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Establishing Credibility as a New Business

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Being self-employed can be very rewarding in the long run, but it's often challenging when you're just starting out. In order to get a new business off the ground, you need customers, but customers aren't easily willing to put their trust in a newbie. It's a catch-22 -- and nobody wants to be the guinea pig. Now, if you're just starting your new company, there are a number of tactics you can use to establish credibility with potential clients *before* you even open your doors.

If you don't yet have a proven track record as a business owner, but you have many years' experience as a successful business *person*, you can use that to your advantage. First, solicit testimonials from your top 10 contacts, including colleagues, networking partners and customers. Ask them about their experience working with you. Ask for both general feedback that speaks to your character such as your work ethic, follow-up, organization, attention to detail, and professionalism. Also ask for feedback regarding specific projects you've worked on that speaks to your talent.

All of this information will help you create the initial selling-point-content for your marketing material and Web site. As a new business, often what you're selling first is you. Trust and experience must be established before you even get a chance to sell your services or product.

What others say about you is extremely powerful, so use the positive feedback you receive from your contacts as a sales and marketing tool to establish credibility. Use it when writing the marketing content for your new business. On your website, when you describe the products and/or services you will offer, include the general character feedback you've received from your contacts as testimonials on the page.

Next, using the testimonials you receive from your past customers; create case studies that show the ultimate results of the projects you discuss in your marketing materials. Items to include in your case studies should look something like this:

- Name of project
- Challenge to be solved

- Solution you provided
- Result of your solution
- Testimonial from contact who you worked with on the project

The projects you choose to highlight as case studies in your marketing materials should be relevant to the products and services you will offer in your new business. So, for instance, if you're going to offer sales training, choose a project to use as a case study that speaks to your ability and experience as a sales trainer. If you're going to help businesses create new revenue streams, highlight a project you've done that showcases your ability in that area. Or, if you're going to offer one-on-one coaching, choose a project to highlight as a case study to show the results you've created in that area, and so on.

To establish credibility with new prospects as you start your new business venture, you don't have to have history as a "company" as long as you have successful work history as an individual. Potential customers just want to know that you've achieved positive results for others and trust that you can do the same thing for them.

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