



Secrets of Success Story Development

*Turning low-impact stories into
high-impact sales tools*

**Note to Readers: I developed this
presentation as a freelance consultant
working for a firm that served enterprise
technology firms.**



Current Situation

- Existing success stories aren't working properly: They're not bringing in more leads or helping sales to close more quickly.

- Why?
 - Stories don't consistently incorporate existing messaging
 - Stories don't reveal why a buyer selected you instead of someone else
 - Buyer "pains" are often buried deep within the content, either in the Success Strategy or Results sections; buried deep means inaccessible
 - Stories ignore IT challenges
 - Stories lack implementation details—a must for IT influencers and decision makers



What's wrong with your stories?

Analysis of Farmers Home Mutual Insurance Success Story

Where's the messaging?

The story doesn't use messaging that shows how or why your product is uniquely equipped to solve pains or resolve problems.

- Your solution is the only one that works on multiple platforms, deploys online, and provides native XML support and client-side web services. Highlight these important differentiators in the story.

Why did Farmers select your solution?

Readers may wonder:

- What other solutions did Farmers consider?
- What specific factors led them to choose you?

What makes for a successful success story?

Successful success stories identify with the pain points and objectives of influencers and decision makers. They also use brand/product messaging to illustrate how solutions solve those pains and meet those objectives—today and tomorrow.



What's wrong with your stories?

Analysis of Farmers Home Mutual Insurance Success Story

Where are the “pains” prospects might identify with?

Challenges are not necessarily pains. Wanting to improve services and minimize errors on applications are objectives, not pains. Although the Challenges section did capture some pains, others were buried. For instance, in the “Results” section, readers learn:

- Farmers was spending more than \$500,000 annually to process applications manually.
- Agents typically spent hours enrolling each client for Farmers' products and services.
- Mailing paperwork often caused up to 10-day processing delays.

Where are the IT challenges?

Much of your messaging speaks to IT developers who may choose your solution as the standard for the company. Yet because stories lack implementation details, and provide limited technical information, this messaging is loudly absent. Questions you might positively answer in a story include:

- How was Farmers able to use its existing IT investments?
- What struggles did they have managing IT assets before?
- Was implementation as expected? Or better?

What do readers want to know?

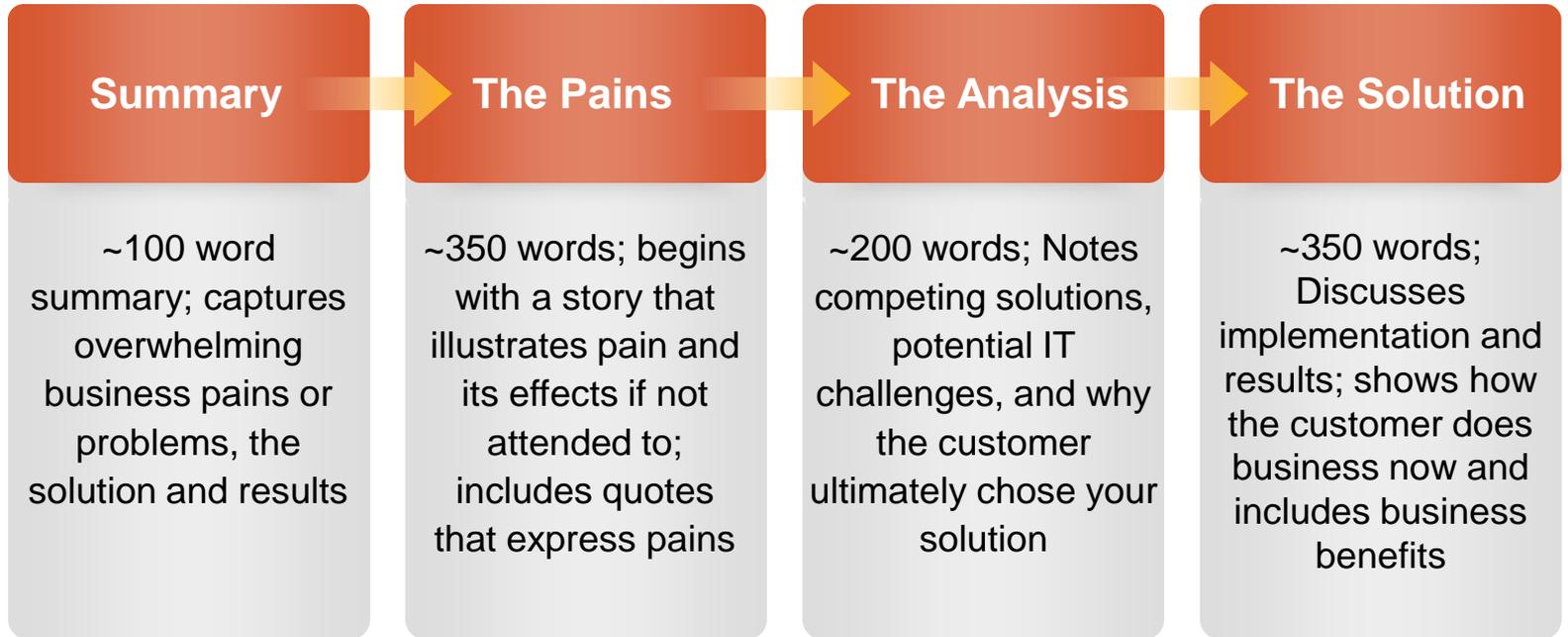
To satisfy everyone who might read your stories, briefly touch upon the points of interest of various groups. For instance:

