



Develop and Execute an Effective Customer Success Marketing Strategy

Maximize the Sales and Marketing Value of Your Customer Assets

The 10 Steps to an Effective Customer Success Marketing Strategy

1. Define & Align Your Strategic Objectives
2. Identify your Budget and Desired ROI
3. Determine the Challenges Faced by Your Target Market
4. Define the Key Messages
5. Develop the Customer Success Marketing Plan
6. Identify the Optimal Mix of Customers
7. Recruit
8. Execute
9. Measure the Results
10. Revise

Your best customers can sell for you.

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A lifeguard stands on the beach and tells you “Go ahead. The water’s warm.” Your first thought may be, “How would she know?”

Then you look at the ocean and notice one man standing in the water. He says, “Come on in. The water’s warm.” You might believe him. You might not.

Now, there are 20 people floating on the surf and they all yell, “He’s right. The water **is** warm!”

That’s the power of Customer Success Marketing: **the compelling effect of a group of customers who are willing to stand up and vouch for your company and the value of its offering.**

What is a Customer Success Marketing Strategy?

A customer success strategy is more than simply posting a few run-of-the-mill case studies on your company’s web site. At Altitude, we define a Customer Success Strategy as:

“A strategy that leverages the marketing and educational value of your best customers’ experiences to help your company achieve its marketing, sales and customer retention objectives.”

This white paper describes the 10 key steps to develop and execute an effective Customer Success Marketing Strategy for your company.

Step 1. Define & Align Your Strategic Objectives

To begin, you need a valid **strategic** reason to leverage your customer success stories. Do you want to:

- Generate more demand in your current target market?
- Help your sales team penetrate a new industry, market or geography?
- Reduce churn and increase revenues from existing customers?

The objectives of your Customer Success Marketing Strategy should directly align with your company’s overall marketing strategy. There’s no point generating case studies or running a customer-led webinar full of healthcare customers if you’re trying to increase your presence in the insurance market. Similarly, it doesn’t make sense to recruit Fortune 500 customers to discuss their best practices when the small and mid-market are your greatest opportunities.

Aligning your customer success strategy with the corporate strategy will allow you to gain the buy-in and support you’ll need from your sales, account management or marketing colleagues.

Based on your defined strategy, identify which measurable objectives will determine whether your strategy is successful. It’s those objectives that will influence your budget, your choice of initiatives and the customers you will want to recruit.



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Step 2. Identify your Budget and Desired ROI

A strategic approach to leveraging customer successes can significantly impact sales, retention and the value of each customer.

You can now determine how much of your budget and internal resources you're willing to allocate to your Customer Success Strategy.

Start by calculating the financial impact of achieving your success strategy goals. For example, if your goal is to generate 10% more leads for your sales team, what is that worth to your company? Then based on an acceptable ROI or another benchmark, such as your target cost per lead, decide upon a reasonable budget for your success initiatives.



Step 3. Determine the Challenges Faced by Your Target Market

Effective customer success initiatives are designed to:

- ▶ Prove to prospects that other companies have overcome the same challenges they are facing
- ▶ Show them how they can achieve similar results by working with your company

What are the key challenges faced by the market you are targeting? Are they different than your typical customer today? If so, how?

Tips for Leveraging Customer Successes

From Cate Vanasse, Retention Marketing Manager for Egencia, Expedia Inc.'s corporate travel division:

- Hold a best practices webinar with your customer spokesperson and offer the case study as a takeaway
- When notifying prospects and customers of new customer success stories, include a customer photo in the e-mail to increase your click-through rate
- Create e-mail templates that speak to a specific need your clients or prospects face. Use the case study to offer a potential solution

To find out, review the experiences of existing customers that are similar to your desired prospects. What business challenge caused them to purchase your solution? Talk to your sales team members who are focused on that market. What are they hearing from prospects? You can also review relevant external sources of information such as analyst reports or industry-specific media.

Use this information to clearly identify the challenges your customer success marketing initiatives should address.

Step 4. Define the Key Messages

Now that you know the key challenges, what aspects of your value proposition are most relevant to overcoming that challenge and therefore are important to highlight?

Look at your relevant customers again. How have they defined success and how did they achieve that success by leveraging your company's offering? Use that information to define the messages that you want to communicate in your success initiatives.

Step 5. Develop the Customer Success Marketing Plan

At this point, you should know your strategy and its measurable objectives, plus the key business challenges and messages you want to incorporate. It's time to identify **how** you are going to reach your target market with the messages you've identified.

Case studies in print, video or interactive format are likely a given, but think about what other initiatives would be the most effective means of reaching your audience.



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For example, if you are:

- Targeting a specific geographical region, does an in-person event make sense?
- Targeting a particular industry, can you recruit customers to join your tradeshow exhibit?
- Focused on retaining current customers, what existing communication channels can you take advantage of, such as an e-newsletter or a customer portal?

