

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE to SOCIAL PROOF MARKETING



INTRODUCTION

Do you sometimes wonder why customers pick your competitors over you?

After all, you do everything by the book. You attract the right traffic, engage visitors with killer content and constantly test different approaches to improving the user experience.

And yet...

...they still prefer to buy from someone else.

But you see:

They might have a good reason for doing so.

For instance, they may perceive your competitors' as more trustworthy, credible, and consider their products as more popular.

They see the others using your competitor's products. They hear stories from friends about how well they have helped them, and read reviews and praise for your competitors' efforts...

So while you think your products are better, customers still prefer to buy something else... just because of various social proof that convinces them to do so.

We're hoping to help you change that with this eBook.

We'll show you how to use social proof to convince more people to buy from you, and present you with examples of how other companies successfully use it in marketing.

WHO IS THIS EBOOK FOR?

E-commerce Owners

If your online sales aren't as high as you'd hoped for, it might mean that you need to increase the trust in your store or products. And that's exactly what this eBook will help you achieve.

Advertisers

If every ad you run fails to convince users to your product, then you should keep on reading too. You'll find out how to grab prospects' attention and convince them to buy from you.

Agencies

If you want to find out how to improve the effectiveness of client campaigns, this eBook is for you too. It'll teach you how to incorporate social proof into their marketing campaigns and improve their performance

HOW TO GET MORE PEOPLE TO BUY FROM YOU?

I'm sure you've noticed:

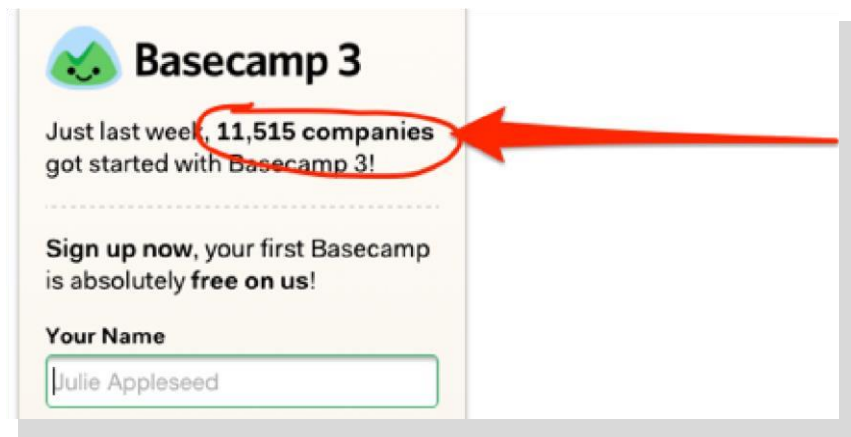
Many websites feature information on the numbers of customers who have purchased their products.



Online stores display ratings and reviews for every product they sell.



Software companies boast about the number of their active users or recent signups.

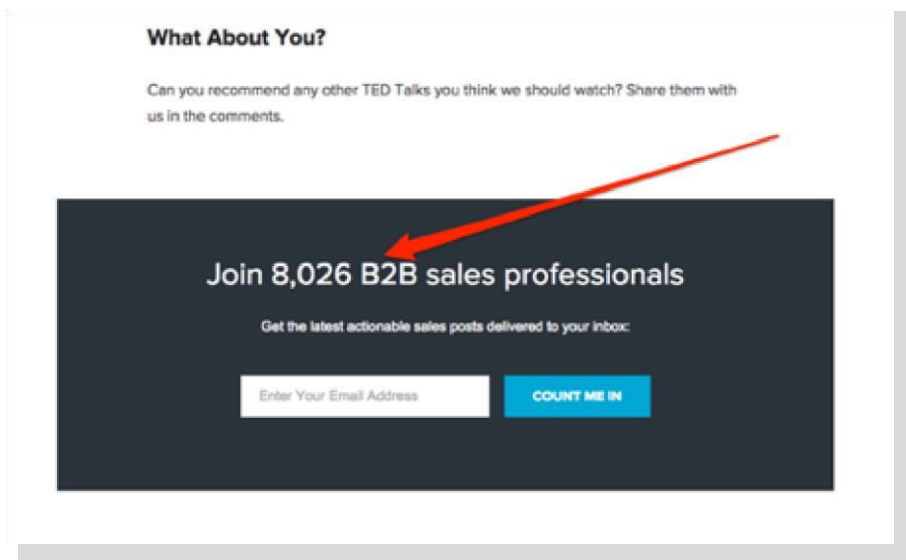


A screenshot of a Basecamp 3 sign-up form. At the top left is the Basecamp 3 logo. To its right, the text reads: "Just last week, **11,515 companies** got started with Basecamp 3!". The number "11,515 companies" is circled in red, and a red arrow points from it to the right. Below this, the text says: "Sign up now, your first Basecamp is absolutely free on us!". Underneath is a label "Your Name" followed by a text input field containing "Julie Appleseed".

Groups and organizations make you get on a waitlist before you can apply to join them.

The September Workshop is full, but we invite you to sign up for our waiting list. If you want to join this workshop, please fill out this form and type "waiting list" in the questions field, and simply click [Submit]. Your name will be added to the waiting list.

And marketers entice you to sign up for their list showing the number of current subscribers.



A screenshot of a sign-up form for B2B sales professionals. At the top, it says "What About You?" followed by a question: "Can you recommend any other TED Talks you think we should watch? Share them with us in the comments." Below this is a dark grey box with white text that reads: "Join 8,026 B2B sales professionals". A red arrow points from the number "8,026" to the right. Underneath this box, it says "Get the latest actionable sales posts delivered to your inbox:". At the bottom of the dark box are two elements: a white input field with the placeholder text "Enter Your Email Address" and a blue button with the text "COUNT ME IN".

