8 BRILLIANT WAYS TO MAKE CUSTOMERS PART OF Your Story

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As technology marketers, or technologists, you can probably pitch your products in your sleep by now. It's what you know best. It's your comfort zone. But, there is so much more to your story than the products you sell or support.

Do you know how your customers use your products? Why they continue working with you? What benefits they've realized as a result of your partnership? Many customers are willing to share great experiences…IF you ask. You might be surprised at what you find out, and there is generally a marketing gold mine in their answers.

IT'S TIME TO FLIP THE SWITCH FROM PRODUCT STORIES TO CUSTOMER STORIES

Whether you call them client case studies or customer success stories, these little gems are one of the most – if not the most – important marketing assets you can have. Just having them, however, is not enough. To truly take advantage of the power of customer stories, you need different formats for different mediums and more engaging ways to tell your stories than the same old two-page PDF you've been doing for years.

Ready to get creative with your customer stories? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

INFOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES

According to the Social Science Research Institute, 65 percent of us are visual learners. Why not create an infographic case study to capitalize on that? Think about doing these for an initial rollout showcasing things like time to market, etc. and then again after a year or so when you can show the customer's ROI. Another approach? Create an infographic that pulls your best customer quotes or stats into one strong visual piece.

EBOOKS

Compile the best of your customer stories into a single eBook. You can create different versions for different industries or showcase your solution's flexibility by bringing different industries and solutions together. Don't skimp on the design here. Create a powerful and enticing cover and use strong images throughout. You can embed videos, add trivia, and make your eBooks an interactive experience for readers.

Customer Stories

Chapter One:
Infographic
Case Studies

Chapter Two:
eBooks

Chapter Three:
Dimensional Mailers

Chapter Four:
Email Marketing

Chapter Five:
Quote Cards

Chapter Six:
Website Home Page

Chapter Seven:
Explainer Videos

Chapter Eight:
Webinars

We LOVE This Product!

DIMENSIONAL MAILERS

Dimensional mailers can help you stand out and are a powerful way to reach out to your best prospects. Make your mailer about your customer to add even more impact. Instead of a trinket, send something that represents your customer. If you're working with a consumer goods company, maybe you could send their product. Work with an automotive company? Send a toy or model car. If you don't have that type of client, send something representative of their brand or your project. Of course, this won't work for every client, but all of us probably have at least one customer that can be showcased this way. Include a short letter and a case study with your package, and make sure you follow up with a call after the mailing.

EMAIL MARKETING

Bring your clients into your lead generation emails. You can do this in a variety of ways, from making the whole campaign about your customer to just referencing them in the body of the campaign as a "proof point." Customer quotes or references to other customer stories can also work great as a sidebar or P.S. in your emails.

QUOTE CARDS

Quote cards are a simple way to add impact to short quotes or testimonials. Find an image that represents your customer (a logo can work as well) and create a quick graphic that shows the quote and image side by side. You can create these in PPT or any editing program. Share them everywhere. They are great visual posts for LinkedIn. Use them on your website and in PowerPoint presentations. Turn them into posters or postcards to use in your tradeshow booth.

WEBSITE HOME PAGE

If you're still using stock images and business value statements in a slider on your home page, you're missing a huge opportunity to showcase your customers. Use THEIR images, logos, and quotes instead. If that won't work with your site's structure, add quotes and images somewhere else on the home page. The key here is to make sure site visitors hear from your customers without even a single click.

When you're updating your website, don't forget to include case studies on related internal pages. For example, if I'm looking at a distribution solution, share a customer story in that industry on the same page. Don't make me have to look for the customer section to see what you've done in my industry.

"The Partner Marketing Group is constantly **innovating** for us. We get a **top-level marketing expert** who is **completely invested** in our business without breaking our budget. The response is immediate and **above and beyond** what we expected. It has been amazing."

Kim Haythornthwaite, General Manager
Nolan Business Solutions

EXPLAINER VIDEOS

Animated case studies are a great way to highlight customers you can't get on video and can actually be more compelling than a "talking head". They're also great when your customers aren't the best speakers or aren't comfortable with the idea of a video. Although videos like this can be costly, online animation agencies like wizMotions, Promoshin, and AnimationVids have made them far more cost-effective for most B2B marketers. If you've never worked with an animator before, consider bringing in a marketing agency to craft your script and storyboard for the best results.

WEBINARS

Buyers want to hear from their peers, so your clients can be a big draw for a webinar. If you have a client who is a great communicator and willing to be a featured speaker on a webinar – DO IT NOW! Not so lucky? Maybe they would be willing to answer questions about their project. Open the webinar by providing a short presentation on the project and then have your technical team and client on standby to answer questions. Keep these short (around 10 to 15 minutes), record them, and share everywhere. Make sure you have a series of questions for your speaker ready to go.

MORE TIPS FOR YOUR CUSTOMER STORIES

Hopefully these ideas got your wheels turning, and you're excited to start making your customers' stories part of your story! Before you jump in, here are some additional tips to get the best value from your investment.

MAXIMIZE YOUR STORY'S FOOTPRINT

Like with any marketing investment, you'll want to maximize each customer story you have. Think of all the pieces you can create from one interview and case study. Write blogs about each of the challenges the customer faced and how you addressed them. Were there "lessons learned" you can build into a blog or article? Create at least six to eight LinkedIn posts or tweets that link back to your story. If you already have some great case studies, use some of these ideas to give them new life and distribute them on new platforms. Pull out the best facts and highlight them in an infographic. Turn the best quotes into title cards. There are lots of possibilities, so don't just post them on your website and be done.

THE POWER OF VISUALS

Regardless of the form your customer story takes, pay special attention to the visuals. This is about your customer, so using stock images to illustrate their story will reduce the impact. Consider images of your client's product (if there is one), their warehouse, an office building or sign, or their staff in action. If those aren't options, screenshots of their custom solution or portals are also helpful visuals.

As you can see, there are many options for going beyond the traditional case study and adding some punch to your customer stories. However you present them, they are always a powerful way to stand out from your competitors and sway the vote in your favor.

The team at The Partner Marketing Group has helped hundreds of software and technology companies tell their stories in a more creative, modern, and engaging way. Contact Barbara at Barbara@thepartnermarketinggroup.com or visit www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com to learn about industry-specific marketing solutions and programs for your business.

Editor's note*: It has been such a privilege to work alongside the talented individuals that make up The Partner Marketing Group. They have such a vast knowledge base and their combined talents are an enormous asset to the Partners they support.*