

How to Collect and Use Social Proof to Market your Business

What is Social Proof?

What does it mean?

“Social proof, also known as informational social influence, is a psychological phenomenon where people assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect correct behavior for a given situation. This effect is prominent in ambiguous social situations where people are unable to determine the appropriate mode of behavior, and is driven by the assumption that surrounding people possess more knowledge about the situation.” - Wikipedia

What does it mean?

- ✓ In short – we often will do something or buy something because other people we like and trust have recommended it.
- ✓ We unconsciously trust our friends to have 'done their research', and when they claim something is awesome, we're biased by that opinion, and are therefore more likely to buy what they've bought/do what they've done.
- ✓ It works more broadly, too. Think about the adage 'don't eat at an empty restaurant'. Or, think about situations where you've heard or seen testimonials about a product from strangers.
- ✓ We trust other consumers to tell us the truth about a product, **much** more than the company selling it to us!

Types of Social Proof You Can Use

1. Customer Testimonials

- ✓ Customers giving honest positive feedback on a product in the form of a testimonial or a review is absolutely golden social proof!
- ✓ They might leave a review on your site, your Etsy shop or other venue, on your Facebook page, or even on Twitter or other social media.
- ✓ They might also email you with feedback, which is always lovely!
- ✓ Also occasionally google your brand, and look for blog posts and other mentions of your brand.
- ✓ Checking through your site stats for links to your site is a good way to find these sorts of things, too.

1. How to Use It...

- ✓ Whenever a customer emails you with good feedback, ask them if you can share it publicly. Also ask if you can get a photo of them (headshot, smiling, or them wearing, using, with your product) to go alongside it.
- ✓ Take public reviews – from Etsy, for example – and post them elsewhere – on your social channels, in your newsletter, on your blog. You could even create a rotating sidebar of reviews or a reviews page on your website.
- ✓ Place appropriate customer testimonials/reviews in the description of your products in your online store.

2. Customer Stories

- ✓ This goes a bit deeper than customer testimonials.
- ✓ It's the process of you or your customer sharing their story, which involves your product in some way.
- ✓ Instead of just a line or two, this is when your product is part of a larger event or story.
- ✓ For example – as wedding ring makers, we might share photos and stories from a couple's wedding, and they just happened to have chosen Epheriell wedding rings :)
- ✓ Videos are awesome if they ever happen!

2. How to Use It...

- ✓ Longer-form is great here.
- ✓ So – a blog post telling a customer story, with a number of relevant photos.
- ✓ Share a story in your newsletter.
- ✓ You can then parse out bits of the story into separate posts on social media.

3. Customer-Created Images

- ✓ In this age of social media, it is very likely that some of your customers are photographing and sharing your product on social media. (They may even share video!)
- ✓ Hopefully, they have something nice to say alongside it! Therefore, it's a form of testimonial – but in mostly visual format, which is brilliant for you, because it gives you customer-generated visual content to share.
- ✓ Many venues are allowing customers to share their own photos alongside their reviews, so look out for these, too!

3. How to Use It...

- ✓ Collect any images that your customers share publicly.
- ✓ Repost these on your social channels, and tag the customer, thanking them for their share.
- ✓ Add them as additional photos to item descriptions.
- ✓ Use them on your blog and website.
- ✓ Use them as window dressing at markets etc.
- ✓ Of course, always credit the customer (their IG handle, name etc. is fine).

4. Celebrity/Influencer

- ✓ This is where you get an endorsement from a blogger, social media 'star' or some other form of celebrity or influencer in your niche.
- ✓ This brings something called the 'halo effect' in to play. It's a cognitive bias whereby we judge a person's opinion based on our OWN impression of them.
- ✓ Influencers have built a reputation in their industry – therefore, we give their opinion more weight than the average Jane or Joe on the street.

4. How to Use It...

- ✓ First – you may need to reach out and solicit these sorts of reviews/testimonials.
- ✓ Some bloggers/ig 'stars' may ask for payment in exchange for a review or share of your product on their channels. Be very discerning here.
- ✓ The best type, is, of course, where the influencer chooses your product, buys it, and then shares their thoughts under their own steam.
- ✓ Make sure to share their review far and wide!
- ✓ You could add a 'as seen in' section to your blog or website.
- ✓ A press page on your site is a good choice, too.

5. The 'Wisdom of the Crowd'

- ✓ This is approval or endorsement from large groups of people.
- ✓ Whenever you see a business using a phrase like '20 million users' or '3,000 downloads this month', or '10,000 newsletter subscribers' they are utilising this form of social proof.
- ✓ The idea, being, of course, that if a large number of people have chosen this product or service, it must be good!

5. How to Use It...

- ✓ Once your business grows, make a big deal of any impressive numbers.
- ✓ Promote large social media followings.
- ✓ Promote large newsletter subscriber numbers (people will trust that all those other folks are getting good stuff!).

6. The 'Wisdom of your Friends'

- ✓ This is where you choose to investigate a product based on the fact that your friend has endorsed it.
- ✓ This is very powerful, because it's not just a stranger recommending the product.
- ✓ We give more weight to what our friends, family, and acquaintances think.
- ✓ We trust our friends to care about us, and not steer us wrong.

6. How to Use It...

- ✓ Put social sharing buttons wherever you can – on your product pages, on your website, in your newsletters.
- ✓ Ask your customers to share with their friends! For example, ask buyers to tag your social account (instagram or facebook) and use a special hashtag if they share a photo of your product with their friends on social media.
- ✓ You could target ads on Facebook and IG to friends of your fans. If they see that their friend is a fan, and be more likely to check it out.
- ✓ Run challenges or giveaways on social media that include a social share function.
- ✓ Set up a referral program on your website.

Summary of Social Proof Strategies

- ✓ Collect customer stories and testimonials (preferably with a photo of them!) and share them on your website, blog, and social channels.
- ✓ Collect any images of your product that your customers share on social media, and repost to your own channels.
- ✓ Reach out to influencers in your niche and ask for a feature/recommendation. Make a BIG deal of this if it happens!
- ✓ Emphasise any 'big numbers' that your business attains (sales numbers, length of time in business, mailing list subscribers, social media subscribers etc)
- ✓ Ask your customers to share your business with their friends!

Questions?

