

Energize Your Buzz! **Generate More Biz!**

10 Powerful Reasons Why *Energized Case Studies*
Help B2B Marketers Attract Higher Quality Leads



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Energize Your Buzz! Generate More Biz!

10 Powerful Reasons Why *Energized Case Studies*
Help B2B Marketers Attract Higher Quality Leads

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Introduction:

What Exactly Does *Energizing Your Buzz* Have To Do With Generating More Biz?

You can learn a lot from nature. Just think about the highly energized honey bee, for example.

Go outside on a warm summer afternoon around a few of your favorite flowers. Consider the Rose of Sharon bushes or Black-Eyed Susans that I have around my yard, for example.

Honey bees will seem to be flying just about everywhere. They're certainly energetic. They're obviously highly industrious. Word of caution, however . . . "bee" very careful not to get stung . . . especially if you're allergic to bee stings!

But what is it about all of the honey bees that those flowers are attracting? Do you think that they really care what the flowers look like? Possibly. Do they notice if the flowers are drab and ugly or vivid and colorful? Maybe. Biological studies have shown that honey bees are attracted to some colors over others.

Putting flower appearances and color aside, what do those buzzing honey bees really care about? Without a doubt, it's what's *inside* each flower that counts – the flower's content, otherwise known as nectar and pollen. They're a honey bee's purpose for being. They're the reason honey bees get out of bed every morning (honey bees do sleep, don't they?)

Energized content is one of the most critical marketing elements that will attract buying customers to your company.

Just like content (or nectar and pollen in this case) is king in the world of the honey bee, ***energized content*** is one of the most critical marketing elements that will attract buying customers to your company.

And one of the best ways to get your prospects and customers ***energized***, or *buzzing*, about your products or services is through substantive content that includes the unique "***voice***" of your customers.

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It's your customer's unique "voice" that will **energize** your content and make it highly engaging. It's their unique "voice" that will help your company generate more quality leads and ultimately more sales. It's your customer's unique "voice" that will differentiate your company from its competitors.

You can produce all of the slick, 4-color, multi-page product brochures you want.

You can publish expensive, self-serving full-page ad campaigns appearing simultaneously in 20 different trade publications.

Or, if you're really inspired, you can post the most awesome web banners ever seen (which, by the way, only serve to irritate website viewers who really don't bother to click on them anyway!).

Ultimately, you won't even come close to matching the credibility and validity that just one engaging and **energized** case study – or what I prefer to call *customer success stories* – can provide for your company.

*Which has more credibility . . .
a self-serving print ad or a
compelling and energized
customer success story?*

Sadly, there are a lot of companies who are stuck in a time warp. They just can't seem to break from the status quo of print advertising, for example.

They would rather waste their limited marketing budgets on self-serving advertising and other ingenious forms of outdated and irrelevant marketing communications tactics that convey the message, "Gee . . . look how great our new widget is everyone! We're a fantastic company, don't you agree?"

You have to wonder . . . does anybody really even care about your print advertising? That's a tough pill to swallow, especially after you have spent thousands of dollars (or perhaps even tens of thousands of dollars) of your annual marketing budget on a disappointing print advertising campaign.

But think for a second or two . . . which has more credibility and validity in the eyes of your customers and prospects: a self-serving print ad or a compelling and **energized** customer success story featuring – you guessed it – the unique "voice" of your customer?

Let's take a few moments and look more closely at the power of **energized** case studies.

Energized Case Studies:

Why They're Such A Powerful Selling Tool!

Successful companies have been using customer success stories for a long time. Some companies do it well. As for the others? Well, let's just say there is plenty (and I mean plenty!) of room for improvement.

Sales teams love customer success stories because they are such a powerful selling tool. It's one thing to tell a prospect how great your product or service is. Having one of your most satisfied customers expound at length about why they like your product or service is something altogether different!

Traditionally, marketers have been attracted to customer success stories because they, in turn, so easily and economically attract more tryers and buyers for their company's products and services.

In today's cost-conscious economy, in-depth, feature story-oriented (more on that subject later)—and yes, **energized**—customer success stories are one of the most powerful, yet cost-effective marketing communications tools you can use to generate leads, repeat business and excitement about your company. They also play a vital role in your overall marketing communications efforts to reach your key audiences. Why? Because **energized** customer success stories:

- ✓ Are highly **CREDIBLE** in the eyes of your prospects.
- ✓ **EDUCATE** about how products and services actually work in real environments.
- ✓ **VALIDATE** by actually demonstrating key results for your key audiences*.

