

BOOST YOUR SALES THROUGH CLIENT STORIES

Learn how case studies and testimonials can drive sales.



KATE ROBERTSON

You have a rare date night organised with your partner and are keen to see a movie. One you've had your eye on has received critical acclaim, but friends who share your taste in movies have told you it is dull and depressing and they are raving about a different flick that has just come out. Which movie do you choose?

Most people, if not all, would choose the second movie, because they can envisage themselves having a similar experience to their friends' – hating a dull and depressing, if 'worthy' movie, versus having a great night watching the second. And really, date nights are too precious to take a chance on a bad movie.*

This is why case studies, also known as client success stories, are such a powerful tool for businesses. The greater the financial, emotional and time cost involved in a product or service, the more impact case studies have.

Potential purchasers want to be reassured that they are making the right decision, and hearing about other people, who are similar to themselves, having a great experience, makes them more confident they will be making a good decision and can expect a similarly good outcome.

Why you need to read this report

This short report will explain the power of case studies, and testimonials (which are similar in aim and outcome but much shorter).

By the end, you will:

1. Understand why case studies and testimonials are so powerful
2. Know the key elements of a powerful case study/testimonial
3. Know how to gather great case studies/testimonials
4. Know how to get a case study/testimonial for a new product or service
5. Know how to use them for maximum impact.

*This is an example of a very short case study. I used it to engage you in a storyline that you are likely able to relate to and to quickly overcome any objections you may have had about the power of a case study/testimonial. As a case study it is also more interesting than a standard dry opening, meaning you are more likely to be willing to read on and become more engaged in the content that follows – if this was a sales page, it would be moving you towards the sale. Go case studies....

What are case studies and testimonials?

A case study is really a small success story that takes your prospect on a journey through the problem, solution and outcome of someone they can identify with – your happy customer.

Case studies are a great way engage your prospects emotions as they identify with the pain, problem or predicament that caused your customer to seek a solution. They then get to vicariously experience the triumph your solution provided.

A testimonial is a mini-version of a case study, and is another way to address your prospect's concerns with maximum impact.

The power of case studies

Case studies are great at:

1. Building credibility
2. Creating trust
3. Creating a bond between you and your prospects
4. Appearing factual and objective
5. Removing sales objections
6. Answering prospects' unspoken question 'will this work for me?'
7. Compelling prospects to read on and become more invested and engaged in your solution.

She wanted to break my daughter's jaw*

Last year, I took my 12-year-old daughter for an orthodontic assessment. The 30-something orthodontist was friendly and chatty as she opened my daughter's file, spilling images of her teeth across the desk.

I was expecting the orthodontist would recommend braces for my daughter's mild overbite, and my credit card and I were reasonably prepared.

But the orthodontist's first words were so shocking that the rest of the appointment was a blur.

As she pulled out her list of treatment options, she looked at my daughter's anxious face and back to mine before saying, "There are three ways we can tackle this, but my recommendation is that we break your daughter's jaw".

I have a vague recollection of her explanation that this would involve surgery to cut the jawbone and move it forward and I know I asked questions but it was all on remote. I couldn't shake the dramatic (and obviously inaccurate) image of someone smashing my daughter in the face.

For her part, my daughter sat in stunned silence and I felt ill at the thought of how, as a pre-teen, I would have interpreted the health professional's opinion that my profile must be truly horrific if breaking my jaw was the best option.

Needless to say, we didn't go back. We found another orthodontist who did mention 'minor surgery' as a potential option but he preferred a more conservative route – using a plate to bring her jaw forward before applying braces.

And my point is?

The first orthodontist lost a sale, worth at least \$7000. I had my credit card ready to go. But she blew it because she chose her words poorly and did not clearly explain what she wanted to do and the benefits it would provide. (This is also an example of why you need to steer clear of industry jargon and use words your clients are comfortable with)

If she had pulled out a case study of a patient with a similar issue as my daughter's and talked through the treatment plan she had followed (calling it 'minor surgery' as opposed to 'breaking your jaw'), with photographic evidence of the results, it is likely we would have gone ahead. Or at least seriously considered it. Particularly if that case study included a testimonial from the patient about her experience of treatment and how pleased she was with the outcome, how much faster it was to get a result than the other options, etc.

