

PLAN TO WIN

WHAT CONTRACTORS CAN LEARN FROM FOOTBALL

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THE LEADING BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR CONTRACTORS

***What Happens  
When Leaders  
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**IN THE OFFICE  
IN THE FIELD**

CONSTRUCTION INSURANCE  
MARKET OUTLOOK

**ALTERNATIVE FUELS  
REDUCE YOUR COSTS**

## Spread the Word

Learn how to use client success stories to confirm your company's competency and boost business.

**W**hen your construction firm prepares to buy a new service or product, you probably go online to read the reviews or ask your colleagues for their opinions: Who did you work with? Did they do a good job solving your problems? Did you like working with them? Does that product really do all the great things the salesman says it will?

The same is true for your construction business. Your customers talk about the work your firm completed, and your prospects ask for those customers' opinions. These conversations give your firm a marketing boost; however, you must capture those powerful conversations and put them to work. Client success stories lead prospects toward the decision to hire your firm by making them confident in your abilities and by eliminating their concerns about working with an unknown entity.

Small- or medium-sized construction firms with limited marketing budgets should use client success stories in multiple ways to promote and distinguish their company, making the investment spent in creating them worthwhile.

### WHAT IS A CLIENT SUCCESS STORY?

Client success stories—traditionally called case studies—can help prospects understand a firm's business offerings

more clearly. Case studies show potential customers how a previous client's needs were met and the value the client received, a message that helps reduce a prospect's concerns about risk. When these engaging and influential stories come directly from your clients, they are more credible and help prospects make a decision in your favor.

At a time when firms in the construction industry are being treated like commodities, a client success story helps any firm stand out among its competitors. A client's testimony about your firm's competency validates the worth you can bring to a project. Because the positive review is in the client's words, it is more meaningful than the usual boilerplate statements about qualifications. For these reasons, the client success story is a powerful marketing tool.

### HOW CAN YOU BEST USE CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES?

Client success stories demonstrate the services your firm offers and give potential clients an idea of what they can expect. To use case studies to promote your firm and boost business, consider doing the following:

- Add client success stories to proposals and RFQ (Request for Quotation) responses as validation of your firm's competency.
- Present them on your company's website.
- Offer a PDF of success stories as a printable document.
- Make a slide presentation of success story key points.
- Videotape an interview with the client and put it on your YouTube channel and website.
- Create press releases and advertisements using client success stories.
- Write articles about these case studies for trade magazines targeted to your prospects.
- Feature key quotes from the stories in all communications.
- Use case studies when presenting at industry conferences or trade shows.

### HOW DO YOU CREATE CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES?

The process of creating client success stories starts with identifying clients who are willing to cooperate with your company's goals and who have time to fully participate in the interview and review



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process. If you use an outside case study writer, he or she will spend some time becoming familiar with your firm, your products, your services, your overall marketing messages and your particular marketing goals for each client story. Your writer, whether an internal staffer or an outside consultant, will talk to the project director or project manager who worked most closely with the client to gain useful background information.

The writer outlines a set of focused interview questions, talks to the customer, drafts a preliminary document and usually has you or your marketing manager review it to ensure the message is on target. Many writers will help manage the review and editing process, taking that burden off your marketing staff. The final document is turned in after editing and approval. The writer may supply several versions such as a full write-up, an executive summary or a bulleted list of main points appropriate for a PowerPoint presentation, depending on the intended marketing uses that were identified beforehand.

#### **WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A USEFUL CLIENT SUCCESS STORY?**

An effective client success story should follow a story arc that explains who the customers are, what challenges they faced, how the construction firm helped them overcome those challenges and what the outcome was. If the completed project also helped boost a client's business and make it more successful, that is a powerful message that could motivate potential clients to choose your firm over your competitors.

In the past, traditional case studies were often dry, academic documents, so

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using a friendlier, more journalistic writing approach similar to a newspaper or magazine article for your case studies can help engage potential clients. Your firm is trying to help prospects understand how you can solve their problems. In addition, using a friendly, approachable tone helps prospects feel confident that you are someone they can talk to and work with.

### WHAT IF THE CLIENT SAYS SOMETHING UNEXPECTED?

Most customers understand a firm's marketing priorities when they are invited to share their success stories and are happy to cooperate. Occasionally, someone tells a surprising story, but these unexpected insights are sometimes useful. Your writer should notify you before proceeding further if something unusual or especially interesting comes up in the

interview—that unexpected information may offer a new angle that is of great importance to other clients.

### WHAT DOES IT COST TO WRITE CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES?

For a one-page write-up, expect to pay a writer or consultant \$500 to \$1,000. For a two-page study, a \$1,500 fee is appropriate. Larger firms and specialized firms that need to convey highly technical information can expect to pay an appropriately higher


cost. The fee typically does not include the writer's time spent collecting background information and strategizing with your marketing staff, which could add a few hundred dollars to the cost.

For a small- to medium-sized construction firm, the client success story is a marketing gold mine that validates the company's abilities and competencies, differentiates the firm from competitors and makes it easier for prospects to choose you. **CBO**


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