*Points above excerpted from *Stories That Sell: Turn Satisfied Customers Into Your Most Powerful Sales and Marketing Asset*

Ask any member of your sales team who has used customer success stories, either at your company or while working at a former employer, and they'll agree with authors Richard Maxwell and Robert Dickman who wrote in their book, *The Elements of Persuasion: Use Storytelling to Pitch Better, Sell Faster & Win More Business*:

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“For those of us whose business depends on being able to persuade others – which includes all of us in business – the key to survival is being able to cut through the clutter and make the sale.

“The good news is that the secret to selling is what it has always been, a good story. It's that simple . . . stories sell.”

Not All Case Studies Are Created Equal (that is, if you can even find them in the first place!)

I studied a random selection of more than 100 B2B websites from companies with as few as 20 employees to those with several thousand employees. Surprisingly, I found an equal number of companies (about 50/50) who use customer success stories in their marketing mix compared to those that don't.

For many of the B2B companies that feature case studies on their websites, the case studies are often hard to find.

Case studies are often very hard to find on B2B websites.

Rather than place access to case studies front and center on their home pages, companies typically bury their case studies in a section with the links such as “Resources,” “Media,” “Library,” or one of my

all-time favorite links, “Downloads” (that one really gets you pumped, doesn't it?) or some other obscure location. Website viewers must hunt for the case studies, which uses up their precious time, not to mention their **energy!**

Once a viewer finds a company's case studies, they are often disappointed in what they discover. For example, the company has put little time or effort into what they mistakenly call a case study that contains little substance.

In many instances, the case study doesn't even include one quote from the customer being written about. That's a sure-fire way to keep the human element out of what otherwise might have the potential to be a highly engaging and compelling case study.

Check out the following B2B company websites for examples of how the companies are linking access to and positioning their case studies **front and center on their home pages**. They certainly aren't afraid to shine a spotlight on the content they've taken the time and effort to craft:

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TotalTrax, Inc.

Provider of real time vehicle, driver and inventory tracking technologies and fleet management solutions for manufacturing and warehouse operations.

UPS Supply Chain Solutions®

Global supply chain management expert.

gdata

Integrator of innovative barcoding/RFID software and hardware products, wireless solutions and services.

What The Experts Say About Case Studies

There are numerous sales and marketing experts who regularly tout the benefits of using customer success stories as an important part of any company's overall marketing communications strategy.

One of the most recognized experts on writing engaging and compelling case studies is **Casey Hibbard**, author of the popular book, *Stories That Sell: Turn Satisfied Customers Into Your Most Powerful Sales and Marketing Asset*. In her book, Hibbard expounds on the benefits of what she calls Success-Story Marketing:

“Customer stories complement all other communications – brochures, Web content, data sheets, testimonials and white papers – and bridge a gap between an organization and its prospects. As in school classrooms, entertainment, and social bonding, it’s the act of storytelling that keeps audiences interested, engaged, and able to remember information.

“Just as reality-TV caters to a public craving real stories, Success-Story Marketing fills a need for buyers to understand the experiences of other buyers.”

According to **Ann Handley**, chief content officer of MarketingProfs, and co-author of *Content Rules: How To Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars (and More) That Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business*, your company won't capture the attention of its audience without producing insightful content.

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One of Handley's key pieces of advice in *Content Rules* is: "Share or solve; don't shill." She admonishes marketers to share resources with would-be customers, or solve a problem for them. But whatever you do as a marketer, "put content before product."

Handley adds, "Good content comes from telling the stories of your customers. Show how your service has helped them in their lives. The stories of people are inherently more interesting than stories of products and services."

What better way to put content before product by focusing attention on your most valued customers through engaging and *energized* case studies?

Jill Konrath, noted sales expert and author of *SNAP Selling* discusses in detail in her book what sales professionals should do when prospects ask them to "tell me more" about your company.

Instead of giving the prospect an overview about the company or more in-depth information about a product or service, Konrath suggests sharing customer success stories as a key way to pass the "tell me more test."

Sharing relevant customer success stories ensures that your company's sales team follows Rule #3 in Konrath's now famous **SNAP** formula—**Align** with customers so that they see "an immediate connection between what you do and what they're trying to achieve."

In the fourth annual Content Marketing Institute/MarketProfs **B2B Content Marketing 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends—North America** report, B2B mar-

73% of survey respondents use case studies as an important content marketing tactic.

keting survey participants were asked to rate their most reliable and useful B2B content marketing tactics.

