



# POWER<sup>♥</sup> OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE



## TEXTBOOK

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# Introduction

Retailers will use “Social Influence” as one of their tactics to persuade you that their product is worthy of your hard-earned cash. This method draws from a relatable human component – the need to be like others. Wanting to conform, we often give in and buy whatever they offer us.

Is Social influence a common human element we all share, or a shifty sales ploy?

Social influence has existed since the first communities were ever formed. It is more than just a marketer’s attempt to entice buyers or our desire to conform. It is a factor in everything we do.

- ❖ Think of an article on social media that went viral that your co-workers and friends are sharing daily. Don’t you want to read it to see what it’s about?
- ❖ Imagine that you are trying to pick which restaurant to have dinner at. One has a line of people waiting out to the street. The other is nearly empty. Assuming you aren’t pressed for time, which one would you choose?
- ❖ You’re purchasing something on Amazon, and you see that one seller has a 96% customer approval rating while the other hasn’t made any sales yet. Who do you buy from?

## What Is Social Influence?

Social influence is a psychological phenomenon in which people base their decisions on what those around them have chosen. It assumes that if others made a certain choice there must be a good reason for it. In obscure or questionable situations where you are unsure of which choice to make or where you are lacking in confidence about a decision, it is most powerful.

Social influence doesn’t discriminate based on your position in society. It has spread throughout equally and touches all of us. It shows in an advertisement that “7,626 people previously downloaded this program” or

“recommended by 9 out of 10 dentists”. You are falling under its effect when you watch a new Netflix series because everyone seems to be talking about it. It’s everywhere.

Unless you live on an isolated island, you are influenced by those around you. It is inevitable. Even if you are considered to be non-conforming or don’t easily give in to a marketing pitch, there is still some group of people that influence you.

## **Why Does Social Influence Matter?**

Social influence is a powerful tool for businesses because it generates the consumer’s trust. When people search for a service or product, they positively ask themselves, “How is this going to help me?” There is also the flip side to their thinking. They question, “Is this going to fall short of my expectations and let me down?” or “Can I trust this business?”

Using testimonials, or customer reviews gives the customer’s perspective and insights into whether a business is a company that can be trusted.

Compare it to a dance party where it’s still early and nobody is dancing. If one person braves the empty dance floor and begins to dance, then another person follows suit. After a small group of dancers form, everyone else begins to join them on the dance floor. Social influence mimics that small group of initial dancers, telling the newcomers, “It’s ok to come and dance.”

## **How Social Media Affects Social Influence**

Social influence is what drives people to visit a website, make a purchase, sign up for something, or take any kind of action. We rely on social media now for almost everything. As people increasingly use social media to make major decisions, the relevance and value of social influence increases as well.

There’s no doubt that on a company’s website they will naturally display themselves in a positive light. They will utilize marketing materials that are

specifically developed to influence you to buy. Social media is a totally different story.

When you see people talking about a business on social media, you are getting the untainted voice of the consumer, and not the business itself. In the minds of prospective customers, their genuine impressions of the business are very persuasive.

## Getting the Thumbs Up

Social influence can give your product or service credibility by giving it a thumbs up or stamp of approval. Endorsements by an expert or celebrity that your audience is familiar with gives a great first impression. Your audience will think, “They (celeb or expert) wouldn’t endorse a low-grade product.”

There are various forms of social influence. Whatever form is used validates the decision the prospective customer is considering making. It tells them, “No, you’re not wrong. Go ahead and try it.” It isn’t some form of psychological manipulation or shady marketing; it’s simply how all humans make decisions. Social influence gives you credibility and applies a value to your service or product, making it something you **must** consider in all your marketing strategies.

# Chapter 1

## Using Credible Sources

After reading the introduction, you should understand that there is a diversity of types of social influence. When considering which type to use it’s important to use a source your audience will find credible.

## Wisdom in Numbers

A great example of social influence comes from McDonalds' classic advertising: "247 billion served." This is telling the consumer that since an enormous amount of people have chosen their product that they must be good. This counts on the sheer power of such a large number. These aren't people that you consider experts, friends or anyone else in particular.

## Relatable

Sometimes social influence relies on you being persuaded by the approval of people who are relatable or similar to you. It ties in a connection between you and your likes, and the likes of others. Amazon is a good example of this when it says, "People who bought this also purchased that" and suggests a similar product. The primary principle is that you can relate to the person in the ad, and their choice influences your choice.