And the reason for doing it all?

To offer social proof communicating a product's value, and popularity, and influence our buying behavior.

ENTER SOCIAL PROOF

Social proof is behind almost every purchasing decision we make.

Just think about it:

*How often do you pick a restaurant based solely on the number of people dining inside?
Buy a product based on a number of customers who have allegedly purchased it already?
Or hire a particular service provider just because they have more positive reviews?*

That's social proof in action.

Whenever we're unable to make a decision, we look at what other people do, assuming that their actions are correct for the given situation.

What's more, this behavior is heavily engrained in our nature.

For one, we humans are pack animals.

You might think that you're an individual but deep within you're as influenced by other people around you, their opinions, choices, actions as anybody else.

Scientific experiments like the Stanley Milgram's Street Corner Experiment or Dr. Solomon's Asche's Lift and Line Experiments have proved that **we tend to assume that if many people are doing something, have done something or believe in something, there must be a good reason why.**

And so... we conform.

WHY DOES YOUR BUSINESS NEED SOCIAL PROOF?

Think about it:

You could be doing a great job communicating your unique value proposition or the benefits of using your products...

...but unless you convince others to see what you offer as more favorable and popular; all your other efforts will be in vain.

Social proof builds trust

It's damn hard to convince customers to try your product or book your service without any proof of how it has helped others.

Having social proof (i.e. reviews, testimonials or even the number of sales to date) adds credibility to your business.

Social proof helps to validate the buying decision

For many products, social proof helps to communicate that buying them will get us accepted in social circles, for instance. And so, it provides additional reasoning for making the buying decision.

Social proof also simplifies decision-making

Often imitating what others are doing is the simplest way to actually avoid having to make it.

TYPES OF SOCIAL PROOF YOU COULD USE IN MARKETING

PART 1. USER SOCIAL PROOF

Tell me:

Do you pay attention to what other people say about a product before purchasing it?

I, for one, often head to a product's reviews section first, well before reading the manufacturer's description.

And turns out, so do What's more, trust reviews as much as personal recommendations.

It, therefore, goes without saying:

Nothing beats other user's stories as a way to help you make up your mind about buying a product.

Testimonials, reviews, ratings, case studies, user stories and many other user proof help communicate the users' approval of a product or service.

And here are a couple of examples how companies use this social proof type in marketing:

REVIEWS ON PRODUCT PAGES

Did you know:

"63% of customers are more likely to make a purchase from a site which has user reviews".

And so, creating a reviews section on the site is bound to help you increase conversions.



The clothing company, Ugmonk, includes a prominent reviews section that, apart from allowing customers to leave feedback, offers an option to ask the company pre-sale questions.

TESTIMONIALS

Testimonials help build trust and overcome a prospect's skepticism about your product.

They can also position you as a "safe choice" because they prove that you've already helped someone else.

And there's a number of ways companies use to display testimonials.

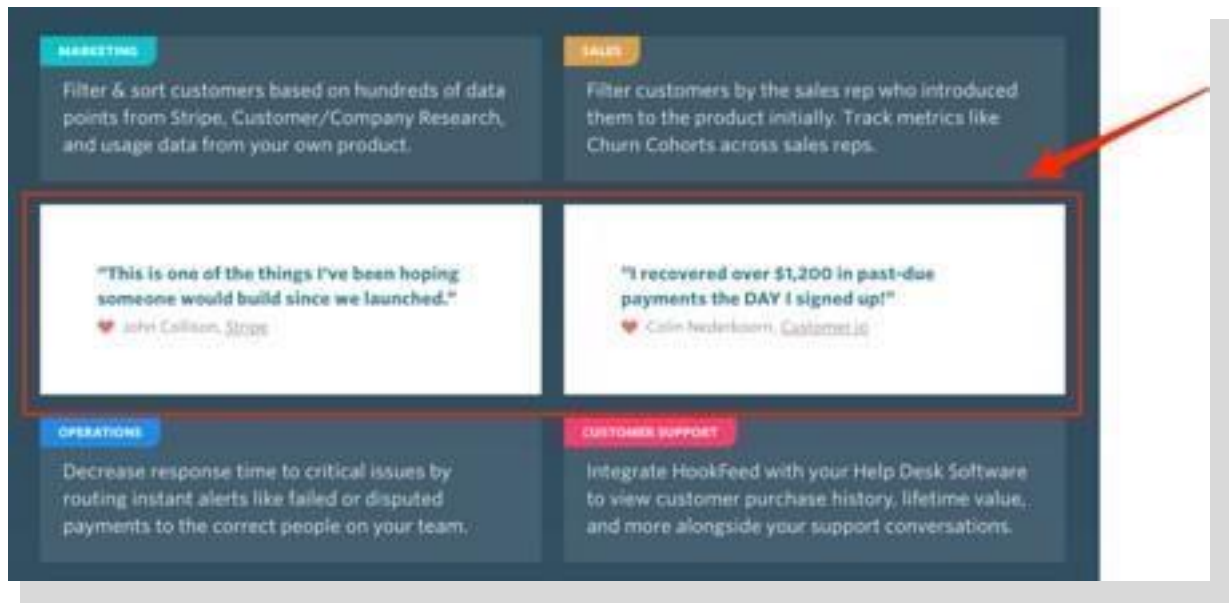
1. Create a dedicated testimonials section on the home page, like Freshbooks (and millions of other companies) did:



Note how Freshbooks uses those testimonials to achieve two objectives:

- They communicate social proof by making them prominent on the page.
- But also, they overcome their audience's key sales objections. Those testimonials feature exactly what prospects should hear to convince them to sign up. For example, the middle testimonial includes this line: *"I get paid three times faster using Freshbooks"* And I'm sure any self-employed person would agree that this is a heck of a benefit!

