
Top 10 Tips for Case Study Writing



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What's so great about customer case studies?

Well, from a reader perspective, offering up real customer endorsement has genuine editorial power. Think of it like eBay feedback. Everyone avoids sellers with poor or insufficient feedback ratings. With this in mind, generating a good customer case study can play an important part in helping your company win new orders.

Case studies are not only third-party references that demonstrate why your business is an expert in its field, they also lend credibility to publications and are hence liked by editors keen to offer up "proof in the pudding" stories.

What follows is a 10-step guide to getting it right.

1. The first hurdle to overcome is that not every customer wants to participate in case studies. Here, try and sell the 'free publicity' benefit, or offer a little incentive: waiving the delivery charge in exchange for a case study agreement, for example.
2. After selecting the most striking accomplishment for the article headline, there are certain rules regarding the crucial opening paragraph. In essence, this is a single opportunity to engage readers and entice them onwards. Opting for a tightly written, punchy tone that summarises the most important benefits and savings is sure to score well.
3. From here, introduce the customer with an interesting line or two and outline the problem it faced and the solution proposed by your company.
4. After this, describe how the customer heard about your products/services and the factors that led to selection over solutions offered by competitors. This can lead into the main challenges posed by the contract/project and how they were overcome. Most of the technology trade press bemoan the lack of genuine technical detail in case studies, so don't shy away from the technology speak.
5. The next and most important step is to major on the benefits achieved for the customer and the ROI/savings accrued. If possible, use financials, as hard cash always speaks loudest. However, if this information is confidential then express in percentage terms. Where there are no financial benefits, focus instead on other advantages such as shorter turnaround, enhanced quality and better reliability.
6. Needless to say, testimonial quotes from the customer add both colour and weight when they complement the technology or the efficiency and support offered by your company.
7. It is also worth adding a quote from your own MD or project manager summarising the success of the work without spurious lines of sales spiel (nothing is more effective at turning off editors and readers). Avoid phrases like 'market leading', 'superior' and 'award winning'.

- 8.** Generating a good case study length will also aid editorial placement. Yes, there is more and more online placement of copy these days, which of course is less space-sensitive. However, we're not yet at a point where we can discount printed media. With this in mind, a typical A4 format magazine typically accommodates 500 words per page allowing for a photograph. A double-page spread will take 1000 words with two images. Hence, around 500 or 1000 words are reasonable bets for editor acceptance.
- 9.** When complete, drop in a few timely cross-headings as these help maintain reader engagement, especially if worded enticingly.
- 10.** Finally, always show the copy to the customer for approval before it's issued to any publications. Editorial exposure is a tremendous marketing tool, but not at the expense of an upset customer.





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