## Previous Customer

Whenever you see a testimonial or review you are seeing a classic example of social influence that produces trust in a product or service. A past customer that gives you their personal reference for a product is very influential.

## Expert Opinion

Using an expert to endorse a product will generate a lot more credibility than that of an ordinary person. The judgment of a product in their particular field tells others that they should feel secure in making the same choice.

## How to Use Effectively

You need to go beyond simply showing endorsements of your service or product. Use social influence that is targeted on some particular part of NAMS, Inc.

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what you are offering and how it has produced successful results for others who have used it. When you tell your audience that your customer satisfaction rate is high, it conveys that previous users are happy with the product's results.

You can focus on a specific benefit that is the result of using your product. For example, a product may save you time, bring your family closer together, save you money, etc. Make the results as specific as possible such as saying, "By using this product, you will get a better night's rest."

Another good social influence strategy is to highlight your expertise in the market. A law firm can use social influence to show that their clients benefit from large lawsuit settlement amounts.

## Chapter 2

### Customers Give Social Influence

After you determine what type of social influence you will use, decide how you are going to get it. You need to create a marketing strategy that includes the ongoing process of gathering social influences.

#### Getting Down Basics

Imagine yourself as the customer for a moment. What type of information would remove any hesitation in deciding about the service or product? What type of social influence would be the most effective in leading them to choose your business?

The key is to figure out what is meaningful and relevant to your customer. If you are selling computer programs or software, expert testimony would be a better social influence than friends' likes or shares.

Another factor to consider is where the customer is in your sales funnel. Social influence types may vary at different places in the sales funnel. You need to keep in mind what action you are wanting them to take and what



information they already know about your brand and company. For each step in your funnel define what solutions your customer needs and position your social proof so that it clearly provides the solution. You may want to consider the following:

- ❖ How did your customer benefit from using your product?
- ❖ How is your product currently being used?
- ❖ Did your product meet their expectations?
- ❖ Would they recommend the product to another friend?
- ❖ Who is the customer leaving the testimonial?

When possible, be sure to have the picture of the customer with testimonial. This makes it more relatable and real to the visitor.

**Remember that the key factor is that the visitor can relate to the person.**

## Obtaining Testimonials

Testimonials can be from long-term loyal customers, or from first-time consumers who have just benefited from your product for the first time. Some ways to obtain testimonials have been provided for you below.

Follow-up to a recurring purchase	➔	Customers may be more apt to leaving a testimonial after multiple purchases.
Follow-up to a new purchase	➔	Ask customers to do you a favor and leave a testimonial.
Reviews or online comments	➔	Ask customers that wrote positive review if you can use it for a testimonial.
Comments section on a survey	➔	Include testimonial section in your customer survey.
Reply to comments	➔	If customer sends you an email, this is a great time to ask for a testimonial.
Asking directly	➔	Simply ask customer to leave a testimonial.
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Remove any barriers that may prevent your customer from being inclined to leave a testimonial. Incentives are a good way to encourage your customer to say what they already feel.

## Location of Your Testimonials

Testimonials can be placed anywhere on your website. You want to put them in a location that compliments your sales funnel. For example, a first-time customers review can be placed on your check-out page to extinguish any last-minute doubts about your product.

Create a section on your social media sites or your website that is specifically created to highlight testimonials left by customers. Set it up as a section for telling your customer's stories. Make this a comments section where customers can leave their own feedback.

## Ongoing Testimonial Collection

You need to set up a system where you continuously gather new testimonials. They should be changed out periodically. Communicate clearly that you accept testimonials and would love to publish them. You could let customers know that include a link to their profile or site.

You should always encourage customer feedback whether you are trying to gather testimonials or not. By being able to better meet the needs of your customers, you are providing yourself further opportunities for collecting testimonials from positive feedback.

# Chapter 3

## More Social Influence Tactics

Testimonials are the most widely used social influence tactic, but there are many other ways that can be used. A combined approach is usually the most effective.

## Using Case Studies

A Case study tells a story about the customer using your product. It is an expanded more in-depth testimonial. It emphasizes a positive experience your customer has had and offers detailed background information. It's better to use a few well-written stories than many that are lacking quality and details.

Make them highly visual with images of customer using the product. Turning it into a video case study is a great option as well. Be specific in your supporting data. It's better to say, "I gained 5,000 subscribers" than to say, "my email list grew."