Consider sharing each success story in several formats to increase its overall marketing value. If you have not leveraged your customer success stories at all up to this point, it's probably wise to be somewhat conservative. Don't expect too much from your initial efforts and don't blow the budget on a multi-city tour if you've never captured a single case study. Once you've recruited an initial set of customers and they begin participating in case studies, etc., the momentum will grow and you'll have many more success marketing initiatives that you can pursue.

Step 6. Identify the Optimal Mix of Customers

Looking at your strategy, objectives, and messages, what factors matter when selecting the optimal set of customers to recruit? How important is the customer's industry, location, size, brand, specific business challenge, or even your main contact's title?

Now that you have determined what characteristics are important, you can analyze your existing customer base to find the companies and individuals that best match what you're looking for. Don't be discouraged if you can't find exact matches. The point of this step is to maximize the value of current customer assets you have, by selecting the companies who come closest to your ideal customer advocates.

Step 7. Recruit

This step is where many companies fall down. It's critical to have a plan for recruiting customers that anticipates and addresses their concerns, and highlights the valid benefits they will receive from participating.

We believe it's important not to promise financial compensation or a gift upfront for participating in a customer success initiative as that practice can tarnish its legitimacy. Instead focus on the PR benefits to the company and potential career benefits to the customer. Many customers we have recruited for our clients have leveraged the exposure from a case study or speaking opportunity to be internally promoted. No matter what, you must reassure your customers that they will have complete control over the content of any initiative they agree to participate in.

Step 8. Execute

Once you have recruited your customers, make sure you follow through on your commitments in a timely manner. Your customers may love your offering and agreed to participate, but recognize that they are **volunteering** their time to your initiative and they have their own roles and responsibilities that they have to attend to. Try to agree on reasonable deadlines upfront to help keep the project on track. To ensure customers are satisfied with the process and the results, make it easy for them to participate. Whatever you can do on their behalf, such as drafting a case study based on a phone interview or formatting their presentation, do it.

Customer Recruiting Tips

When recruiting customers to participate in success marketing initiatives:

- **Make it easy.** Minimize the customer's time requirement.
- **Make it worthwhile.** Highlight the personal benefits from the added exposure they'll receive.
- **Give them control.** Make sure they know their final approval is required before you can publish and share their success story with others.



Our Mission

To maximize the value of prospect, customer and partner relationships for our B2B clients.

“ Altitude Management goes well beyond the ‘one-off’ case study. They provide tools to help our sales team find the right study to present to a particular prospect and they recommend ways to incorporate the voice of the customer into our other marketing initiatives. ”

STUART ROBERTSON
GENERAL MANAGER
SHAREBUILDER 401(K),
A SUBSIDIARY OF ING DIRECT

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Also, make it worthwhile. Give them the lion’s share of attention in any success initiative. Your company played a supporting role; a very important supporting role, but a supporting role nonetheless. Plus, your target audience will better relate to a story that puts the customer in the lead role.

Step 9. Measure the Results

Once your customer success initiatives are underway, make sure you measure the results. It's not always easy, and the results may not be quantifiable to three decimal points, but it's important to measure the results as best as you can. That will enable you to:

- Identify what's working and what's not
- Celebrate your successes with your internal colleagues and participating customers to continue to receive the support you need.

Step 10. Revise

Based on your results, determine what changes are required and define your next steps. At a minimum, you probably have customer advocates who are even more enthusiastic as a result of participating in your initiatives, AND new customers who will soon have their own successes you can leverage. In our experience, new customers who engaged in some customer success-related initiative during their buying process are much more likely to participate in any future initiatives you develop. The companies we’ve worked with often get requests from customers to participate in upcoming initiatives.

Summary

In today’s economy, a well executed Customer Success Marketing Strategy can generate new prospects and provide them with the proof they require to make their buying decision. It can also provide current customers with the information they need to maximize their value from your offering. In other words, a Customer Success Strategy can help your company to both increase sales, and improve customer retention. The 10 steps identified in this white paper, are based on our experience helping companies maximize the value of their customer assets. We hope they deliver the same results for you.

About Altitude Management Inc.

At Altitude Management, our mission is to help B2B companies to maximize the value of their prospect, customer and partner relationships to drive new sales and revenues for their business. Our customer success marketing work has included over 50 print and interactive case studies as well as video testimonials, multi-city customer success tours, referral programs, customer-led webinars, satisfaction surveys, customer-focused user guides and white papers.

In our view, your base of successful customers is an incredibly valuable asset that, if treated with the utmost respect, can be leveraged to generate new demand, drive new sales, improve customer retention and increase the value of each customer for your company.