2. Blend them with the rest of the copy to back up its claims (like in this example from HookFeed):



3. Or include them in the sub-headline to achieve immediate impact:



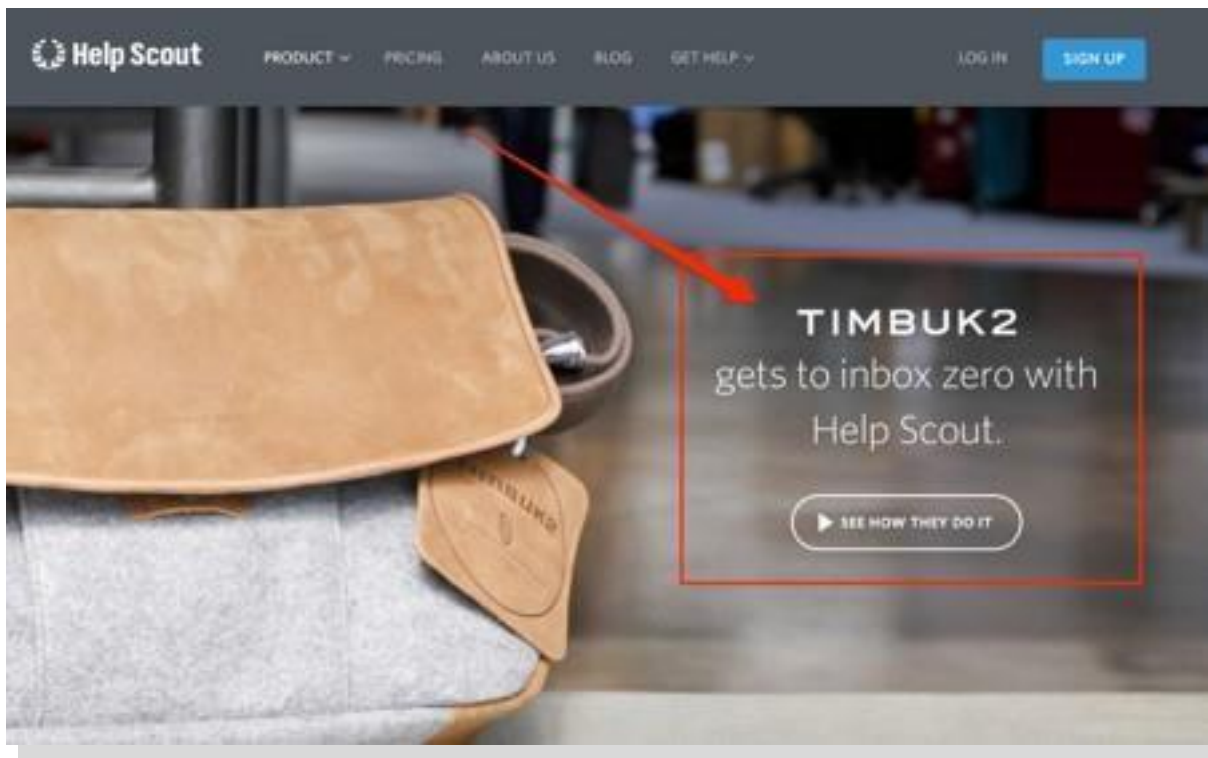
CASE STUDIES

Case studies provide a deep insight into a customer's story, from the problem they experienced and the reason they sought out your solution to how you've helped them solve it.

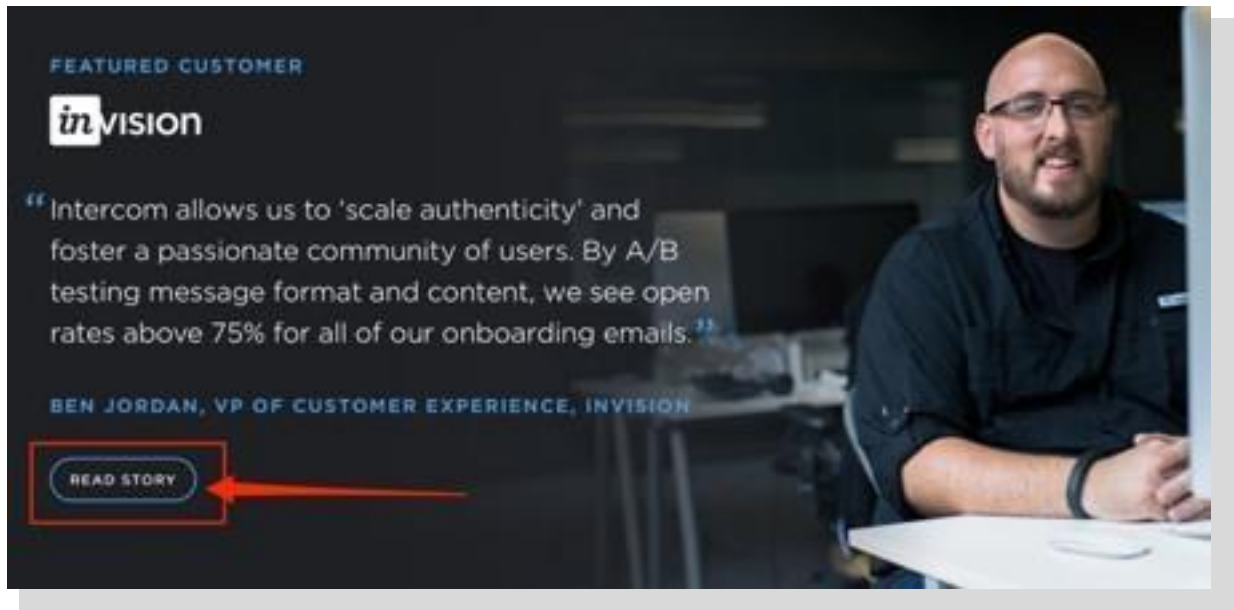
Case studies help convince prospects at later stages of the buying cycle and for that reason, companies often use them as lead magnets.

