**HOW TO WRITE AN ADVERTISING SUCCESS CASE STUDY**

by

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| Too many success stories published by the media regurgitate bland statements about how advertising in a media gets results, but there is rarely any useful information about how this wonderful situation came about.  Case studies are much more effective selling tools than advertiser testimonials. Case studies can give specific details on how a particular medium helped solve marketing and advertising problems. Case studies can be used by salespeople to demonstrate how a medium can marshal its resources and expertise to help customers achieve their specific marketing and advertising objectives. Case studies can also be used by salespeople to position themselves as problem solvers.  Advertising success case studies are also excellent tools for teaching salespeople the important elements of marketing and advertising.  Elements of an Effective Advertising Success Case Study  1. The Marketing Environment: A good case study describes the marketing environment: short-term and long-term developments and trends in the advertiser's external environment such as changes in the economy, competitive pressure, regulation, technology, culture, economics, or demographics.  2. The Competition: Define the advertiser's main direct and indirect competitors, both current and potential. Competitors should be described in terms of size, growth rate, market share and primary strategies. Competitors' major strengths and weaknesses should be noted. Competitors' positioning statements and advertising strategies should be outlined briefly.  3. The Marketing Objectives: State the advertiser's marketing objectives such as "increase market share by two points" or "increase weekday traffic by 20%" or "attain a 30% share of mind (recall of stated benefits)," for example. Marketing objectives should be stated in hierarchical order and quantified so that progress toward them can be measured.  4. The Marketing Strategy: Outline the advertiser's primary marketing strategy (segmentation, differentiation or low-cost producer) and the critical success factors in the execution of their strategy.  5. The Advertising Objectives: Delineate the advertiser's advertising objectives such as ”increase sales by 10%,” "create awareness," "reinforce brand loyalty," "increase store or site traffic for next weekend's sale by 15% over last year" or "increase usage of dry cereal," for example. Some of the advertising objectives can be similar to the marketing objectives but they should also be more short-term and media and campaign specific. Advertising objectives should be stated in hierarchical order and quantified so that progress toward them can be measured.  6. The Advertiser's Competitive Positioning Statement (advertising objectives put into the plain words of a consumer promise): Express the advertiser's positioning statement, not just the current slogan but a positioning theme that makes a definite promise to customers. A positioning statement clearly defines "who we are."  7. The Problems that Advertising Can Solve: Lay out the advertising problems from the advertiser's point of view. The problems must be stated in a manner that is objective and not biased to a particular point of view or does not imply an obvious answer.  8. The Solutions to the Advertising Problems: Give details about the specific solutions a station and its salesperson provided for the client:  a. Creative: Ideas, strategy and execution.  b. Media: Strategy, plans and execution, including merchandising, promotion, vendor support, co-op coordination, research, copy testing, etc. Be sure to include details of what was purchased, including impressions and reach and frequency estimates. Reach estimates are especially important for planned-purchase products rather that impulse purchases because of the long-term purchase cycle.  9. The Results: Summarize the results of an advertising campaign in specific, measurable terms. The results section answers the questions; "Did the campaign work?" "Were the marketing and advertising objectives achieved?" "Were the results attributable to the advertising campaign?" "Were the results attributable to the medium used?" Graphs and other visual presentations of results greatly increases their impact.  Make sure to secure the client's and agency's permission to use the case. In some cases clients are reluctant to give permission to use their names because they are afraid their competition will get wind of and try to duplicate their success. In such situations, write a case study using fictitious names and organizations and change the conditions slightly in order to mask the identity of the client, or just use the numbers and refer to the client as “brand X.” The principles, strategy and approximate results should remain the same. When salespeople use the fictional case, they should tell prospects: "This case is based on an actual situation, but the real client doesn't want us to use their name – the results were so terrific that they don't want competitors to know about it."  You should have at least one case study that demonstrates how it worked as a partner with an agency to solve a client's problem. You should also organize an effort to have case studies in several categories such as financial services, CPG, automotive and ecommerce, for example.  Advertising success case studies can be written with a client or an agency as the protagonist.  Writing Tips   1. Keep your audience in mind: Remember you are writing for potential advertisers. Keep jargon to a minimum. 2. Openings: Grab the reader with a opening that is about a client facing their biggest advertising problem. 3. Provide relevant details: After the opening that sets the situation, give relevant details about objectives, challenges and solutions. Use hard numbers when you can.   Case Studies as Teaching Tools  Not only are case studies excellent ways to walk clients through the problem-solving process, but they are also one of the most effective ways to teach salespeople about the marketing and advertising factors involved in designing successful advertising campaigns. Developing case studies is the best way to teach value-added and consultative selling techniques.  If two or three salespeople are given a team assignment of writing a case study for a business category, in the process of developing the case, they will not only learn a lot about that category, but they will also have to learn a great deal about the marketing and advertising process: objectives, strategies and execution.  Of course, once a team develops a case study for a business category, the next logical step (and one you'll find they will take virtually automatically and enthusiastically) is for the sales team to write a well-organized, insight-oriented, problem-solving sales presentation for that category or vertical.  Thus, case studies teach insight and solution selling, marketing and advertising principles, problem solving techniques, how to create value and how to create effective sales presentations. Advertising success case studies are excellent teaching *and*selling tools. |