

HOFFMAN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

## TOP 7 REASONS TO WRITE SUCCESS STORIES

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*Steve Hoffman, President and CEO  
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—Mark Twain*

While most enterprises realize the value of effective corporate and product brochures, as well as a compelling Web site, many underestimate the worth of success stories (also known as case studies). As Mark Twain once said, “Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.” In a business context, managers and technical professionals alike respond to the power of example, which is the essence of a business success story.

In the past, sales and marketing departments viewed success stories as “icing on the cake”—nice to have, but not required or top-priority marketing collateral. Today, business customers are more demanding. Many require vendors to deliver success stories that are tailored to their particular industry. Customers need this real-world proof that a vendor’s solution has been successfully implemented at a competitor to justify their investment in the solution. This poses a critical challenge for vendors: They must produce case studies in each of their target verticals, else risk being at a disadvantage when competing for business.

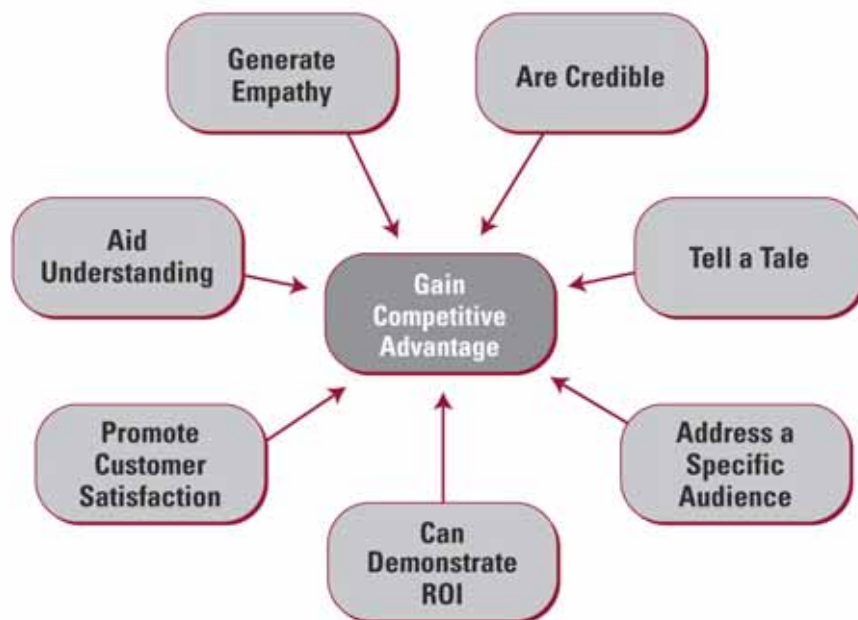
This article summarizes the top reasons why success stories are such a crucial part of the marketing process, especially when complex business issues and solutions are involved.

- **Examples aid understanding.** Examples improve understanding of complex business issues and solutions. Most people have struggled with a difficult concept, only to understand it when someone says, “for example.”
- **Success stories generate empathy.** Properly written success stories enable the reader to empathize with the problem or challenge that the customer in the story faced—in many cases, because the reader faces a similar problem.
- **Success stories are credible.** Success stories ring truer with readers than marketing brochures, because success stories relate a factual situation rather than subjective claims.

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- **Success stories tell a tale.** Everybody loves a story. The success story writer weaves a tale that enables readers to take the first step towards solving a complex, and potentially expensive, business challenge.
- **Success stories address a specific audience.** Most enterprises that adopt success stories as a key marketing vehicle tailor at least one success story to each main audience they target. The goal is for each reader to be able to closely identify with the customer in the relevant success story.
- **Success stories can demonstrate ROI.** In some success stories, the benefits of the solution can be quantified—which enables documentation of a return on investment (ROI). This can present a compelling case for adoption of the solution.
- **Success stories promote customer satisfaction.** By bringing closure to a successful customer project, success stories can increase customer satisfaction. Some enterprises provide a pdf file, printed copies, and even a framed hard copy of the final success story to their customers as a form of thanks. This framed copy, hanging on the wall of the customer’s office, is a symbol of the successful relationship between the customer and the solution provider.

### Success Stories...



***In highly competitive businesses, success stories can provide the competitive advantage that enterprises need.***

For many enterprises, expanding the role of success stories in their marketing and sales strategy can provide the missing piece to the puzzle. Effective success stories can be posted on the Web site, distributed at conferences, packaged and tailored to particular audiences for customer meetings, and sent in direct mail packages. In highly competitive businesses, success stories can provide the competitive advantage that enterprises need.

However, writing success stories without a careful plan can lead to suboptimal results—duplication of target audiences and omission of others, for example. At the same time, poorly written or organized success stories reflect badly on the organization—causing more harm than good. And an improper approach to success story writing—failing to involve the customer at the right times, for example—may alienate the customer. For these reasons, many enterprises retain the services of agencies that specialize in writing success stories. A seasoned success story writer can enable enterprises to take full advantage of the power of example.

***About the author:*** *Steve Hoffman is President and CEO of Hoffman Marketing Communications, Inc. ([www.hoffmanmarcom.com](http://www.hoffmanmarcom.com)) – a firm that has written case studies for business clients for more than 20 years.*



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