However, that's not the only way to use this social proof.

HelpScout, for example, offers video case studies right on their home page:



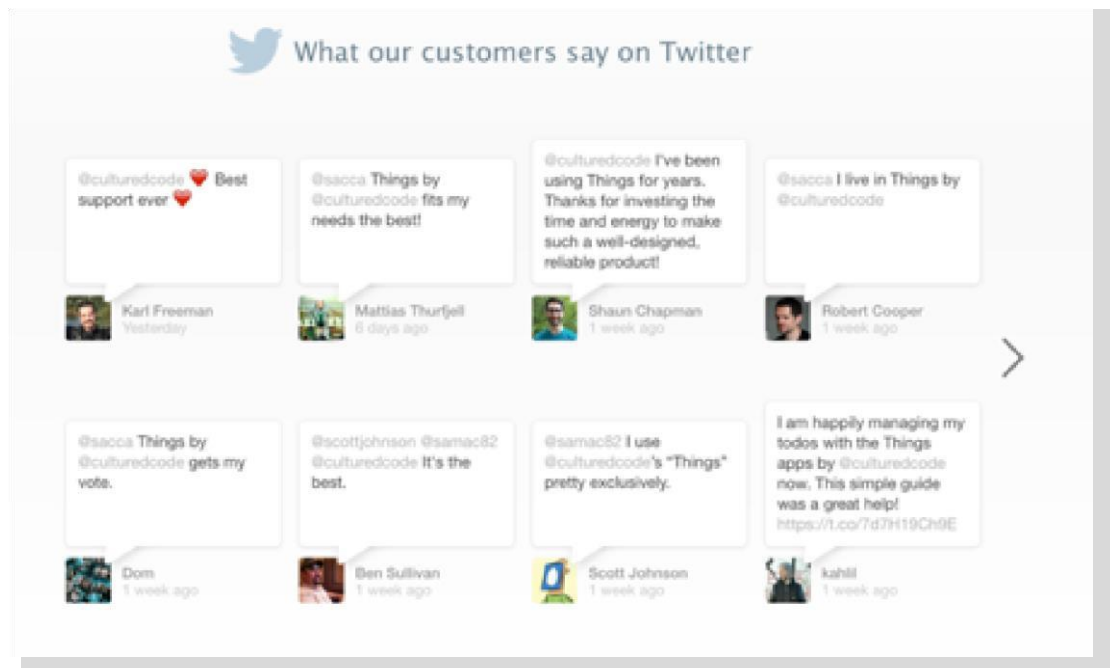
Intercom, on the other hand, combines them with testimonials to target casual browsers and prospects already comparing available solutions to buy.



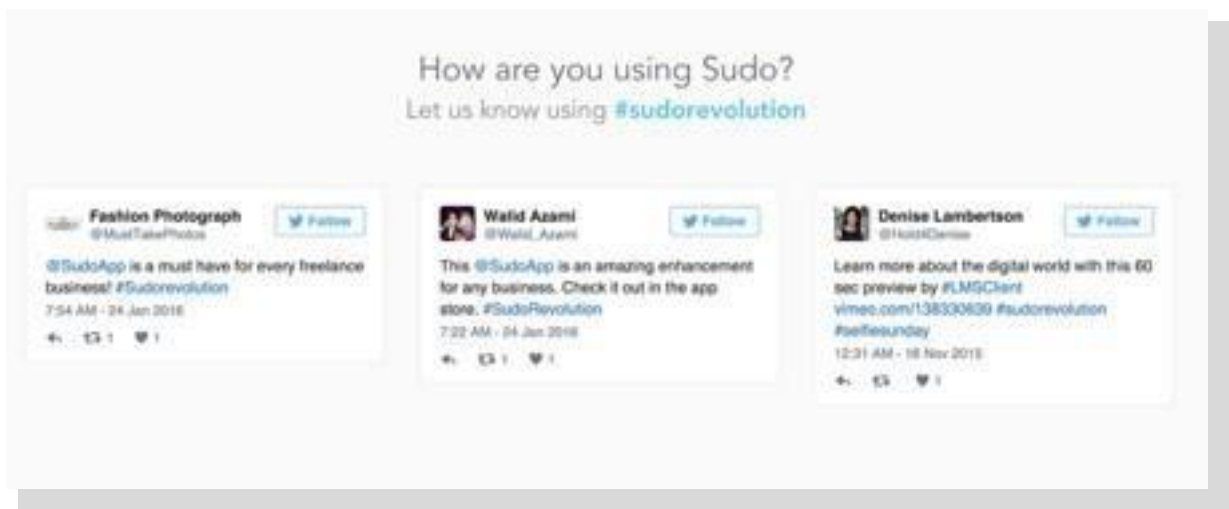
ONLINE BRAND MENTIONS

Some companies display their brand mentions on social media as a social proof.

For example, Cultured Code, the makers of Things app, include tweets with their company brand name on the home page:



Sudo App also includes tweets mentioning their brand on the site:



USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Because it isn't created by the company, a marketing agency or someone else with the intention to promote the brand, user-generated content is becoming the most trusted form of social proof.

Take GoPro for example. The company embraced user-generated content in their marketing.

And the result?

In 2013 alone the company's net income grew by \$28 million with only \$41k more in marketing costs.

