything—if they give you favorable comments, it works out nicely for you as a powerful endorsement!

As a side note, (if it makes sense) you may consider running your ad in a regional issue of a big magazine that your target market reads... Wall Street Journal, Time, Baron’s, Investor’s Business Daily, Good Housekeeping, Woman’s Day, etc. Why?

Well, you can place that little credibility-booster stamp, “As seen in the Wall Street Journal” on your ads.

Personally, I don’t think you should do this ‘til you’re up and running smooth and with a lot of profit behind you.

“Credibility-Booster” #8: Have Your Ad Or Letter Come From A Well-Known And Respected Individual Whom Your Target Market Knows And Respects, OR, Have Your Ad Or Letter Endorsed By that Individual

This isn’t always possible. But, it’s definitely one of the very most powerful ways to create believability in an ad or sales letter. If you can get the endorsement of that “celebrity” (they’re a celebrity to your target market) you can really bump-up your response rate—and profit!

Here are some ideas of what you’re looking for:

- a respected consultant to your target market
- a speaker or trainer to your market
- a movie-star-type of celebrity involved with your target market
- a top athlete who’s involved with your target market in some way
- a noted author who’s a part of your target market
- a popular politician who’s a part of your market

In short, anyone who your target market knows and respects their opinion... they would be a great endorser of your product or service. The only catch is this: you must be able to deliver! Otherwise, it'll all backfire on you and you'll end up out of business quick!

Whenever I'm doing a promotion, trying to sell my products or services, I first look for an opportunity to do a venture with someone who has a lot of "pull" with my target market. If I can get their endorsement, I can almost guarantee myself a winner.

This is what you'll want to do.

At the very least, you need to get a testimonial from these people.

For example: I have testimonials from Ted Nicholas, Gary Halbert, Ted Thomas, Mike Enlow, and Brad Antin. Most of these names are very well known to the advertising and marketing industry. By using their names in my ads and sales letters, it helps me to sell more of my books, CDs, and services... a whole lot more!

Without their endorsements and testimonials, I probably wouldn't be able to sell near as well. If you know any of these gentlemen, you understand what I'm talking about—they've really got some pulling power with my target market.

A Step Better

A step better than having their testimonial would be to have the letter or ad written from the "celebrity", and signed by them. This is the optimum way to use celebrities to help build credibility. This is called an "endorsed mailing" or an "endorsed ad."

It is by far the most effective way to advertise.

"Believability-Builder" #9: Put Your "Private" Number In The Ad.

Don't just put your 800 number and your office number in the ad. Put your personal phone number in the ad or letter.

Tell them "this number rings right at my desk—I'm in from 9 to 5 Central Time, M-F; and I welcome your calls and questions."

Obviously you can only do this if you can handle the number of calls, and if you're really going to be at that number during those times. If you can do this, it'll allow people to "meet" you and get more comfortable with you. Plus through talking to you, they may become comfortable enough to order from you.

An added benefit is that you'll discover more about who's really answering your ads. This will open-up a lot of doors for you... it'll show you what lists you might want to rent, what magazines you may want to run ads in, and more. You'll learn what hot buttons you need to push and all kinds of other information you'd probably take years to discover!

Give it a try.

“Believability-Builder” #10: Be Sincere in Your Ads and Sales Letters... Go Easy on the Hype.

Sure, you want to be (and you must be) passionate in your ads and letters. But make sure you don't cross over into the “hype” arena. Hype is when you're pushing the truth farther than you should. It's exaggerating your claims and results.

You need to make sure what you say is from the bottom of your heart—and very sincere. You see, if people don't think you're sincere, it doesn't matter how “honest” you are, they're just not going to believe what you say.

“Believability-Builder” #11: If You're Offering an Incredible, Almost Too-Good-To-Be-True Deal, Explain Exactly Why It's So Good. Actually, You Should Always Tell Your Prospects the Reason Why (Whether You've Got a Hot Deal or Not).

