

# ellcom

## Backgrounder

An e-newsletter from Ellenbecker Communications focusing on the PR, marketing and creative needs of B2B equipment manufacturers

### Table of Contents

- [Setting up your job-story program](#)
- [Executing your job-story program](#)

## Setting up your job-story program

As I mentioned in an earlier post, when I was in sales I loved my company's marketers, because when they did a good job, they made my job easier. Most of my sales career was devoted to opening new territories or channels, and the people I talked to didn't necessarily know me or my company's products. The third-party credibility that a job-story or application story in the trade press gave might be the difference in whether I had a chilly reception or a warm one. And while I was perfectly capable of handling the chilly reception, why would I make the job harder than it had to be? Why extend the sales cycle by an extra visit or two when you could hit the ground running?



Do you have a regular program in your company that generates a steady stream of high-quality job stories?

**If you don't, our managing editor for client publications, Sara Schmuck, has a list of suggestions that can jump-start your program.**

1. Start with mentioning the whole idea of job stories and why they are a useful marketing tool to the sales and marketing team. Maybe finding a story that was done for a similar company is a good start and will serve as inspiration. This is because the sales team may not be able to picture just what you have in mind without an example. We tend to think in terms of stories; they tend to think in terms of quotas.
2. Internally communicate the desire to actively pursue success stories. Call them job stories, features, success stories, whatever sounds appealing within your company. A mass email to your team or an article in an internal newsletter is a good place to start—or maybe you can pitch it during a big sales meeting, as part of your marketing department presentation.
3. Talk personally to salesmen who know customers and will be able to identify happy customers and those willing to share their testimonial.
4. Follow up with salesmen, asking them to talk to customers and request permission to feature them. Telling them that they will be able to approve whatever is written or photographed usually helps. They are proud to be featured, usually.

The whole idea here is to get the story-funnel full. You generally need a lot of possibilities stacked up before you get one that makes it all the way through the process and gets signed off and approved by all stakeholders.

Sara has managed story funnels as large as 80 submitted ideas to come up with two or three that make it to the assignment phase—that is, when a story is assigned to a writer and a photographer. That is an extreme example, but not as extreme as you might think.

You've got stories. Let's get 'em told!

## Executing your job-story program

Once you have story ideas rolling in from the field, and you've decided which ones you'd like to pursue, it's time to assign a writer and a photographer. There are a few options you can consider in choosing a writer and photographer, and we'll discuss those in another issue. But for now, we'll assume those choices have been made.

I asked Sara Schmuck, the managing editor of our client publications, to share a basic checklist for those of you that may not currently have a set process for your job-story program. When you look at the list, you may just nod your head and say, "Common sense," but I can assure you that every one of these steps has been missed by some marketing manager at some point in time, and the result has been the birth of a self-reproducing headache factory all his or her own.



*Ellcom editor Sara Schmuck on-site at a quartzite quarry in Minnesota.*

### Here is your basic checklist:

1. Well ahead of time, set up a specific date and time for writer and photographer to be on the job site. This should be agreed to by the salesman and the company being featured so that there are no last-minute surprises. Make arrangements to interview key people on the job site or via telephone before or after the job site visit.
2. After the job-site visit and interviews, the writer will write up the draft, and submit the first draft to you.
3. After you have made your edits, and the writer has tweaked the revision based on those edits, only then submit the revised draft to the other stakeholders, such as the dealer, contractor, etc.
4. Make sure you get formal approval to use customer information/photos for marketing purposes. And document that approval.
5. Submit the final story to an appropriate trade journal. (Be aware of the magazine's publication rights' expectations.)
6. Maximize the exposure for your story. Publish it on your website and in appropriate marketing collateral material in full or abridged versions.

Of course, each of the items on Sara's checklist could be the subject of a full blog post or article all its own, but this skeleton outline should provide you with the structure you need to execute your job-story program.



—Matt Fueston

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