



6 Simple Steps

To an Effective Success Story



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Success stories are a highly effective marketing tool. They lend credibility to your firm's technological expertise in a format that prospects can easily relate to and understand. A well-written story delivers tangible, real-world evidence of your ability to provide meaningful solutions that will not only solve your prospects' issues but help them become more efficient, profitable and competitive ... which may ultimately help you get the deal closed!!

Developing an effective success story is as much an art as it is a science. At Juice Marketing, we adhere to a few best practices that help us develop success stories for our clients that are compelling and resonate with their prospects. But don't our word for it ...

"Our customer success story has been a great sales and marketing tool. I bring copies with me to every meeting as well as include the story with every proposal. It really helps!! Our prospects like hearing the story of how we've helped companies just like them."

*- Free Polazzo
Friendly Systems, Inc.
Sage Partner in Atlanta, GA*



Step 1 – Selecting the Right Customers

There is a difference between a **testimonial** and a success story. You may have a customer that absolutely loves working with you but has a difficult time articulating pains & benefits that were addressed or achieved with your solution. If they simply say, "ABC Reseller is great to work with and the support has been wonderful," you probably have the makings of a brief quote or testimonial that can complement your marketing collateral or grace your website. On the other hand if your customer can communicate the efficiency gains and process improvements that have been achieved, you probably have the makings of an engaging story.



Step 2 – Conducting an Effective Interview

Asking the right questions during the customer interview is one of the most important elements of the process. Remember that your customer is **not** in the business of providing success stories so they'll need a lot of guidance in order to provide the ammunition you'll need to develop an effective story.

Rarely are efficiency gains and process improvements benchmarked before and after an implementation so it often requires a bit of creative thinking and resourceful questioning to extract the quantifiable data that will make the difference between a good and **great** success story.

Here are a few questions that we typically ask during an interview:

- ▶ Explain the challenges you faced using your old system?
- ▶ What was the impact on your operation?
- ▶ What are the business issues or pains that were addressed during the implementation?
- ▶ How have things improved today using the new system/solution?
- ▶ Give me a “day in the life of” Jane Doe. How do you leverage the new system?
- ▶ What benefits have been achieved? How has it positively impacted your company? Can you quantify those benefits?



Step 3 – Quantify!!

Numbers (whether dollars, percentages or otherwise) are *always* compelling and lend credibility to claims being made in the story. A statement such as “We saved money with our new system” is much less effective than “We eliminated \$60,000 in legacy support costs of our old DOS-based system which resulted in a 7-month return on investment.” Getting your customer to quantify the benefits of your solution is probably the most challenging part of the interview process and is quite possibly an art form. Rarely are efficiency gains and process improvements benchmarked before and after an implementation so it often requires a bit of creative thinking and resourceful questioning to extract the quantifiable data that will make the difference between a good and *great* success story.



Step 4 – Creative Writing Skill

Here is where you make the interview come to life and add depth to the conversation. Don't look to your customers to provide you with eloquent quotes and statements that are absolute gems. They are not in the business of marketing so most of the time you'll have to take what they said during the interview and add a little character (also known as embellishment). And don't forget about the “story” part of the equation. A boring statement of facts or something that reads like a transcript of the telephone interview probably won't keep your readers engaged. That's where creative writing comes in!

Also, don't forget to clearly communicate the critical business issues that were addressed and articulate the benefits that were achieved in working with you ... **Challenge / Solution / Results.**

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Step 5 – Format and Design

An appealing graphical layout and organization of the story will make it more inviting to read. Section headlines, featured customer quotes and carefully placed graphical elements will also help break up text into “bite-sized” pieces so the story doesn’t appear as intimidating to read as a 1,000-page novel. And while there is no standard length (it can be as short as 1-page), a 2-page format seems to provide enough space to convey important details without drawing the story out unnecessarily.



Step 6 - Make it about YOU

Overall, the story should convey YOUR capability as a technology solution provider and valued business advisor. Avoid the temptation to focus on software product features and overuse the product name as this approach does very little to “brand” your company’s expertise nor differentiate your implementation technique from the reseller down the street. If it’s all about the product, your solution becomes commoditized and the unique experience & implementation method that you bring to the table is devalued. You are MORE than a software reseller; you’re a technology partner & business advisor!!

Leveraging the Story to Generate Leads and Close Deals

Now that you’ve got a great story, use it to your advantage. Don’t bury it in a corporate kit as another piece of collateral or drop it on the table at the end of a meeting as a low value leave-behind. Use the story as a sales and marketing tool. Build a direct mail campaign around your story and target prospects in a similar industry. Bring a professionally printed copy with you to every meeting and discuss the success with your prospects. Develop a press release around the story, distribute it through a newswire and use the press to build awareness of your firm in your local business community. Also, make sure to feature it on your website and maybe organize them by industry as you build an inventory of great stories!!

Ready to get started with a success story for your firm? Contact us today for information about our Success Story program.



**“Squeezing the Most
Out of Your Marketing Dollar”**