



10 Costly Mistakes Healthcare Marketers Make With Case Studies

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Who doesn't love a great story?

Whether it's the story of how you met your spouse, the time your best buddy saved you from a group of bullies or memories of afternoons baking sweet treats with your grandmother, we all love to share and listen to stories.

Stories are the reason magazines put celebrities on their covers. People want to read the latest celebrity gossip and find out how the rich and famous defied all odds to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles.

In business, stories strengthen our pitch, foster relationships, create brand loyalty and close deals. No matter how mundane the product or service you offer, it's *your story* that brings your business to life.

Healthcare is the best market for storytelling.

Whether you're a hospital, group or concierge medicine practice, medical device company, a tech startup or any other type of healthcare organization, let's face it: you're saving lives. You have the information, expert advice and tools your clients or theirs need to solve their biggest challenges.

And behind every life you save is a story. It's a story filled with vivid detail, raw emotion and life-changing moments. It's the kind of story that makes your heart skip a beat or your eyes well up with tears.

Telling those stories through customer case studies is one of the most effective ways savvy marketers like you use to convert prospects and drive sales. In fact, according to the Content Marketing Institute's report, *B2B Content Marketing: 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends-North America*, 82 percent of organizations use case studies in their arsenal of marketing tactics.

Case studies are a cost-effective, multipurpose marketing tool that can maximize your marketing ROI.

Effective case studies can:

- Establish your credibility
- Educate in a compelling way
- Drive home what makes you different than your competitors
- Create brand awareness
- Demonstrate and validate results
- Build trusted relationships with clients
- Boost consumer confidence
- Increase sales
- Shorten the sales cycle

- Sell more to current customers—upsell and cross-sell.
- Answer questions
- Foster engagement
- Get media placement

Here are just some of the ways case studies can be used:

- SEO
- Social media
- PR: press releases, pitching, contributed articles and sources for journalists
- Lead generation
- Newsletters
- Trade shows
- Events
- Direct marketing and sales letters
- Meetings and presentations
- Email
- Proposals and presentations
- Direct marketing

Case studies can be a valuable tool, but if you fail to tell the story the right way or miss key elements, you'll miss out on opportunities to grow your business.

10 costly mistakes to avoid

1. Thinking testimonials are case studies.

Although testimonials on your website are important, testimonials are not case studies. The 2 to 3 sentence endorsement from your clients might be the most glowing recommendation you've ever received, but testimonials don't give your prospect much to go on. With a well-written case study, prospects can relate to the story and see you as the perfect match.

2. Missing the data.

Journalists are always told to “show, don't tell,” and the same holds true for case studies. Instead of simply writing about the features and benefits, focus your story on the results.

Customers crave data. They want to know exactly how much your doctor was able to lower her patient's cholesterol or how much money your client saved by using your software. Without the hard-hitting numbers, there is no compelling reason why you should be the business your prospect chooses.

3. Thinking happy customers are the right ones.

Just because your customer is loyal or even head-over-heels in love with you, they may not be the best one to feature in your case study. Since it can be hard to find a customer willing to participate, you might be tempted to use anyone you can get. And even if your

client does commit, he may have certain requirements, refuse to reveal information about his company or have his own idea of what the story should look like.

Instead of settling for anyone, take the time to find the perfect clients with the best stories and your case studies will shine.

4. Flying by the seat of your pants.

Before you even conduct your interviews, you want to have an idea of what your story will look like. Even if you know the story, yours may take a different angle once you're talking to the client. Plus, although some of the best stories develop organically, you always need to be prepared.

If you are hiring a copywriter, make sure that person has as much information as possible about your company and your clients. These can include:

- Product brochures
- Sales letters/landing pages
- Annual reports
- Newsletters
- Press releases and media kits
- Ads and advertorials
- Competitors' case studies
- Scripts from presentations
- Testimonials
- Complaints
- Market research studies
- Contacts of company employees for more information

5. Blowing the interview

Interviewing is an art. You need to do your research, know the right questions to ask and know who you're talking to. An interview isn't a chat over coffee but that doesn't mean it has to be a formal business meeting either. Often times, the best stories develop when there isn't a strict agenda, the interviewer delves deeper into the story or the interviewee goes off on a tangent.

Compile a list of questions that you want to make sure you ask. If you need specific facts and figures, be sure to include those as well. Send your customer the questions ahead of time so he can be prepared as well. Depending on the size of the company, your customer's public relations and/or legal department will also want these questions before they give him approval to participate.

6. Not writing for the customer.

For a prospect to consider doing business with your company, they can't leave their decision to chance. They want to know how you helped a similar company to theirs achieve results and they also need to envision themselves working with you. Say for

example that you sell simulators to hospitals. You certainly wouldn't want to present a case study about a customer who used a baby simulator to a client looking for a CPR/AED simulator.

So one of the best ways to personalize your case studies and make sure they're written for your prospect is to create buyer personas for the types of customers you work with. Once you understand who your customer is, you'll know how to write an effective case study that speaks to them.

7. Not crafting a story.

Like any great page-turning novel, case studies should have a clear beginning, middle and end and smooth transitions throughout. The story needs to flow.

Regardless of the format you choose, there should always be a lede, descriptive subheads and most importantly, quotes.

In fact, one of the biggest mistakes marketers make when writing case studies is including just one pull quote or not including quotes at all. Quotes, when they're strong, support what the writer is trying to say and bring the story to life. If you take the time to tell the story in a way that your readers ask, *what happened next?*, your case studies—and your company—will stand out.

8. Leaving questions unanswered.

Sure, your case study clearly explains the problem and the solution and includes a call to action, but if it doesn't answer the questions that keep your customers up at night, you won't close the sale.

When prospects read your case studies, they need to know:

- What makes your company different?
- How does your product or service work?
- What is the process and how long will it take to see results?
- How will you save me money?
- Will I receive ongoing support?
- How will you help me achieve the results I want?

9. Following a template.

When it comes to healthcare case studies, somewhere in the process, the story gets diluted and well, boring. Way too often marketers are more interested in the features and benefits of their products or services and not the story.

Although case studies should explain the challenge, solution and results, your case studies don't have to, nor should they always follow the same format. Try writing your case studies in a feature story format, in first person or write a Q & A. Get creative in finding fresh ways to present the information in a compelling way and it will pay off.

10. Not sharing the love.

According to a 2012 survey by Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 72 percent of people who used the internet looked online for health information in the past year.

So whether your customer is looking for a new physician, or your client needs a new solution to cut costs, case studies should be a part of your inbound marketing strategy. Be sure to add a "case studies" tab on your website's navigation bar and share your case studies in all content marketing, social media and email marketing efforts.

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