

How to write an inspiring case study

A case study is a powerful marketing tool to bring light over products or services hard to understand otherwise. Think of you shopping for a new outfit. You would want to try it in the dressing room and look in the mirror, to see how it looks on you. It's the same experience a potential customer wants to have when entering your website. His first question will be: *"will I look good in their customer's shoes?"*.

Sadly, PR and marketing people often find it difficult to give the proper answer. Especially when they sell complex "services" or "solutions". It's true about anything sold "online", but it's also the same with financial services, software, marketing or advertising agencies, real estate, training, education or academic institutions.

In such situations is harder for you to help the potential customers decide if your service would fit them well. You need a "magic mirror" of communication. That's why you need to tell stories about the real people you've already helped. To let the prospects imagine themselves in their shoes.

Organize your case study as a story

The stories we read as children were meant to educate us in a pleasant and memorable way, to provide us with the context needed to understand new terms and concepts. That's why I recommend you the following **structure** for your case study:

1. **Problem / Opportunity**: the "setup", where the context and what is intended is presented
2. **Solution**: the "conflict", where the client hires you and begins implementing your solution, with the inevitable drawbacks and providential workarounds

3. **Results:** the resolution or the answer to *“has the solution REALLY worked?”*

Let's talk every stage in detail.



Problem/Opportunity

Write not only about the problem the client wanted to solve but also about **the problem's impact** in his everyday life. If you only say *“our client had a problem with the supply chain”*, your Reader can easily reply *“so what?...”*

Now is the time to anticipate the dramatic conflict that will follow. Make the Reader understand the challenge, how painful the situation was for the client and how many nights of insomnia he had before he found you. For example: *“according to the CFO's reports, the company was losing 1.5 million Euro because of the poor management of the supply chain”*.

And remember that people act mostly because of the fear of loss and not because of the possible gains. So make sure the problem in your case study looks as dreadful as the one that made the Reader search for you, after all.



Solution

Write about how you solved the client's problem in **plain language**, with no technical terms. Use a descriptive tone. This way you help the Reader "*see the movie*" of the solution you have implemented.

Describe the **steps** your company did, in **chronological order**. Write about specific episodes from the project. You will transform your abstract "*solution*" into something the Reader can picture as **his own story**.

Illustrate the case study. Use pictures from the meetings you had with the client or from various stages of the process. In order to give life to your story's characters write about the challenging moments and also about the smart workarounds you came up with. Use video files or multimedia presentations whenever you have the chance.



Results

Until here, your story should have built enough “*tension*”. Now, the Reader craves for the answer to the question “*has it worked?*” So tell him the consequences of your solution.

Write about **specific benefits** your client had. Use absolute numbers but also relative ratios. More important, write about **the money** he *gained* or *avoided losing*. For example: “*In the first 6 months after implementing our solution, the X company has managed to almost double its net income, with a 0.8 billion increase compared to the same period last year. Also, they forecast a continued increase of 2 billion for the next year.*”

If you manage to get the client’s permission, make him say the most important results with his own words. Remember that people trust other people like them, going through similar situations, so **testimonials** are the most reliable pieces of information for the Reader.

More case studies recommendations

- Use the most important part of your time working on the case study in **research** and making sense of the

information that only the members of your team or your client have.

- Make sure **you have your client's support** from the start. Make him see the case study not as a time-consuming task but as a publicity opportunity and a professional confirmation for him also.
- After you finish the case study read it again and **get rid of anything that sounds like empty marketing** language, baloney, self-flattering, redundant or unclear.
- **Search for re-publishing** opportunities in targeted media outlets. There are a lot of websites out there that need good content, and the first options should be the ones related to your industry or to your client's.
- **Use the "case study" expression** in your title, especially if you use the case study for your website. It's a guaranteed way to catch the Reader's attention. He will expect real solutions for his real problems. Make sure you don't disappoint him!...