Key elements of powerful case studies

For maximum impact, case studies need the following elements:

1. Story that prospects can relate to
2. Needs to outline the problem, solution, outcome
3. Overcomes potential obstacles to a sale (for instance, the delivery cost included installation so all the channels were programmed in ready to use)
4. Should be written in an editorial style rather than an advertisement
5. Should have an attention-grabbing headline (for e.g. She wanted to break my daughter's jaw...)
6. Should include details that make it seem more real (Spilling images of her teeth across the desk...)

Testimonials

Testimonials are like mini-case studies. They also have a huge impact on prospects' willingness to buy.

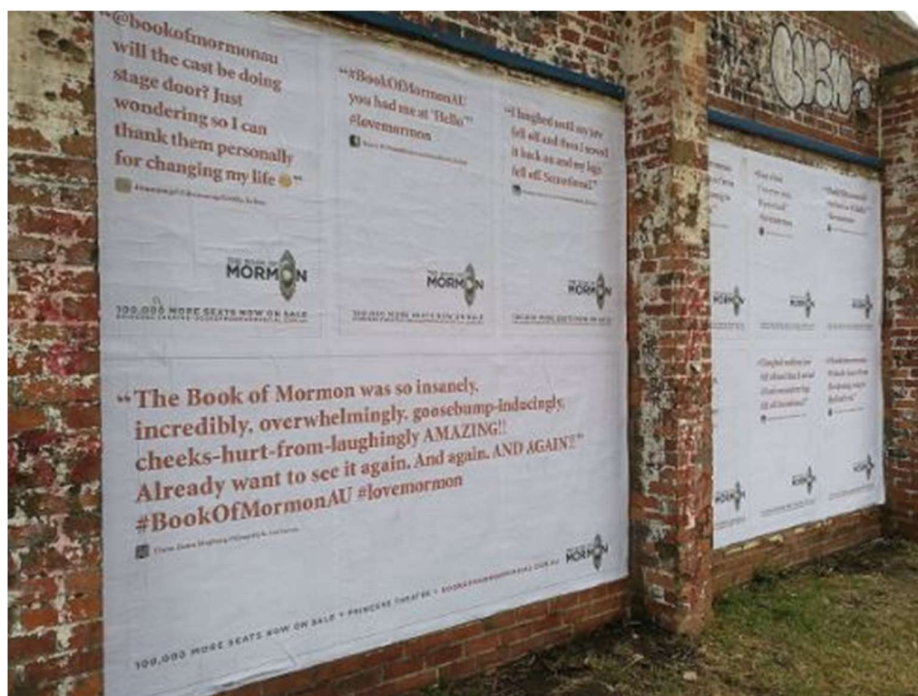
The team marketing the hit musical Book of Mormon rely almost solely on testimonials to promote the show.

Tweets from theatre goers adorn posters that have been slapped on walls throughout Melbourne and included in a wrap around in *The Age* newspaper. And it's clear why, when they include gems like:

"@bookofmormonau will the cast be doing stage door? Just wondering so I can thank them personally for changing my life 😊"

And

"My heart just exploded with joy and I'm 160% okay with that #LoveMormon"



Key elements

Not all testimonials are equal. To be compelling, they need to:

1. Be authentic (the more details you can include the better, for instance name, profession, location – video is often more compelling as it seems more ‘real’.)
2. Follow the problem, solution, outcome format: “I tried everything for my painful and itchy rash but it cleared within 24 hours after using xxx.”
3. Address client concerns or objections: “I doubled my investment within two months.”
4. Be written in a conversational rather than formal style.