The report found that fully **73 percent of survey respondents use case studies as an important content marketing tactic.**

When compared to the influence of other B2B content marketing tactics, case studies ranked above white papers, which are used by 63% of survey participants. It's interesting to note that the Content Marketing Institute/MarketProfs **B2B Content Marketing 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends—North America** report also found that "sales lead quality" remains one of the top content mar-

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keting metrics. Case studies can definitely help B2B companies produce higher quality sales leads as a vital sales tool resource due to their ability to help drive website traffic.

As for video case studies vs. written case studies, it's widely accepted that presenting a case study in a written format helps visually preserve the actual comments from your customers. Giving your prospects the opportunity to see your customers' comments in a written format makes a much more powerful impact than if they only heard the same comments via audio or video. Written case studies also provide more substance and depth than is possible with audio or video recording.

And now for the most important *content* of this special report . . .

10 Powerful Reasons To Energize Your Case Studies

1. *Are you telling the whole story?*

During each episode of a popular reality-TV series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, a featured celebrity goes on the hunt to find out more about their family's roots. In the process, each celebrity ends up uncovering a very engaging and compelling story that uncovers the hidden history of their family's past. Most of the details uncovered are very positive and quite inspiring to the celebrities, their families and to viewers.

Just as each celebrity digs deep to find out the whole story about a specific aspect of their ancestry and tying it to the present, **companies should also delve deep into the reasons why their customer selected them**—instead of their competition—for their company's products or services. Was it the company's reputation for quality products? How about the level of service promised *after* the sale? How was the customer treated from the very start of the buying stage? How does that compare to the relationship during the final purchasing or selection stage?

Due to the long and sometimes complex B2B buying cycle, there is typically more at stake than just price in the buying decision. Sound buying decisions typically take a lot of energy, most of which is positive since the outcome should be mutually beneficial.

Uncovering the whole story about how the buying decision was made – as opposed to sharing just selective pieces and parts – ultimately becomes a much more powerful and *energetic* story in the end that you'll be proud to share with your prospects and customers.

2. Prospects love a great story

You might be able to tell a story about nearly every customer interaction your company has. But, let's face it, not every customer encounter is going to make a great story.

So what's the answer? To provide a great story that your prospects will love, pick your customers wisely to feature in your case studies. Customers will have a great story to tell when your company:

- Solved a major problem and helped a customer overcome a seemingly insurmountable obstacle;
- Went above and beyond the customer's expectations to find a solution to their challenges;
- Provided an exceptional level of service in addressing your customer's needs;
- Has been able to quantify a return on investment (ROI) regarding the product or service your customer purchased.

3. Formulas are b-o-r-i-n-g!

A vast majority of customer success stories in use today lack energy and interest because they follow the standard, ho-hum and utterly predictable "Challenge-Solution-Results" formula.

Just saying "Challenge-Solution-Results" over and over will make anyone want to yawn!

If you feature case studies on your website that are always written using the "Challenge-Solution-Results" approach, they will eventually all tend to run together and become quite predictable.

As a result, none of your case studies will stand out as unique to your readers. Your case study library will seem "run-of-the-mill" and your

readers will expect to see the same style, case study after case study. Did someone just say “b-o-r-i-n-g?!”

Instead of the “Challenge-Solution-Results” formula, **a much more interesting, more engaging approach is to present your case studies in a feature story format.** Everyone is familiar with the feature story format, which is consistently found in magazines and newspapers. A good journalistic-style copywriter will use the feature story format to draw readers in and build momentum throughout the case study.

In addition, the feature story format paints an intriguing picture about your customer from the very beginning. It describes your customer’s corporate setting, a little about its history, the daily challenges and problems your customer faces and—most important of all—includes a generous dose of compelling quotes from your customer.

4. *Not everyone’s a skimmer*

In today’s crazy-busy world, hurried and frazzled prospects and customers still like to take time to read a good story. Even if your audience is trying to maximize every second of every minute out of each day, they still enjoy reading a captivating book or an intriguing magazine article.

Reading is a form of relaxation and even an escape from the daily grind. Why should the content you provide in the form of customer success stories offer anything different?

Rather than settling for the mundane that lacks substance and depth, why not go the extra mile and offer your customers and prospects a *quality* story they can really relate to and find highly interesting?

