



By Walt Denny

About the Author

Walt Denny is the president of Walt Denny, Inc., an advertising/public relations agency that focuses primarily on home products clients such as Amerock Corp., KitchenAid brand, L.E. Johnson Products and Whirlpool Corp. The Home Products Agency was established in 1989. For more information on Walt Denny, Inc., visit [www.waltdenny.com](http://www.waltdenny.com).

To outshine the competition in today's business environment, companies must deploy the right public relations (PR) tools at the right times, which means allocating PR dollars and resources more wisely than ever. Interestingly, many companies overlook the fact that they are sitting atop an untapped PR gold mine—their own customer base, which has the potential to propel them into the public spotlight again and again. One of the most powerful tools for mining this wealth is the customer success story, a credible third-party endorsement of a manufacturer and its product or service. Through the usage of customer success stories many companies can highlight their business strengths and open the lines of communication with their sales reps and customers.

Whether you are marketing home products or financial services, success stories are a high-impact way to promote your products and enhance your image by demonstrating how your product or service help address a customers' business need or concern. A well-executed success story program quickly can enhance your credibility and visibility with target audiences, whether they are consumers, builders, architects, retailers or other manufacturers or service providers. For instance, a kitchen and bath products manufacturer could target a success story to building trade magazines, highlighting how its innovative product attracted more homebuyers

# Customer Success Stories Make Companies Shine

by Illuminating Business Strengths

to a builder's model home, boosting sales opportunities for builder and manufacturer alike. A story geared to architectural publications could explain why a top residential designer prefers to spec one manufacturer's building material, home appliance or other product in their homes. A bank looking to grow its equity loan business could aim a story at consumer financial websites, telling how it helped a family finance a home remodeling project.

One of the biggest challenges is identifying which customers have the most compelling success stories and are willing to have their stories published. Not just your sales reps, but your

dealers, resellers and distributors often can help identify the best success story candidates since they have direct customer contact. Once you have viable candidates, be sure to tell them how the publicity can positively impact them by enhancing their image and visibility, boosting business potential and giving them a free tool they can use in their own self-promotion efforts—in most cases, this increases their willingness to share their story with the world.

When creating success stories as sales tools, colorful graphics and logos, catchy pull-quotes from customers, glossy photographs and promotional copy make a more eye-catching presentation

and increase the chances customers and prospects will notice you. It's wise to be conservative when pitching it as a feature story to editors of print or online business and trade publications. A low-key approach bolsters chances that editors may want to expand your story into a feature-length article versus a news brief. Whether you are using them as sales tools or for publication, the more success stories in your PR arsenal, the more impact the program will have on your image. While story quality is critical, there is power in numbers, too, especially when sales reps need more support tools to secure accounts in tough markets.

Because a success story program requires significant time and resources, many companies outsource to PR agencies that have demonstrated expertise in this area. Agencies typically have strong relationships with top-notch case study writers, art directors, photographers and other pros who can collaborate to produce high-impact success stories. They can manage everything from interviewing customers to pitching stories to the media. Agencies can open new dialogs with editors of relevant publications that would be interested in publishing stories for specific areas of interest such as home technology or building trades. Experienced agencies know how to build a rich success story portfolio that will make your company—and your customers—shine bright and get noticed. **WQP**

**Ultimate II E™**  
Water System

*Treat your home to clear, refined, quality water every day!*

- ◆ Auto-function memory capability
- ◆ Retains usage, volume and flow history
- ◆ Glass-filled Noryl construction
- ◆ Completely lead-free design

**"Designed with you in mind."**

**KAVEY**  
WATER EQUIPMENT  
A CORN CO. COMPANY

**800-373-5454**

730 Commerce Drive, Venice, FL 34292  
941-723-0707 941-723-0515 fax

## 7 Steps to Making Your Success Stories Work for You

- Find a success story within your organization that exemplifies your products / services.
- Maintain a file of compelling success stories and dealers, distributors, etc., who are willing to share their successes with others.
- Target specific publications / audience.
- Write a story describing the location, what the problem was, the product used to fix it, issues faced during the project and quotes from the customer. Be sure to share the end result.
- Include photos, illustrations, logos and other colorful graphics.
- Outsource the work to a public relations company or freelance writer.
- Share your stories regularly with editors.

Submit your success stories to WQP at [wking@sgcmail.com](mailto:wking@sgcmail.com), fax: 847-390-0408.

For more information on this subject, write in 1011 on the reader service card.



**LearnMore!**

For more information related to this article, go to [www.waterinfocenter.com/lm.cfm/wq070301](http://www.waterinfocenter.com/lm.cfm/wq070301)