For example, instead of: “Bob provides a professional mechanical service.”

“I’ve been burned in the past by mechanics charging me for unnecessary work so Bob has been a breath of fresh air. He listens to my concerns and explains what he is doing and why. I recommend him to all my friends and family.”

Instead of: “Good service.”

“I wish I’d had a dentist like Amy when I was a kid, maybe then I wouldn’t be scared of a checkup!”



How do you gather compelling case studies and testimonials?

You ask! Make it part of your follow up process after completing a sale or after providing a service to ask clients for their feedback (and their permission to use it for marketing purposes).

You can also provide incentives:

1. Reward them with entry to a prize draw
2. Offer something small for everyone who submits a testimonial (gift card, discount offer...)
3. Do it as part of a fun survey
4. Offer to feature them on your blog or newsletter, which provides some cross promotion for their business
5. Ask them personally; give them a call or send them an email
6. Put a testimonials page on your website and ask people to submit theirs (you'll probably want to ensure you can vet them first in case of spam or detrimental posts)
7. Enable purchasers to add their testimonial via social media, including Facebook and Twitter
8. You can also put out a call for testimonials on your company website and social media channels, or send them direct mail.

Be clear on the format:

Without putting words in their mouth, you need to ask clients for a testimonial in a way that is likely to provide the key elements needed for it to be effective. You can frame this by asking questions such as: problem, solution, outcome format

1. Why did you buy our product/service? (to find out the problem)
2. How did it help? (solution)
3. What results have you achieved through using our product/service? (outcome)

4. What concerns did you have about our product/service before you experienced it? (identify the sales objections that were overcome)
5. Who do you think would benefit from our product/service? (identify others like them)
6. Would you recommend our product/service? If so, why? (how it can help others like them)

If they provide a great testimonial, it is worth following up to see if you can interview them for a case study.

How to get testimonials for a new product/service

Give friends, family or existing clients a free taste of your new product or service in return for their feedback. This can also give you key information on ways to improve your new offering.

Where to use testimonials and case studies

Use your testimonials and case studies wherever you can leverage their impact, including on your:

1. Website
2. Landing pages
3. After your order form (to prevent buyer's remorse)
4. Social media
5. Emails
6. Direct marketing
7. General marketing collateral
8. ENewsletter
9. As a downloadable pdf

10. On your LinkedIn profile

“Kate has provided the Centre for Palliative Care with invaluable expertise in all things marketing, from running webinars to strategic media advice and promoting events, over the past 12 months. Kate was my right-hand person for our major website redesign project, assisting me with the challenges that such a large project presents. She not only wrote, but designed marketing collateral for the Centre, including our annual report. At short notice, Kate also stepped up to give a solid presentation on writing for the media to researchers at our annual colloquium. I have no hesitation in recommending Kate to other organisations.



Soula Ganiatsas

Head of Operations at St Vincents Hospital - Centre for Palliative Care

Don't stop

Gathering fresh case studies and testimonials should be embedded as part of your ongoing marketing efforts.

You want to refresh the testimonials you display on your marketing materials and you also want to keep in touch with your customers' experience of your product and service and demonstrate that you are committed to constant improvement and listening to your clients.

If you have raving fans, why not tap into them and flesh out their success story, adding them to your sales team.

People buy on emotion and justify with logic.
If you give them both you are much more likely to get the sale.

Need help?

If you need assistance with gathering testimonials or case studies, Icebreaker Communication's Kate Robertson can assist.

Kate has written countless case studies over the past 25-plus years with her stories appearing in newspapers, magazines, annual reports and government publications.

Kate has witnessed first-hand the power of case studies and testimonials to achieve goals as diverse as selling online products, attracting more members to sporting clubs, securing government funding and demonstrating a business's commitment to being a good corporate citizen.

As a small agency, Icebreaker can provide breathtaking marketing and copywriting services, without the breathtaking invoice.

Contact Kate to see how she
can help your business.

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