



CREATIVE SERVICES

Customer Evidence Rules

Customer Evidence assets are marketing tools that communicate your product offering through the voice of your customer. When customers testify to your value, you are demonstrating your effectiveness as a solutions provider and building credibility. Compared to claims you make about yourself, customer evidence is persuasive and can drive customers to take the next step in the buying process.

Stories That Sell: Customer Evidence In The Sales Cycle

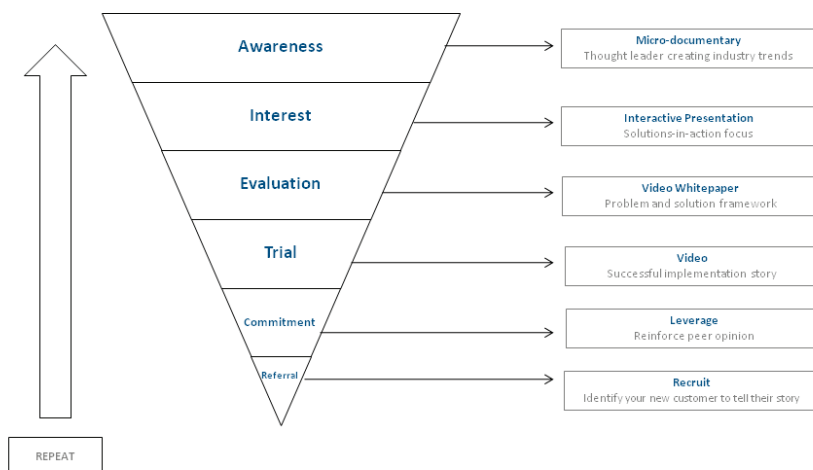
The length of time to close a deal in the business-to-business sales cycle has increased by more than twenty percent in the past five years. Buying team sizes have also increased, and buying processes have become more complicated as businesses provide require greater scrutiny of purchasing decisions. Customer Evidence assets work well within this lengthened sales cycle because of their versatility. The same asset, and its variations, can be leveraged to hit multiple targets (end user, influencer, and decision maker) at different stages of the buying process.

Depending on the sales cycle stage, the customer story will vary. In early stages, the story can outline the dynamics and forces behind a new industry or product innovation, or present a customer as a thought leader adopting your solution. At a middle stage of the sales cycle, the asset can define the problem in a challenge/solution framework to help prospects see a world where their problems are solved. At the later stages of the sales cycle, where comparative content is critical, Customer Evidence serves to reinforce peer opinion, as well as provide answers to implementation concerns.

Customer Evidence Helps Your Company:

- Add Credibility
- Communicate ROI
- Educate Prospects
- Inspire Prospects To Action
- Build Social Media Porfolio

Mapping Evidence To The Sales Cycle



Effective Customer Evidence storytelling requires an approach that combines journalism with a bit of anthropology. Customer Evidence focuses on compelling customers, whether it's an individual champion or an entire company. We want to present a real life person with whom your prospect can identify. Who is this customer? What do they do, and what motivates them to go to work in the morning and do it? What are the challenges they face, and why did they choose to reach out to your solution? With this mix of personal and professional information, your prospects have an opportunity to identify with your existing customers, and realize that you have a solution that can solve their similar challenges.

Leveraging Customer Evidence

Customer Evidence can be leveraged as follows:

- Video testimonials for your website and social media channels, as well as external communication channels such as tradeshows
- Interactive presentations for your website, or rebranded for resellers and other sales channels
- PDFs to be distributed via your website, through your sales reps, or used as collateral at trade events
- Proof points in sales and capabilities presentations through slides, videos, and takeaways

The focus and format of your Customer Evidence story can be inexpensively repurposed to reach prospects through any channels at any stage of the sales cycle. In all cases, Customer Evidence assets include clear calls-to-action that invite prospects to take the next step.

Best Practices For Demand Generation

Customer Evidence assets build demand by facilitating discovery, promoting brand awareness, and by validating your solution. In employing Customer Evidence for demand generation, follow these best practices to make the most of your existing customers' experiences:

Story is first and foremost

Customer evidence is all about the compelling story. Allow your subjects to be honest and open. Keep your prospects interested with powerful quotations, and avoid marketing-speak, clichés, and jargon. Maintain a clear story arc, like any good film, book or article.

Solid interviews

Finding the right personalities for interviews is essential to a good Customer Evidence asset. It is important that you find compelling personalities that will fit the mood of your Customer Evidence story. Senior level executives, client account managers, or, depending on the client, technical experts can provide excellent credibility and material for Customer Evidence. By interviewing these people you can capture a larger scope of the story, from the high-level to the operational to the user-level inner workings of the offering.

Details matter

General details won't give your Customer Evidence very credible legs to stand on. Include specific statistics and concrete details such as, "over 1,200 sales leads generated", or "392 companies participating in the free trial." The more factual data your Customer Evidence contains, the more credibility it holds. Specific details are very important to your prospects for validation of your offering or solution.

Common Customer Evidence Formats:

- Videos
- Interactive Presentations
- PDFs
- Slideshows

Where Customer Evidence Can Be Leveraged:

- Website
- Social Media Channels
- External Communications
- Sales Channels
- Presentations

Customer Evidence to support sales

Give your sales team the tools they need to show potential customers how they, like other businesses, can experience concrete benefits from adopting your solution. Organize your Customer Evidence assets by topic (business problem, solution set or industry vertical), not by company, so your sales team and customers can find the right story at the right time.

Extend your reach

Leverage your Customer Evidence through as many channels as appropriate. Many large companies store their case studies and Customer Evidence assets in a central database. This practice can inhibit the visibility of your Customer Evidence. Instead, reach your prospects through your company's website, social networking and your sales team. By making your Customer Evidence assets easily accessible, you are facilitating the discovery of your brand, solutions and ideas, pushing your prospects further down the sales cycle.

Conclusion

Today's buyers rely on a complex mix of social, editorial and vendor content to form product awareness and ultimately make purchase decisions. Customer evidence can be a critical part of this content mix, and allows your story to be told through your most valuable asset: your customer. And besides, everybody loves a good story.

Learn more about Customer Evidence:

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