For a quick overview, your case studies should certainly contain a sidebar that includes pertinent, high-level details about the success story. However, the meat of the case study itself should include all of the necessary in-depth explanations, customer emotions, feelings and successful achievements that your success story can reveal.

5. *ENGAGE! . . . Emotional appeal does have meaning*

Speaking of emotion, what great story doesn’t include emotion?

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An *energized* customer success story needs to tap into that emotion, whether relating that your customer came to your company distraught with an insurmountable technical problem that only your products or services could solve, to the eventual feelings of elation your customer experienced when you actually came through on your promise of “No problem. We’ve been there before and we can solve your issue!”

6. Kick it up a notch!

It’s no secret that celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse certainly has a strong distaste for bland food. He’s always suggesting ways to “kick it up a notch” when it comes to serving great cuisine. So why should *your* customer success stories be bland?

Spice up your customer success stories with generous amounts of compelling quotes from your customers, vivid examples of how problems were solved, challenges overcome, dollars saved, measurable ROI as well as significant improvements made to productivity and efficiencies.

7. Trade editors also love a great story

One of the best ways to get more mileage out of your customer success stories is to get them published in the trade publications that cover your industry.

Trade publication editors are always looking for interesting and relevant product application stories to fill their printed pages and website content. *Readership studies have proven time and again that product application stories are a trade publication’s most widely read articles.*

In addition, getting your case study published in the trade media provides an added level of credibility for your company and its products.

8. Give customers room to “speak their mind”

This point almost goes without saying. However, it’s a basic concept that is often overlooked in published case studies found on numerous websites.

If you’re going to take the time to produce a quality customer success story, by all means, let your customers shine in the spotlight by giving

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them the opportunity to uniquely “speak their mind” about why they like working with your company and why they trust you with your products or services.

Again, it’s the unique “**voice**” of your customers that helps to set your company apart from your competition.

9. *Thanks for the memory*

The great comedian Bob Hope is famous for his trademark song, *Thanks For The Memory*. His comedic talent will certainly be remembered for generations. Just check out a clip or two on YouTube to refresh your memory (or if you’re not familiar with Bob Hope, why not take a nostalgic trip back in time and discover the true legend for yourself?).

By crafting a compelling and engaging case study, you ensure it will be remembered well beyond the moment your prospect or customer first discovered it on your website or saw it published in a trade magazine.

And that leads to one additional way to **energize** your case studies . . .

10. *Get your community buzzing via social media*

The ultimate goal of publishing a customer success story on your website or in the trade media isn’t to merely hope that someone will read it and simply forget it. Your goal is to **energize** your readers so that they will in turn pass along the story to others in their own community who may also become a hot prospect, or better yet, a new customer!

Whether your customer success stories are shared via email, in LinkedIn discussion groups, on Facebook fan pages or via Twitter 140 characters at a time, **your goal is to get your customers and prospects *buzzing about them, and often.***

Ensuring your customer success stories are engaging, compelling and memorable will help your company attract more customers to your business and generate more sales. Successfully marketing your company doesn’t get any more **energizing** than that!

Supercharge Your Customer Reference Program With *Energized* Case Studies

A strong and reliable customer reference program is increasingly becoming one of the most critical selling tools a company can use to market its products and services.

Pick and choose the right customer to showcase during all phases of the B2B sales cycle.

According to Boulder Logic, a Colorado-based software company with a specialized customer reference management system and services for program rollout:

“The goal of a successful customer reference program is to have an army of highly satisfied customer evangelists who are passionate persuaders of your products and services. Ideally, a program should track the life cycle of a customer: from deal signing, to first adoption of a product/service, to measurable ROI from use of your product/service.”

A carefully managed and regularly updated library of customer success stories will not only make it easier for your company to leverage your most satisfied customers, it will help your sales team pick and choose the right customer to showcase during all phases of the B2B sales cycle.

Here are three different perspectives of buyer stages that you can consider when developing your own persuasive content, which must include a library of invaluable customer success stories:

Traditional Buying Stages (*according to revenue performance firm, Marketo*)

- Stage 1:** Awareness – Identify a business need
- Stage 2:** Consideration – Determine possible solutions
- Stage 3:** Research – Evaluate different solutions
- Stage 4:** Purchase – Select a solution and negotiate the purchase

Buying Stage Framework (*according to analyst firm, SiriusDecisions*)

- Stage 1:** Loosening of the Status Quo
- Stage 2:** Committing to Change
- Stage 3:** Exploring Possible Solutions
- Stage 4:** Committing to a Solution

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Stage 5: Justifying the Decision

Stage 6: Making the Selection

The BuyerSphere (according to B2B research firm, Enquiro)

The buying process is not a simple logical, rational and linear process where a prospect moves neatly from one stage to the next; rather, prospects move chaotically forward and backward through the process as they balance rational decision making with the emotional impacts of fear and risk.