## Users Producing Social Influence

This is a type of social influence that creates itself in a sense. You only need to provide the platform for the users to create the content for you. The big advantage is that it removes your role and takes minimal work on your part. Another positive is that because it is user-generated, consumers know that it isn't coming from you, adding to the content's credibility.

A drawback is your lack of control as a business owner if a user provides negative feedback.

Some examples of user-produced social influence include the following:

- ❖ Reviews on websites or blogs written by consumers
- ❖ User reviews on sites such as Yelp or TripAdvisor
- ❖ Comments about your company on social media sites like Facebook, Google+, Pinterest or LinkedIn

You can't control what users write but you can act as a moderator and try to avoid negativity. The following are a few tips to try to help in this area:

- ❖ Guide conversations in a positive direction
- ❖ Show your customer service skills by responding with concern to negative comments and offering a solution to their problem.
- ❖ Encourage your biggest supporters to be active on third-party platforms.

- ❖ Set up notifications to alert you to new comments so you are aware of what is being said and to be able to respond promptly.

## Online Customer Reviews

People are increasingly relying on online reviews before making purchases. This is a powerful type of social influence because it is the voice of the customer, not the company.

You can set up your website for customers to leave reviews there or use third party online review sites like Yelp. Don't worry about negative reviews. If you allow users to write reviews, there will be the inevitable possibility that someone may write something negative. An upside to unfavorable comments, is that they add credibility. If all reviews are fantastic and nothing but praise, some consumers may be suspicious.

Here are some guidelines to follow if you are going to put reviews on your site:

- ❖ Put your reviews in a location on your site that is easy to spot.
- ❖ Part of your regular follow-up and sales processes should include soliciting reviews.
- ❖ Offer incentives to customers for providing reviews.
- ❖ Turn every piece of feedback you get into a review.

## Trust the Numbers

Statistics show trust and credibility by using numbers only. Using messages such as, "200 people have purchased" or "we now have 10,000 subscribers" give specific numbers telling the reader that your product has value. Use actual statistics not made up figures. You can get this information from your website analytics or customer surveys.

## Using Mentions

Anytime your company or website is mentioned in any media arena, this is a wonderful occasion to show your social influence. These mentions are more influential coming from a trusted source than a regular person or customer.

You can solicit mentions by contacting media outlets directly. Sign up for notifications using a service like Google Alerts. They will notify you whenever your website is mentioned online. Use the information to display on your website, social media profile, and any other communication forms appropriate.

## Social Sharing Buttons

Another excellent source of social influence is social sharing. You can add social sharing buttons to your website and any other content, to allow people to share your content on social media.

# Chapter 4

## Publish Your Results

Now that you have compiled your information it's time to publish it. You want to display it so that it is visible to the widest audience possible in order to enhance your sales funnel and encourage your customer's decision to purchase your product.

Here are some types of social influence you should display prominently:

- ❖ Put customer comments, rankings, ratings and testimonials in your product descriptions.
- ❖ Add social sharing buttons and social media widgets to every page on your website.
- ❖ Include testimonials in your weekly blog.
- ❖ Tweet the results of the latest statistics or surveys.
- ❖ When possible show images or videos of your customers. Make sure you obtain their permission.
- ❖ Display any certification or accreditation badges.
- ❖ Display any awards or mentions using pictures or graphics.
- ❖ Use trust badges to show your customers that their privacy and security are important to you.
- ❖ Include statistical breakdown in your email newsletter.

# Chapter 5

## Continually Build Your Process

Collecting and publishing social proof needs to be part of an ongoing process that you incorporate into your marketing plan. You should always be collecting, managing and publishing it regularly.

You can make any needed adjustments for improvement.

Here are some basics for setting up your social influence management system:

- ❖ Take screenshots of all favorable social media posts.
- ❖ Make a special file for emails, thank-you notes, awards, validations and anything else that you can use.
- ❖ Ask customers immediately if you can use the compliment they just gave you.
- ❖ Put a customer testimonial tab on your Facebook page.
- ❖ Listen to the feedback you receive from your customers and take note of any obstacles they face. You can use that information to choose the appropriate social influence to remove those barriers.
- ❖ Make a file for negative feedback that you can refer to when you are searching for new social influence or to improve your product.
- ❖ Respond right away to any feedback.

## Conclusion

Now you're ready to implement what you have learned and strengthen your social proof. Create an action plan that includes how you are going to obtain, publish and track social influence. Monitor your information and pay close attention to the reactions you receive. Knowing what works and where it works best, makes social influence a powerful tool on your road to success.