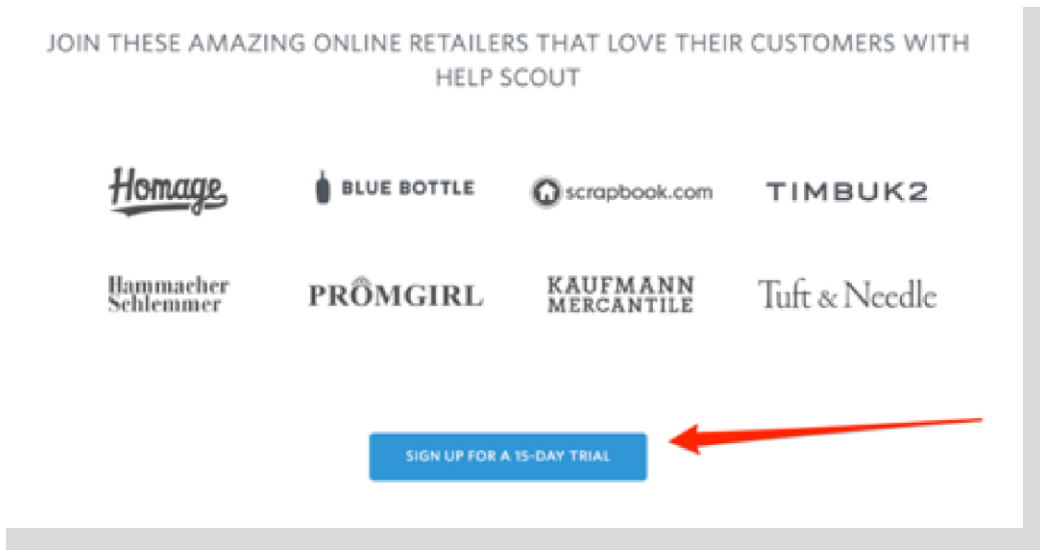
Here's one example of their user-generated content, a video of on his head for a day:



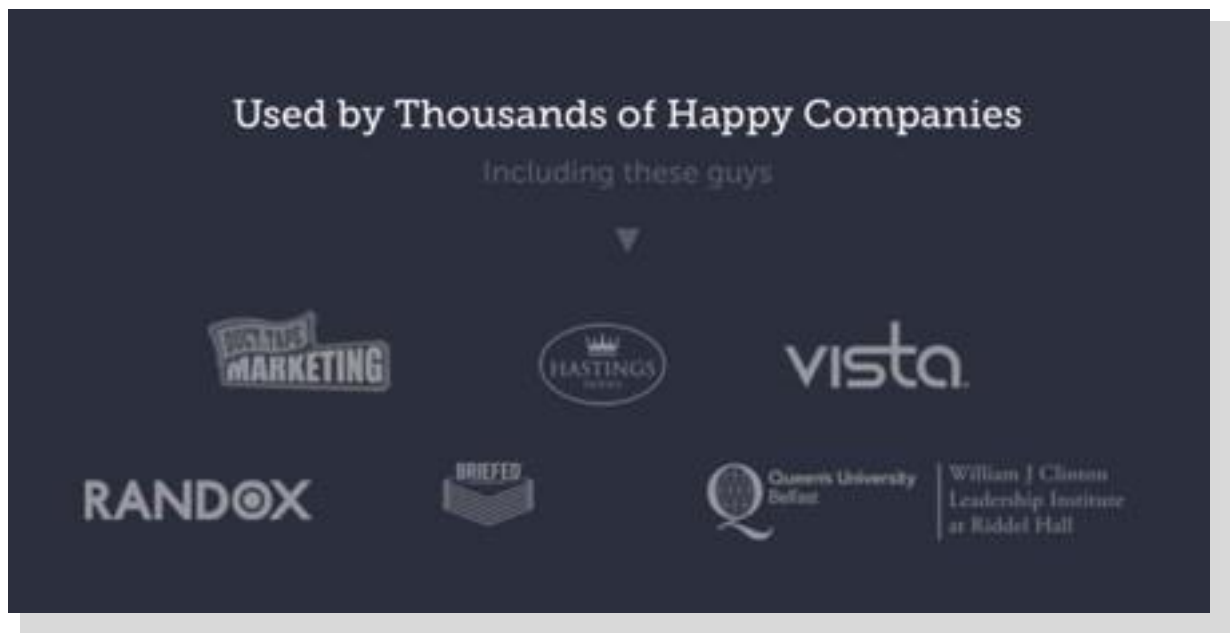
CLIENT LOGOS

Including a list of clients and showing their logos often helps B2B companies provide a strong social proof convincing others to hire them.

HelpScout not only displays logos of companies they've helped but also, positions it close to the sign-up button, turning client logos into the final proof needed to convince someone to try their product.