Marketo, a well-respected firm that specializes in revenue performance management, offers this basic advice when engaging the now changing B2B buyer:

“Provide prospects with sufficient amounts of relevant information to help guide and educate them during the buying process.”

In terms of advanced techniques for engaging the changing B2B buyer:

“Eliminate risk by developing thought leadership through relevant marketing assets, blog postings and more (such as engaging and persuasive customer success stories). By becoming a leader in your category, you build trust with prospective customers.”

Engaging the changing B2B buyer with **energized** customer success stories from your most satisfied customer will undoubtedly help you achieve both of these sales techniques. They will also help to **supercharge** and **energize** your customer reference program, as well as your overall marketing efforts, for years to come!

Energizing Takeaways

- ✓ Just like nectar and pollen are king in the world of the honey bee, **energized content** is vitally important for attracting buying customers to your company.
- ✓ **One of the best ways to get your prospects or customers energized, or buzzing,** about your products or services is through substantive content that includes the unique **“voice”** of your customers.
- ✓ No matter which kinds of sales collateral material you produce, you won't even come close to **matching the credibility and validity** that just one

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engaging and **energized** case study—or *customer success story*—can provide for your company.

- ✓ In today's cost-conscious economy, in-depth and **energized customer success stories are one of the most powerful, yet cost-effective marketing communications tools** you can use to generate leads and build repeat business.
- ✓ **Presenting a case study in a written format helps visually preserve the actual comments from your customers.** Giving your prospects the opportunity to see your customers' comments in a written format makes a much more powerful impact and allows for more substance and depth than if they only heard the same comments via audio or video.
- ✓ **Companies should delve deep into the reasons why their customer selected them**—instead of their competition—for their company's products or services.
- ✓ **Customers will have a great story to tell when:** your company solved a major problem and helped a customer to overcome a seemingly insurmountable obstacle.
- ✓ Instead of the standard, boring and utterly predictable "Challenge-Solution-Results" case study formula, **a much more interesting and engaging approach is to present your case studies in the *feature story* format.**
- ✓ The **meat of your case studies** should include all of the necessary in-depth explanations, positive customer experiences and successful achievements that your success story can reveal.
- ✓ An **energized customer success story needs to tap into the emotions** that your customers experienced when your company came through on an important commitment or promise to "get the job done."
- ✓ **Energize your customer success stories** with generous amounts of compelling quotes from your customers (a.k.a. their unique "*voice*").
- ✓ Readership studies have proven that product application stories are the **most widely read** trade publication articles.

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- ✓ Your goal is to **energize your case study readers** so that they will in turn pass along the story to others in their community, whether in person or through social networking via Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.
- ✓ A carefully managed library of customer success stories will **make it easy for your company to leverage your most satisfied customers during the various steps of the often complex B2B purchasing process.**

About Chovan Communications, LLC

Chovan Communications, LLC principal, **Doug Chovan**, is a results-driven marketing communications professional with nearly 30 years of B2B copywriting experience in the high-tech, manufacturing and financial industries.

A graduate of Kent State University with a bachelor's degree in Journalism, Doug is also a graduate of the American Bankers Association School of Bank Marketing and Management, University of Colorado at Boulder, and a Certified Financial Marketing Professional (CFMP), granted by the ABA Institute of Certified Bankers.

Chovan Communications, LLC specializes in helping B2B companies use content marketing to generate higher quality leads and shorten sales cycles by leveraging the unique "voice" of their customers through credible, engaging and validating B2B copywriting that educates and persuades.



Doug enjoys working and strategizing with savvy B2B marketing and sales professionals, as well as business owners, who are not only passionate about their careers and companies, but who also clearly understand the value of **substantive** (and that means exactly what it says . . . *'no fluff or hype, period!'*) **B2B content marketing.**

For more information on how **Chovan Communications, LLC** can help your company generate higher quality leads and shorten sales cycles using effective B2B content marketing, log on to chovanb2bcopy.com. You can also reach Doug via his office phone at **330-880-0383** or mobile at **330-268-6384**.