

Communicating with Case Studies

By Robert F. Abbott

Communicating with Case Studies

Robert F. Abbott
abbotr@managersguide.com

Newsletter Publishing Services <http://www.createnewsletters.com/>

Communicating with Case Studies

By: Robert F. Abbott

A couple of colleagues and I were discussing a new business idea; but, we had trouble expressing how this new business would provide value.

And out of our discussions came the idea of writing a case study. If you're not familiar with them, case studies are histories of business initiatives.

They're like articles, but they often put the reader into the shoes of a person making a difficult decision. Other professions also use case studies; you've probably heard of medical case studies, for example. Medical students get a set of facts about a patient, and perhaps some background or context, and then must diagnose the patient's condition or disease.

Business case studies have proven popular in the business community and at some university business schools (with the profs, at least). In some senses, the case study is the next best thing to being involved in a real-life decision making.

Now, how is this relevant for you? Well, if you have to persuade others to adopt your point of view, or buy your products, or vote for you, then you might find a case study useful.

In fact, you may be doing something like that already. Whenever you tell a story that's designed to make a certain point, you're using a form of case study.

During my brief foray into life insurance sales, for example, I learned that emotion sells policies, and not logic. That's why people in the business have a raft of stories about people who did or did not have protection when they died.

The moral, of course, is that you should not only have life insurance, but you should have the right kind, and in the right amount. Now, if you sold life insurance, you would quickly find that no one listens when you explain the logic, but they will listen -- and act -- if you have your case studies (your anecdotes).

So, having gone through all that, is a case study just a fancy name for an anecdote or story? Yes, to a certain extent it is.

But, when you think of a case study, think of it as a more elaborate and more logically constructed story. Typically, a case study describes an organization or department that faces a choice or dilemma of some kind, and the reader gets a number of facts about the options. Then, the reader is challenged to make a choice. Some case studies include a follow-up report, so readers know whether or not they made the right decision.

Try creating one yourself, by taking the following steps:

First, identify a company or organization (and perhaps a person) with a difficult choice, along with relevant information that provides context to the issue addressed in the case.

Second, introduce the decision or dilemma that the company or person faces. In many cases, the writer sets out two or more possible options. One of those options may be to do nothing, to maintain the status quo. Another option may demand significant changes, and yet a third option would require more modest changes. However you set the options, they should offer distinct choices to the reader. Don't allow a muddling-through solution that involves compromises.

Third, after setting out the choices, provide the basic facts and opinions the reader will need to make a logical choice. These may be financial results or any other bits of information involved in making the decision or living with the results of that decision.

As you develop the case study, keep in mind that you're trying to convey that the person or company in the case had to make a difficult decision. And the more the reader feels that difficulty, the more effective the case.

Fourth, and finally: Provide the outcome to the reader if possible. Let the reader know which option the person or company chose, and how well that decision worked. After all, you've been telling a story, and your audience will want to know how it ended. Ideally, you would not give the reader access to the outcome until after he or she makes that decision.

Robert F. Abbott sometimes uses case studies when he writes and publishes newsletters for his clients, to help them communicate with customers, employees, and important others:

<http://www.CreateNewsletters.com> .

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)