This is so simple, yet so powerful you'll be amazed at how much it will increase the believability of the ad; and your credibility as an advertiser. Here's how it works:

Basically, you just need to be honest.

If you bought too much inventory in the fall when business was hot, and now it's winter and it's the “off-season” for what you're selling, tell them:

“You get these one of a kind widgets at 75% off for one simple reason: 1) I overbought in the fall, and now I've got inventory just sitting here. If I don't sell it, I'll have to lay-off 4 of the guys in the warehouse. Rather than do that, I thought I'd generate a little revenue and give you (my loyal customers) a great deal at the same time.”

That makes sense doesn't it? All the guy's doing is being honest. This technique will work for you as well.

Let's say you're a wholesaler who sells lawn mowers to retailers. And let's say it's your first mailing or ad—and people have never heard of you. So, you want to make an incredibly positive (credible) impression with your market, so you give them a buy one, get four free! Your reason why may be something like this:

“Why such a powerful offer? Well you see, I realize that competition is tough out there. I figured if you could try my mowers out, you'd be impressed. Plus you'd get a taste of our support services, and you'd get to take a look at the marketing and advertising materials we give you free with each mower... this helps you to sell more.

And, basically, I'm hoping that you sell these 5 mowers in no time flat with those materials helping you. If you do, the way I look at it is this: you'll be back... you'll want to become a permanent customer of mine. You'll buy your lawn mowers from ABC

Lawn Mowers from now on. Doesn't that make good business sense? Besides that, I got a great deal on these models myself—why not pass it along and build a relationship?"

Do you see how much sense that makes?

Being open and honest like this, and telling your prospects the exact reason why you're making the offer you're making builds credibility and believability!

“Credibility-Booster” #12: Offer A No-Risk, No Hassle, No-Questions-Asked, Money-Back Guarantee.

This is a powerful believability booster because essentially what you're doing is taking the risk off the shoulders of your prospect. Most people will feel your claims to be more believable if you back them up with a powerful, well-articulated, and clear guarantee.

How many times have you bought while saying to yourself (or your spouse) “Hey, if I don't like it, I've got 90 days to send it back! “? Probably almost every time you buy—right?

Taking the risk upon your own shoulders is very appealing to your prospects. Think about it... isn't that what you like when you buy? Don't you like it when you know you're covered by a powerful guarantee? Of course you do.

We all do. It gives us a certain sense of security in a way.

You need to make your guarantee as strong as you possibly can. Guarantees are covered in great detail in Chapter 14, “Guarantee Magic: How to Create Win-Win Guarantees That Take the Risk From Your Prospect & Shoot Your Response Through the Roof.”

“Credibility-Booster” #13: Offer a No Questions Asked Warranty.

If you sell a product your customers physically use, you may profit from a powerful warranty.

Warranties are much like guarantees, they comfort your prospect. They let him know that if the thing breaks within the first year, he can return it with no hassles, and no questions asked.

Warranties also give a feeling that “Oh, these guys will be around at least for the next year look at the one year warranty... they've gotta stay in business to honor the warranty.” Hey I've heard people say it out loud—there's got to be hundreds more who say it to themselves, or who say it subliminally.

No doubt about it, warranties can increase credibility and believability.

“Believability-Builder” #14: Have Your Prospects Post-Date Their Checks When They Order.

This is another technique to take the risk off your prospect’s shoulders. Of course, you’ll be assuming more risk—but by using this technique, you’ll be building credibility and trust with your prospect. Here’s how it works:

Essentially, you’re going to let your prospects send you a check for the amount of your product, but it’s dated 30, 60, 90, days out so that you can’t cash it. This gives your prospects 30, 60, or 90 days to give your product or service a try. Like I said, this will develop trust and credibility—but it does put you at risk.

A lot of people feel that this technique has made them very profitable. Others haven’t had a good experience with this approach—those “others” are usually people selling shoddy products to an unreliable market. So be careful. But realize that this technique will really enhance your credibility.

