

What is the Ultimate Marketing Tool that Can Help You Engage an Audience, Penetrate New Markets, Enhance Customer Loyalty and Increase Sales All at the Same Time?

By: Julia Perry



Some businesses have trouble engaging an audience, penetrating markets of doubtful customers, enhancing customer loyalty and increasing sales. The ultimate marketing tool that can help a business accomplish all of these objectives at the same time is the case study. Here's how.

What is a case study?

A case study is well-written story that shows tangible results about how a product or service made a real difference for a real customer. Case studies demonstrate what problem a customer is facing. They also show the solution a product or service provided as well as the measurability of the results achieved.¹

“Case studies, usually two or more pages, go into more specifics about one or more customers, providing greater detail about certain aspects of a customer's experience. Instead of an overview in a success story, a case study often goes more in-depth regarding parts of the customer's experience. Some audiences, such as those in technical roles, want and need this additional detail to assist with decision-making. They need to see specifically how a solution works in a similar customer's environment, not just for increased confidence in the purchase, but also to educate themselves on successful practices of other companies. Many managers also like the additional detail that a case study provides, but they usually prefer business benefits and results rather than “how it works” information,” said Casey Hibbard, author of *Stories That Sell*.²

Why is the case study important?

The case study is important because it contains the positive client testimonial or customer success story. According to The National Federation of Independent Businesses, client testimonials are a powerful, often overlooked marketing tool.³

¹ Meranus, Rachel, “The Case for Case Studies,” <http://www.prnewswire.com/knowledge-center/content-marketing-strategies/Entrepreneurcom-The-Case-for-Case-Studies.html>, retrieved on February 13, 2013

² Hibbard, Casey, *Stories That Sell*, page 9

³ “Testimonials: How Important Are They,” National Federation of Independent Business, retrieved on January 8, 2013 at <http://www.nfib.com/business-resources/business-resources-item?cmsid=35752>

When client testimonials are creatively written into a story, they communicate directly to the consumer. "The creative use of writing in communicating with consumers is essential," said Dr. Andrzej Włodarczyk, Professor of Business at Nyack College's School of Business and Leadership.⁴

Terrance Vaughns, Territorial Sales Manager for Grainger agrees that written communication with consumers is essential. "Writing has helped numerous times around change management in my role. Written communication helps alleviate FAQs and also can be used as a refresher in emails. Our Senior Leaders all do blogs or articles on the state of the business and what is coming down the pipeline. It has helped with numerous things such as closing more sales, increasing revenue and profitability, etc," he said.⁵ Not only do well-written stories increase sales and generate more leads, but they can help business owners everywhere avoid losing a sale.

"Customer stories provide that critical validation that gets prospects' attention at multiple points in the sales cycle. Seeing clear results at other organizations like theirs helps buyers more easily make the decision to purchase, and eliminates risk in their minds. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't create detailed brochures and Web sites. They certainly provide important information for decision-makers. But for ultimate impact, you have to back them with real customer stories, results, and quotes," said Hibbard.⁶

One person who knows all too well how a good success story can increase sales is Subway's spokesperson, Jared Fogle. At one point in his life, Jared wore pants with 60-inch waistlines and weighed 425 pounds. One day, Jared received some startling news from his dad, a physician, who said his son would be dead by 40 if he didn't lose some weight.

Jared knew it was time for a change, so he went on a diet. He drank only coffee for breakfast. For lunch, he ate a six-inch turkey sub and a bag of Baked Lays chips. He also drank a Diet Coke. For dinner, he ate a foot long veggie sub and drank a Diet Coke. His subs had no cheese or mayonnaise on

⁴ Interview with Dr. Andrzej Włodarczyk, January 21, 2013

⁵ Interview with Grainger Territorial Sales Manager Terrance Vaughns, January 19, 2013

⁶ Hibbard, Casey, *Stories That Sell*, page 18

them, just lots of veggies and a little mustard. Jared did not eat snacks nor did he deviate from his diet.

After eating 700 Subway sandwiches, he lost 245 pounds. In 2008, Subway sales more than doubled to \$8.2 billion because of Jared's story.⁷ Today, Jared is celebrating 15 years of staying fit by eating Subway sandwiches.⁸

Do you see how powerful success stories are?

Case studies can benefit your business because they:

- **Engage audiences.** One reason why case studies are powerful is because of the success stories they contain. People remember the powerful stories they hear because a success story is unforgettable. "People are often bored or put off by facts, but they never tire of hearing stories. That's why selling with stories is so effective," said Jay Conrad Levinson author of *Guerrilla Marketing*.⁹ In addition, a case study helps engage an audience because it contains tangible results that anyone can achieve. Consumers are looking for answers to their problems. When they read a powerful case study about how your product or service redeemed someone from disaster, they will want to pay attention. They can also be moved to act because they will want to see the same redemption come forth in their own lives.
- **Penetrate new markets of doubtful customers.** Some consumers are hesitant and doubtful about trying a new product or service. However, a case study will eliminate doubt by proving that what you're offering really works. When a customer is doubtful about purchasing your product or service, the positive experiences of a few clients can influence them to buy. Doubt will also be eliminated because the case study tells a story about how to emulate reproducible results.

⁷ "Jared Fogle," <http://www.nndb.com/people/955/000044823/>, retrieved on February 18, 2013

⁸ Murray, Rheana, "Subway commercial spokesman Jared Fogle marks 15 years of turkey subs and keeping the weight off," <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/jared-subway-guy-marks-15-years-turkey-subs-article-1.1365511>, retrieved on June 20, 2013

⁹ Hibbard, Casey, *Stories That Sell*, page 18

“Storytelling is the best way to attract prospects who increasingly rely on what they hear to decide what they buy,” said Lynn Upshaw author of *Truth: The New Rules of Marketing in a Skeptical World*.¹⁰ Case studies help customers see that your products and services deliver.

- **Enhance customer loyalty.** Customer loyalty is birthed out of trust. Case studies help build trust because there are a lot of scammers in the world. Customers are skeptical about who they can trust and who they cannot. “Corporate buyers are also incredibly savvy regarding their options. They know that products like yours are available everywhere—and probably at a lower cost. From their perspective, almost everything is a commodity. Cynicism reigns supreme. The only thing that seems to counteract it is real customer stories with actual, tangible, and measurable results,” stated Jill Konrath author of *Selling to Big Companies*.¹¹ Consumers will buy from people they trust and over time they become loyal customers. Customers don’t want to buy from businesses that will scam and con them out of hard earned money.
- **Increase Sales.** Since case studies help business owners engage their audiences, penetrate markets of doubtful customers and enhance customer loyalty, they ultimately lead to an increase in sales. Independent Fitness Trainer Charles Taylor, owner of Glory Fitness knows firsthand how these aforementioned points can produce a sale that keeps selling. Once he was training a prospective client and was unsure if he would obtain her business. He engaged this potential customer by using success stories from past clients. The success stories helped Taylor penetrate this customer’s doubt so she would at least give his services a try. Over time, she began to sense his passion for fitness and his genuine desire to help her achieve her own fitness goals. Soon, she began to trust him. She had such a positive

¹⁰ Hibbard, Casey, *Stories That Sell*, page 18

¹¹ Konrath, Jill, *Selling to Big Companies*, 2006, page 22

experience that she referred three other people. “I made over \$50,000 from one referral,” he said.¹²

It’s no secret that case studies are valuable marketing tools because they communicate directly to potential customers. By joining the ranks of business that are using case studies, you too can help customers realize the value of your products and services.

¹² Interview with Fitness Trainer Charles Taylor, January 19, 2013