



HOFFMAN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

ADDRESSING COMMON OBJECTIONS TO WRITING CASE STUDIES

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*Steve Hoffman, President and CEO
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Many customers are pleased with the opportunity to document their use of an enterprise solution that solves a business problem.

Hoffman Marketing Communications' definition of a case study is "a marketing document that provides a compelling case for a business solution using the power of example." Some marketing departments shy away from writing case studies, despite the many benefits they offer. Common objections to writing case studies, and ways to address them, include the following:

- **"Our customers won't allow it or approve them."**
Citing concerns of confidentiality or internal political issues, some marketing personnel are pessimistic that their customers would authorize development of a case study. While this is true in some exceptional cases—most notably information security—many customers actually are pleased with the opportunity to document their use of an enterprise solution that solves a business problem. The case study provides them with a document they can show to their senior management or board of directors—demonstrating that they are innovative, solution-oriented, and focused on business benefits.
- **"We have a brochure and a white paper—we don't need to write case studies."**
Case studies complement other types of marketing collateral. Case studies excel in several areas compared to marketing brochures, for example: They tell a story with which customers can empathize, illustrate applications, inform via the power of example, and can be highly tailored to specific audiences.
- **"We don't have time to write case studies."**
When marketing staff time is limited, many enterprises outsource case study writing. Some qualified case study writers can also interview the customer to gather information for the case study. Because case study writing is a discrete, highly outsourceable task, consider hiring a professional to quickly develop effective case studies.
- **"Our solution doesn't lend itself to writing case studies."**
Almost all enterprise products, solutions, and services lend themselves to description in a case study. These documents usually consist of three key elements: a description of the problem or

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challenge, the solution applied, and the benefits of that solution. In most client engagements, a problem, challenge, or at least an unrealized opportunity exists; without one, the client probably would not have adopted the “solution.” And of course, all successful client engagements or sales of products or solutions result in at least qualitative—and in many cases, quantitative—benefits.

- **“No one would be interested in our case studies; our solutions are highly specific.”**
Even highly tailored solutions and services can be described in an effective case study. This can be accomplished by writing first about a more general problem in the industry, then transitioning to the specific problem that the client faced. In describing the solution, the reverse approach can be used: Highlight the specific solution, then discuss the ways in which the solution can solve a broader range of problems.
- **“We can’t afford case studies.”**
In many cases, the reverse is actually true: Enterprises can’t afford *not* to develop case studies. Their competitors may be using the power of example effectively, thus gaining an advantage. Moreover, case studies are generally not expensive to write. Four two-page case studies cost about as much to write as an average-length white paper. Further, in some instances, a set of effective case studies can pay for themselves even if they only lead to a small number of sales.

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



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