What happens is that you tell your prospect to post-date their check (as I describes above—30 days is the “norm”) and you promise that you’ll return their uncashed check if they want their money back within that 30, 60, or 90 days.

“Credibility-Booster” #15: Hold Credit Card Processing for 60 Days.

Here again, you’ll be taking on the risk because you’ll be sending out product or performing services without payment. But, remember, anytime you can reverse the risk like this, it will boost sales.

This technique is basically the same as # 14. It works just like the post-dated check.

“Believability-Builder” #16: Admit that What You’re Selling Has a Flaw.

Imagine “pitching” your product hard and heavy, telling your prospect how it will solve their problems, and outlining all the benefits they get—and then, you shift gears to let them know what’s wrong with what you’re selling.

What do you think happens to your credibility when you do that?

It goes through the roof! People are impressed when you’ve got the courage to admit that your product isn’t everything to everybody. This is called “Admitting the Flaw”. Admitting to this “flaw” will bring you closer to the sale because it increases your credibility.

This works especially well if your offer is really powerful—almost too good to be true. What you’ve got to do is honestly take a close look at your offer, determine what it’s disadvantages are, and talk openly about them with your prospect.

Take a look at this example, from a little Mexican restaurant’s sales letter:

“Look, if you want to go out and have waiters and waitresses with ‘white-glove’ service, then you’re coming to the wrong place. No fine wines here folks... just delectable, hot, fresh, tasty authentic Mexican food made by a real Mexican cook.”

Really, what you’re doing is taking any competitive “disadvantages” and turning them into positives. Another example of this is when stereo dealers, car dealers, appliance dealers, department stores, and other types of businesses have a “year-end scratch and dent sale”!

If you were a furniture dealer for example, and you were having such a sale you might say:

“Oh sure, some of the linings are ripped underneath the couches and chairs—but no one will ever see that. But, because of our strict standards, I can’t sell it to you at full price; even though the damage is completely harmless and non-visible. That’s why we’re holding this ‘scratch and dent’ sale.”

You see, what happens is by admitting to flaw, people perceive that you’re being honest with them... people like that.

This will bring them in again and again.

I encourage you to give it a try!

“Believability-Builder” #17: Don’t Ever Use Just a P.O. Box For Your Address.

That’s a big mistake. Always, always, always use your full street address—even if it’s just your home address. PO Boxes are response-killers! Even if you’re not a fly-by-night operation, they make people suspect that you are. And that’s exactly what we’re trying to get rid of... suspicion and skepticism.

Remember, we’ve all been burned one too many times by someone, somewhere, sometime! You can’t afford to use a PO Box in your ad. If you do put a PO Box in your ad, make sure you also put your full street address in the ad right next to the PO Box.

“Believability-Builder” #18: Offer Your Customers a Double Your Money Back If Not Satisfied.

This is a very powerful technique—but, no matter how good your product or service is, you’re going to get “slime” who want double their money back.

So, when should you use it?

I’d use it once you’re really well known in a niche. After you’ve been around a while, and the prospects have all heard your name and you’ve got a good reputation. What happens

then, is that people are nervous to take advantage of you because everyone else will find out.

So even though it's powerful, be careful how you use it.

One other thing... I personally wouldn't offer such a guarantee on a high-priced product or service. Whether your product or service is the best or not, this could put you out of business!

No matter what you do, make sure what you're selling is of top quality, and does everything it says.

“Believability-Builder” #19: The “Bill Me Later” and Let Your Customers Pay Only If They Like Your Product or Service.

Here again, you're taking the risk off the prospect's shoulders—and they'll show you their appreciation by buying from you if what you're selling **over-delivers**. Yes, over-deliver—at every opportunity.

That's what I believe in anyway—you should too. You should always over-deliver no matter what you're selling and no matter who you're selling to. It just makes good sense to do so. Magazines make this offer all the time. You simply send in a reply form saying you want to subscribe, and they bill you later.