- CIO/IT wants to align IT to LOB strategies. Did the solution help them do so? CIO also wants a scalable, reliable solution that fits with existing IT investments while reducing risk. How did your solution meet or exceed those criteria?
- LOB leaders want operational efficiencies, the ability to change processes, high user adoption, and best practices. Did the solution fill each of those needs, or others that may be relevant to the LOB buyer?

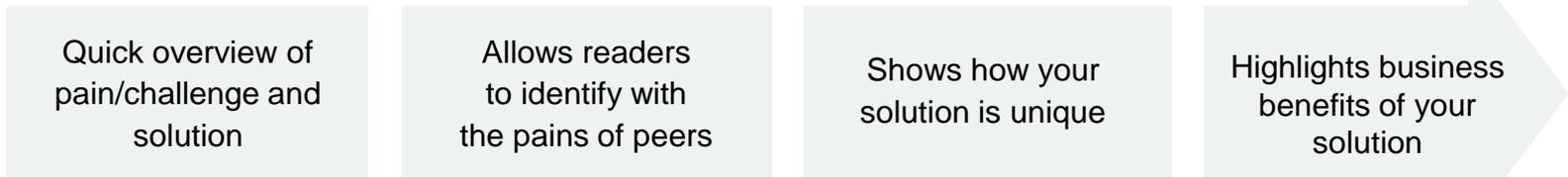


A model for success story development: Overview

Element



Benefit of Element to Readers





Success Story “Success Elements”

Headline

- A strong headline includes numbers justifying business benefits; specifics, not generalities, sell.
- Headline incorporates customer and solution name.

Strong headline:

- Farmers Home Mutual Insurance Company reduces policy processing time by 10 days and cuts annual processing costs by more than \$500k.

Summary

- The summary portion of a success story includes the overarching pain or challenge and the results of implementing the solution. Use metrics.
- The summary gives readers the whole story in approximately 100 words so they can decide quickly if it's relevant.

Introduction: The Problems

- Although your success stories are template-based, each story should include its own unique, illustrative sub-headings throughout instead of “Introduction,” etc.
- To draw readers in, begin with a lively “day-in-the-life” illustration that expresses the customer's main pain or frustration.
- Follow the illustrative story with other problems and pains and how they affect various stakeholders.

Introduction: The Problems (continued)

- Include “pain” quotes from the customer, as well as quotes that express how and why they realized that they had to do something about that pain.
- Illustrate how the company was doing business before your solution came along.



Success Story “Success Elements”

The Analysis

- By this, the reader has connected with your customer’s pains, and knows the implications of not addressing them.
- Now, in the Analysis section, illustrate how the customer compared options, costs, and anticipated benefits.
- Note which competing solutions the customer evaluated, the challenges that had to be overcome, and which IT risks had to be mitigated.
- Clearly state, using quotes, why the customer chose you.

The Solution

- Don’t subtitle this section using only “The Solution.” Add fresh subtitles for each story.
- The solution covers deployment details that may be of interest to similar buyers. Did it include a pilot? How many employees or locations were affected? Include quotes from IT.
- As you explore why the customer chose your company, use business benefits and messaging to illustrate how the customer expected life to change based on your solution.

The Results

- Don’t call this section only “The Results.” Add a fresh subtitle for each success story.
- Show how the business operates now with the solution in place while integrating brand/product messaging.
- Show business benefits, such as rapid adoption and reduced costs—benefits similar buyers may be interested in.
- Use metrics.
- Use quotes from the customer as well as quotes from end users when applicable.

The Future

- In this section (not titled “The Future”), discuss the possibilities of the customer upgrading or expanding. Illustrate how they envision using the next set of solutions, and the benefits they think they’ll achieve.
- This section shows that your customer is dedicated to your company and its solutions.



Success Story “Success Elements”



In Closing

- Wrap up the success story with a brief overview of pains/problems solved, including metrics, and a quote from the customer that incorporates messaging.

- Use customer quotes as design elements, either, pull quotes or a sidebar.
- Use a sidebar on the first page of the story to present an overview including, when possible:
 - Customer company
 - Buyer’s name and title
 - Industry
 - Revenue
 - Size
 - Business pains and challenges
 - Solutions (products)
 - Benefits, including metrics

Miscellaneous Success Elements

- As you create the interview questions, keep messaging elements in sight. Include messaging whenever you can.
- Speak to multiple stakeholders affected by a purchase to make the story appealing to multiple audiences.

- Prepare two or three success story templates that retain the overall look and feel of a success story but that let the reader know they’re not looking at something they already read. For instance:
 - Rotate the sidebar from left to right.
 - Use different brand colors as the primary.
 - Use pull quotes in one story and place quotes in a sidebar on another.



the writeidea

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