

Why you won't see client testimonials on our website.

Let's face it, we live in a world where we look things up and see what other folks think about a restaurant, a business, a product, or just about anything you can think of before we go eat there or hire someone or buy a product, etc. I know we do it here at Safe Harbor. So naturally you might ask, "Where are the client reviews?" "What are people saying about Safe Harbor? Are they any good?" "If I don't see any reviews does that mean they aren't doing good work for clients?"

There is a simple answer and a more complicated one. ***The simple answer is that we legally cannot have client testimonials on our website.*** We would be very happy to put client testimonials on our website to show you that we are good knowledgeable people who take care of our clients. We have had any number of clients offer to do so. But we cannot do that.

Now for the more complicated answer. At Safe Harbor we are fiduciaries to our clients which means we take on the responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest and work only in the best interests of our clients. Part of our fiduciary responsibility is to follow the legal requirements for our profession, one of which is a rule from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that says:

It shall constitute a fraudulent, deceptive, or manipulative act, practice, or course of business...for any investment adviser registered or required to be registered under [the Investment Adviser Act], directly or indirectly, to publish, circulate, or distribute any advertisement which refers, directly or indirectly, to any testimonial of any kind concerning the investment adviser or concerning any advice, analysis, report or other service rendered by such investment adviser.

Note the very harsh words "fraudulent, deceptive, or manipulative" in this Rule. While we can certainly understand a rule that prohibits false or misleading testimonials unfortunately this Rule does not make any distinctions between good ones and bad ones. So we are left with none at all which is entirely incongruous with the way people actually do business these days as noted above.

To make matters worse our counterparts who are in the broker/dealer world (think of those who sell products and manage money) **don't** have this same SEC rule and can actually have client testimonials on their website. But by definition they are not fiduciaries as we are. So, one simple test of whether a so-called financial planner is really a fiduciary is to see whether they have client testimonials on their site. If they do, then they are not fiduciaries. If they don't they might be, and you need to look further. Makes your head hurt a bit, right? Our many satisfied clients would be happy to say so, but they just can't....