This technique is wonderfully powerful and really helps boost credibility. People like being able to “try before you buy”... it's kind of like the old puppy-dog close.

This technique will work well for you on one condition: You over-deliver. See, whether that prospect pays the bill or not depends on how pleased he is with your product or service. And if you over-deliver to that prospect, you can bet he'll want to pay for the benefits he receives.

It's important that you understand this... you must over-deliver.

“Believability-Builder” #20: How To Get And Use “Success Stories” To Show Your Prospects That Other Buyers Of Yours Are Getting Results With What You're Selling.

This is a convincing strategy that takes good follow-up skills, and good investigative skills, and good probing skills.

The idea is to call-up or visit customers after they've had a while to use what you're selling. What you want to do is find out how well your product or service has improved their life/business—and you want to get this information in measurable specifics. Generalities just won't do—you want exactness.

- Has your product increased their productivity? If so, by how much?
- Has your product increased their profits? If so, how much and how quickly?
- Has your product made a task easier? If so, how much easier?
- Has your product gotten rid of a frustration that's bothered your customers for years? If so, what frustration was it, and how quickly did your product alleviate this frustration?

Are you getting the picture?

Admittedly, this takes some effort and follow-up on your part—you must be consistent, and you must get specifics. Basically, you need to make your Success Story believable by deploying these four elements:

1. You need to find out what problem you solved for your customer—or what benefit they got from your product or service.
2. What action was taken to solve the problems or to get the benefit? i.e. Did they buy your course, buy your service, etc.?
3. What were the specific results? How measurably did your customer benefit from buying your product, or service? You must be specific. What were your customer's reactions to all this?
4. You need to get the details: name, company name, address, phone; and you need to secure permission to share non-proprietary information with other prospects, with your customer's name attached; and where possible, with their phone number, company name, and website too.

If you have to, offer some sort of valuable free gift or free service in exchange for your customers actually taking time out of their schedule to measure the performance of what you're selling.

In its essence, your "Success Story" is a testimonial—it's an embellished testimonial. You want to show your prospects that people like them have successfully used your product to get the benefits you claim you offer. Here's what you must do to make this idea work:

Follow-up on those who are using your product or service — make sure they are satisfied, and then define their satisfaction in measurable terms.

You must find out what difference your product or service made.

You must paint a picture (in your ad or sales letter) of the context in which this success was achieved.

Make sure you use full names in your "Success Stories". A testimonial or Success Story with initials is not worth having. You must get permission and use full names.

Here's an example of a Success Story, and how I've worked it into the copy:

“Robert Blackman owns a printing company in Oklahoma. He was skeptical to pay a so-called “pro” to write his next direct mail package for him. Before he hired Brian, his results were around \$1.10 return on every dollar he invested in his mailings. (At least he was a bit over break-even!) Once Brian helped Robert, his returns shot up to \$4.29 on every dollar he invested! That’s the difference Brian Keith Voiles can make on your next direct mail promotion too!”

You see, it’s pretty straightforward... pretty simple.

People these days are interested in measurable results. They want to see the difference your product has made in the past for people like them.

They *especially* want to know this information if your product is a “high-ticket” item. And you know, I feel that your prospects really do have a good reason for knowing such detailed information.

Your prospects really do want to buy *if you offer the benefit they want*. But, if you don’t do everything in your power to “prove” to them that you can deliver... it’s your fault they don’t buy.

I understand where they’re coming from—and so do you if you stopped to consider it all. Wouldn’t you be more comfortable with your purchases if you could see that others who are like you are making gains, strides, and solving problems and frustrations that you have?

It makes sense—and it works.

So start using “Success Stories” in your ads and sales letters today!

Conclusion

These “Believability-Builders” and “Credibility-Boosters” are all tested, measured, and proven to work. I use them in the ads I create—you should too. Building credibility/believability is of paramount importance in getting your prospects to take action when they read your ads!

And all these little things add up to build powerful, believable credibility!