

ENTERPRISE

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Sales

Your happy customers are your biggest sales tools

Andrea Sittig-Rolf

Do you have happy customers? You know, the ones who are loyal, think you're the greatest and continue to buy from you time and time again? Why not leverage the relationships with those customers to gain new customers to further develop your business? Your happy customers are the most powerful tool you have to help sell your product or service, and a case study is an excellent way to showcase your best customers.

A case study tells a short story of your customer's business challenge, the solution you've provided, the result of your solution, and a testimonial from your customer that speaks to their satisfaction with the result you have provided. Regardless of the features, or even the benefits, of your product or service, prospects want to know the bottom line, and that is, what results have you provided for others that you might also be able to provide for me?

Writing a case study doesn't have to be complicated and can actually be quite simple if you follow this basic formula -- customer name; business challenge; solution; result; and testimonial.

For example, let's say you sell for ABC Video Conferencing Services Co., and you have provided a solution with a favorable result to your customer, XYZ Co. The case-study might look something like this:

Customer: XYZ Co.

Business challenge: XYZ has executives located in multiple locations across the country who need to meet on a regular basis. Travel has become costly and time-consuming, yet the visual contact is an important factor in conducting their executive meetings.

Solution: ABC Video Conferencing Service provided a video-conferencing solution to allow XYZ executives to meet on a regular basis, from the comfort and convenience of each executive's own office, while still allowing the visual contact necessary for viewing of the other executives, as well as charts, graphs and other visual aids.

Result: XYZ has reduced its travel expenses by 18 percent while still allowing executives to effectively communicate, virtually face to face.

Testimonial: "While ABC Video Conferencing Service provided excellent customer service and technical support, more importantly, our executives have become more efficient in their face-to-face communication, and the money we saved on travel expenses has been applied, as

profit, directly to our bottom line. Thank you ABC Video Conferencing Service Co." -- Joe Customer, president, XYZ Co.

It is important to quantify the results by referring to specifics, such as the 18 percent reduction in travel expenses shown above. You can also use a dollar amount to quantify the results you have provided. It is also very powerful if you can speak to how your solution has affected the profit of your customer.

It's a good idea for you, or someone in your company, to write the case study, rather than for your customer to write it, for a couple of reasons. First, it makes it easy for your customer to simply review and approve what you've written, rather than taking the time to write the case study, which may not happen in the timely fashion you're hoping for. Second, by writing your own case study, you are in control of the message you want to convey; and can speak specifically to the points you want to get across to your audience, or in this case, prospects.

You can also write the testimonial, as if written by your customer, if it isn't already available from your customer, as long as you have permission to do so.

Other things to consider are that your case study should be no more than about 100 words and should easily fit on one 8-by-11-inch page. Case studies are also a great sales tool to display on your company Web site, in your marketing materials and company press kits. If you have a low budget for marketing materials, case studies are ideal because you can simply print them on company letterhead and they are still very effective in creating curiosity, conveying your message, and gaining credibility.

As you can see, regardless of the size of your company or your marketing budget, you can leverage the relationships you have with your happy customers by building effective case studies. This powerful tool will attract new customers and aid in your efforts to continue to develop your business. And, after all, that's what it's all about, right?

ANDREA SITTIG-ROLF is a former vice president of programs at Sales & Marketing Executives, Seattle chapter, and is president of Sittig Northwest Inc., Redmond. Reach her at 206-769-4886, www.sittignw.com or info@sittignw.com. © 2004 American City Business Journals Inc.