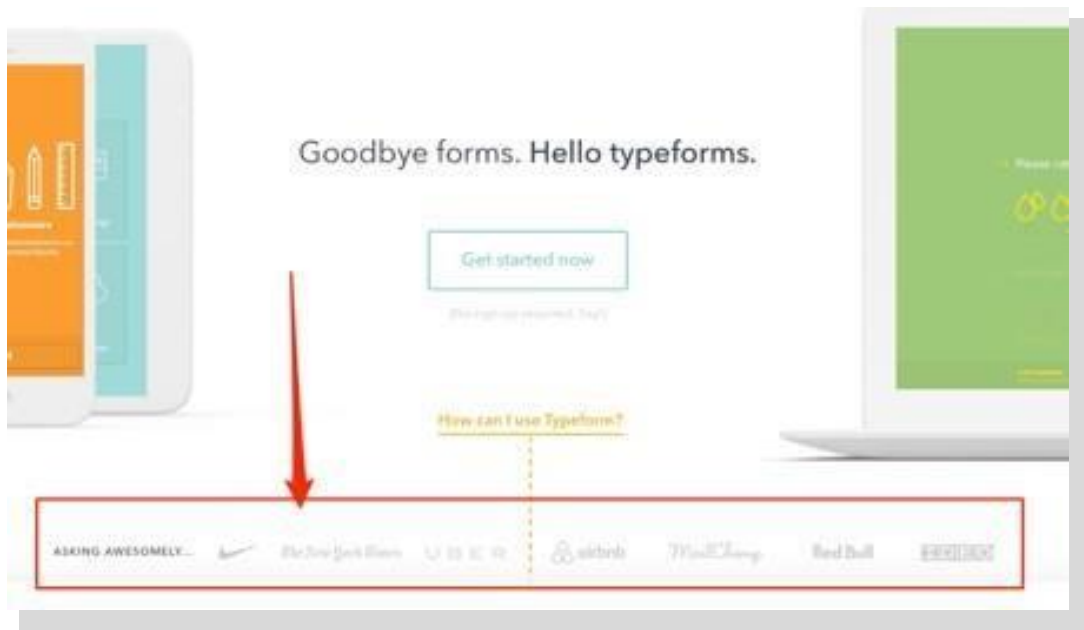


Beacon combines logos with another social proof type, also displaying the number of companies already using their product.



Typeform resorts to just including logos but makes a good play on it in the copy. Instead of using the typical “Companies that use our products” headline, they reference what the product helps clients to achieve, run awesome surveys, by stating that these businesses “Asking awesomely...”

Clever, huh?



PART 2. WISDOM OF THE CROWD SOCIAL PROOF

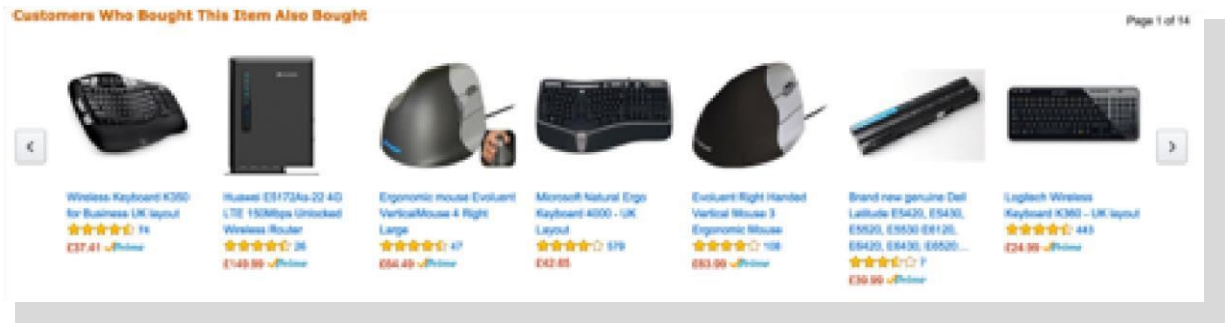
Seeing that the others might be benefitting from something makes many of us want the same.

Companies use this phenomenon (called FOMO -the Fear Of Missing Out, by the way) to entice more people to buy from them.

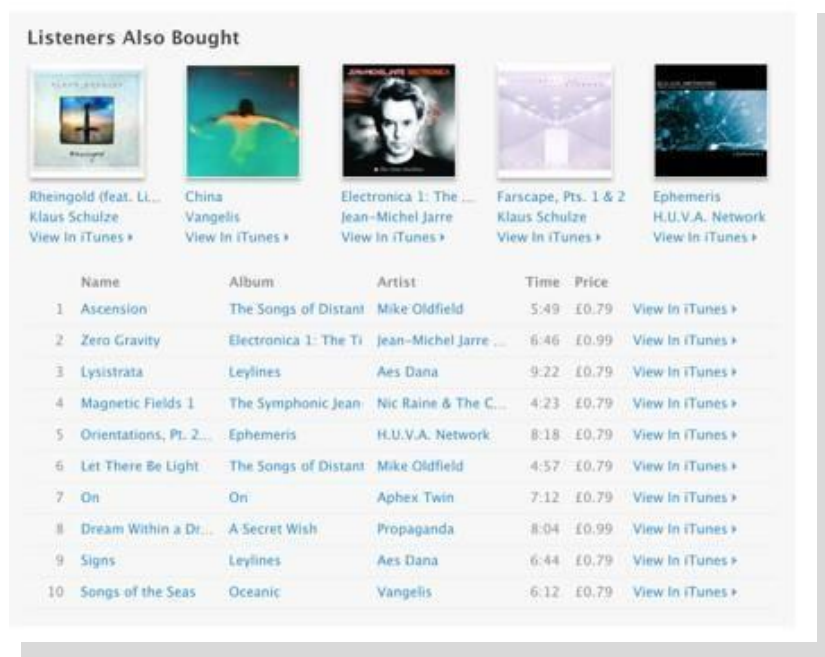
Here's how:

OTHER PEOPLE'S PURCHASES

Amazon (and many other retail stores) show a list of products customers who bought a particular item had also purchased:



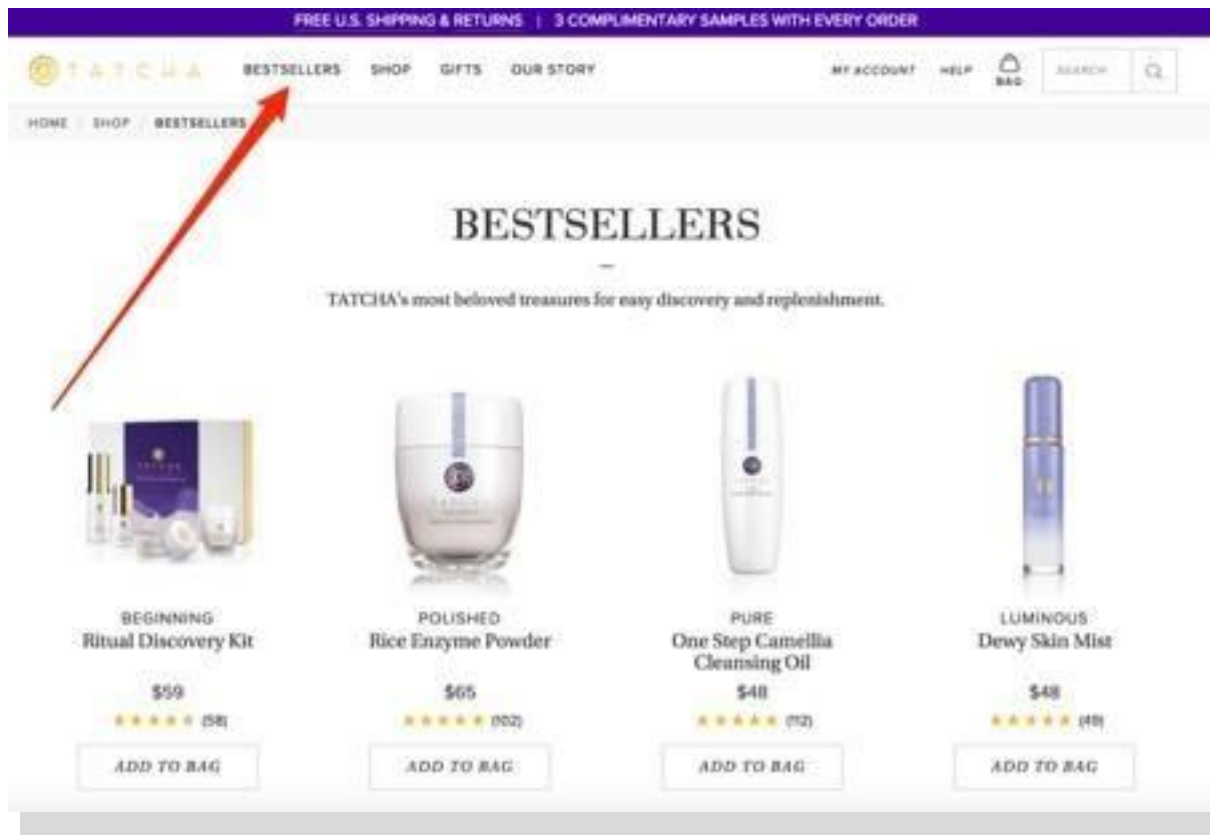
iTunes shows albums listeners bought:



BEST SELLERS

Denoting a product as a best-seller is another way to highlight its popularity.

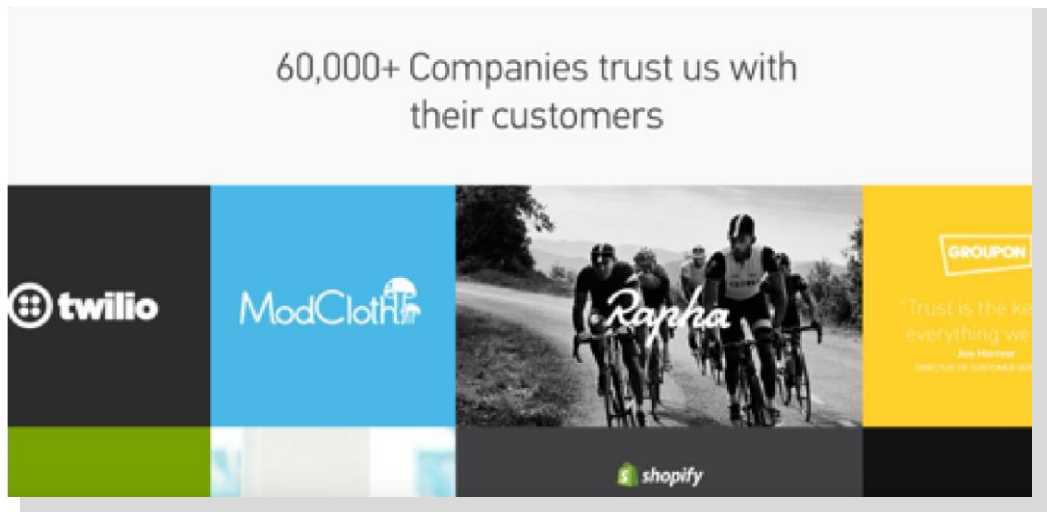
Tatcha, a beauty and skincare products retailer, features a dedicated Bestsellers section on their site. Notices how it is strategically placed as the first item in the navigation.



CUSTOMER OR SALES STATS

Many companies show the number of customers who use or purchased their products to signify their value ability and trust they receive from others.

Zendesk highlights their huge user base:



Note how they include their value benefit in the copy. Instead of just stating the number of companies using their live chat app, they tie the number to the key benefit their product delivers – increased customer satisfaction.

SumoMe states how many sites use their products:



Invision ties the number of users with the call to action, using this social proof as the final way to overcome their prospects' sales objections.



SOCIAL SHARES

Showing social sharing stats helps many companies convince first-time visitors to their content.

We do it here on AdEspresso:



So does Kissmetrics:

How Live Chat on Your Website Can Maximize Conversions

Live chat is the ultimate sales hack. It's a big call, but I stand by it. The reason is simple. It's the easiest way to bump your website conversions in real-time without split testing.

This won't come as a surprise to many of you who have already tried live chat to increase leads (and save on customer service). But, for most of you, it didn't work right away.

Websites like Kissmetrics and SaneBox (which trialed our service when we founded) have tried live chat, and the data was conclusive. There was **no increase in conversions**, and in some cases a reduction.



