

POSITIONING: ONE CASE STUDY, MANY USES

A case study (success story) is the most versatile tool in your marketing portfolio. It shows *your* product or service fixing your customer's problem. A well-crafted case study is a win-win business tale with two happy endings: buyer and seller. You can angle a case study many ways. To start with, it is not advertising. It is *news*, *your* news.

A case study gets to grips with real people solving real problems on deadlines for real companies. Names and specifics stick in the mind long after readers put aside general promotions and colour brochures. A case study travels with no need for colour printing or glazed paper. It travels by email or word of mouth. Its news fills the needs of viral marketing. It does better than describe how your solution solved your customer's problem. Your *customer's* words declare why he or she *chose* your solution over your competitors'. It states that your customer made the right decision. Logic and reason may lead a cautious prospect to the point of sale. But your case study may be the tool that confirms and justifies their decision to buy from you.

So why do many managers commission case studies, park them in one medium and move on? Re-shaped and re-tooled, case studies are perennials. (My thanks to Steve Slaunwhite on whose list I base 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 puts real flesh on 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 MATERIALS a case study provides good reading while reinforcing your reputation with existing customers and prospects.

AS A MEDIA RELEASE a case study gives what trade journalists crave: pre-researched, qualified facts in a good tight story; success; expressed opinions in quotation marks and leads for readers to follow. It's likely to end up as article(s) in trade magazines.

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

POSTED ON YOUR WEB SITE, prospects read your case study and click to action or for information. The second, more subtle impact is that search engines no longer rank your site on keywords only: they assess *dynamism* (how fast sites renew, refresh, change, grow). Posting and *linking* case studies may boost your dynamic ranking. Third, once you post a case study, people searching for your *customers* are likely to find your name linked with theirs.

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