

POSITIONING CASE STUDIES TO GENERATE LEADS

A case study (success story) is your most versatile marketing tool. It shows *your* product or service fixing your customer's problem. A well-crafted case study tells a win-win tale with two happy endings: buyer and seller. If your aim is to generate leads you can angle one case study many ways. To start with, it is not advertising. It's *news*, *your* news.

A case study finds real people solving real problems on deadlines for real companies. Specifics stick in the mind long after readers put aside general promotions and brochures. A case study needs no colour printing or glazed paper. It travels by email, by word of mouth, or RSS. Its news fills the needs of viral marketing. It does better than describe how your solution solved your customer's problem: it witnesses your *customer* declaring that he or she made the right decision by choosing your solution over others. Reason may lead a cautious prospect to the point of purchase. But your case study may be the emotive tool that confirms and justifies their decision to buy from you.

So why do managers commission case studies, park them in one medium and move on? Re-shaped and re-tooled, case studies can be perennial. (My thanks to Steve Slaunwhite on whose list I base some of these suggestions.) :

IN A TRADE-SHOW HANDOUT your case study's specifics outshine and outlast your competitors' generic brochures.

AS CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS your case study trumps paid advertising.

IN LEAD-GENERATION PROGRAMS your case study adds muscle in any medium.

IN EXECUTIVE SPEECHES a case study adds real flesh to virtual bones. It also adds retention-value to your post-speech handout.

IN NEWSLETTERS & EZINES your case study may become a prospect's call to action.

IN MAILINGS WITH OTHER MATERIAL a case study makes good reading while reinforcing your reputation with existing customers and prospects.

AS A MEDIA RELEASE a case study supplies what a trade journalist craves: pre-researched, qualified facts in a good tight story; success; *Eureka* moments, expressed opinions in quotation marks with leads for readers to follow. A good case study is likely to end up as articles in one or more trade magazines.

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AS A HOOK. You can hang all sorts of extra data in sidebars as long as you tell the essential story first.

AS ADVERTISING there is nothing better. Make sure your agency or sales department gets your case studies—and make sure they place them.

POSTED ON YOUR WEB SITE, prospects read and click to action or information. Search engines no longer rank sites on keywords: they assess *dynamism* (how fast sites renew, refresh, change, grow). Posting and *linking* case studies may boost your dynamic ranking.

PUBLICITY BY ASSOCIATION. It gets better. When you post a case study which names a customer, people searching for your *customers* may find them on *your* site, their names linked with yours.

AS WEB COPY DRESSED TO TRAVEL. Write a generic version of your case study to appeal to industry-wide interest. Upload it to your site via RSS (really simple syndication). Within weeks you may find it spread (and continuing to spread) over interested sectors of the Internet.*

(*Try this test: I disseminated a good review of my book *Design and Science* via RSS feeds [XML]. Type into Google the title of that review < "forgotten master of design" > and you may find more than 60 clones. Well written and well-placed, a good case study can reproduce like rabbits.)

Robert Fripp writes case studies, white papers and ghostwritten feature articles. Typically, his clients work in technology, I.T., software, healthcare and engineering.