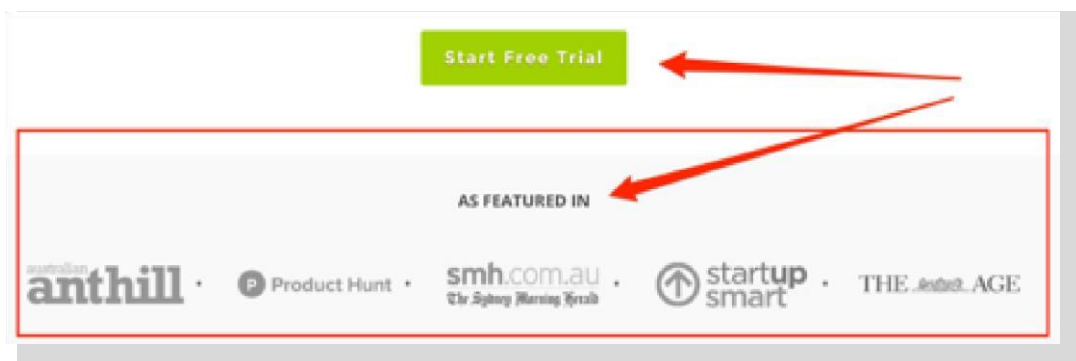
And millions of other sites out there.

“AS FEATURED ON”

If you don't have a large user base to allow you to use the wisdom of the crowd social proof, use media mentions instead.

Many new startups display an “as featured on...” section on the site or landing pages to use the credibility of media to offer some social proof to visitors.

LeadChat displays media companies that have covered their company recently. Note how they placed the list right below the call to action.



PART 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FRIENDS

You know:

We almost unconditionally trust recommendations from the people we know.

For example , 84% of people say they completely trust recommendations from friends and relatives.

A joint-research project by revealed that word of mouth is the highest point of influence for customers (74%).

And a discovered that moms rely on the wisdom of friends 67% more than on any other channel.

And so, enticing people to recommend your products is another way to highlight their value and popularity.

However, this social proof works differently than the others I presented so far. Instead of showing a proof on the site, you need to develop strategies to encourage customers to share what you offer with the others.

Here's how:

SHARING PURCHASES

Include an option for customers to share their recent purchase with friends on social media.



REWARDS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Offer rewards to customers for forwarding your emails or product pages to a friend.

The Body Shop, for example, ran a dedicated campaign to entice customers to share their newsletter with friends.

INCENTIVES

Reward customers for every new customer they bring into your business.

Dropbox gives free space for every new user you entice to sign up.



PART 4. EXPERT SOCIAL PROOF

This type of social proof relies on a credible source (a celebrity, an influencer or another recognizable person your audience identifies with) endorsing or approving a product or service in some way.

Here is a number of ways to use it:

TESTIMONIALS FROM INDUSTRY'S INFLUENCERS

Copyblogger's home page features testimonials from people their audience would consider influencers and most likely look up to:



ENDORSEMENTS

With a big enough budget, you can get celebrities to tweet or promote your product in other ways to their followers.

In 2012, Internships.com hired Charlie Sheen to tweet about them to his followers. The tweet (you can see it below) reportedly generated over



Or feature them in video ads.

Like Volvo did in this ad featuring Jean-Claude Van Damme.



DOES SOCIAL PROOF REALLY WORK?

As part of the AdEspresso University, we decided to see for ourselves if social proof marketing really makes the difference.

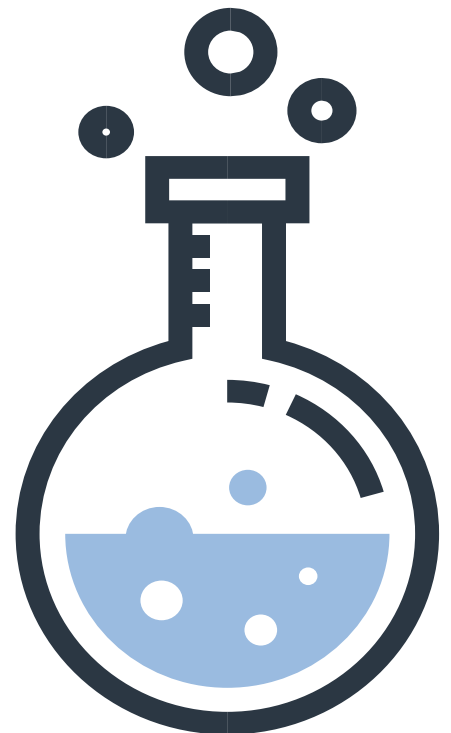
We ran two ad campaigns:

One enticing people to join our newsletter, The
other, offering an eBook download.

In both campaigns we set 3 different ad creatives:

One included a rounded number as a social proof (i.e. 35000+),

The other, an exact number,



Finally, the third ad featured no social proof whatsoever.

We spent, on average, \$100 per each ad.

And the results?

ADS WITH SOCIAL PROOF GENERATED A LOWER COST PER LEAD THAN THE ONE WITHOUT ANY SOCIAL PROOF.

Here's the exact breakdown of costs per lead per campaign:

The "Newsletter" Campaign:

Ad with exact social proof: \$1.973

Ad with a rounded number: \$2.202

Ad with no social proof: \$2.478

The "eBook Download" Campaign:

Ad with a rounded number: \$1.572

Ad with exact social proof: \$1.741

Ad with no social proof: \$2.056

However, as you can see, our research wasn't conclusive on which social proof works better, an exact or rounded number.

Something for another test perhaps?

AND, THAT'S IT

Hopefully, now you have a good idea of what social proof is and how to use it to entice more people to buy from you.

The next logical step then is to implement this advice and start positioning your products as more valuable, trustworthy and popular.

THANK YOU

Thank you for reading our eBook. If you found this information useful, don't forget to drop by our blog for even more amazing social marketing advice.

Also, check the other AdEspresso University experiments:

And finally, if you have any questions or suggestions regarding this publication, get in touch with us at:

