

How to Write a Case Study: A Case Study

I began my marketing career as a writer. While my skill sets have expanded to include [branding](#), [social media](#) and [marketing strategy](#), content development will always be my favorite task. I just really enjoy [telling stories](#), and there is perhaps no better opportunity for a legal marketer to tell a story than to write a case study.

If done right, case studies can be incredibly effective business development assets. That's because we as humans think in narratives. We contextualize our lives as series of overlapping stories, with ourselves positioned as the protagonists. When we hear the stories of others, we unconsciously put ourselves in their shoes, donning the role of main character, which allows us to empathize with their narrative arcs. (This phenomenon is known as "neural coupling" or "mirroring.")

When a prospect reads or watches a case study, they inevitably see themselves as the client in the story. When the client in the case study experiences a situational challenge, such as a lawsuit, the prospect imagines themselves dealing with such a challenge. When you position your firm as the hero who saves the client from a negative outcome, the prospect views your firm as the capable hero to solve their potential problem.

But a case study is only effective if it is a well-constructed story, and stories have a certain flow that must be adhered to in order to resonate with your audience. To help illustrate how to construct such a story, I am providing you with a case study about writing a case study.

The Problem

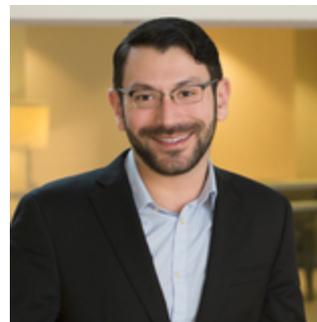
A story begins by introducing the main character. In a law firm case study, the main character is your client. It could be an individual, a corporation or some other entity that is hiring a lawyer for legal representation. For Jaffe, our main character would be a law firm.

Grisham, Campbell & Tolkien LLP is a 50-person full-service law firm in Chicago.

This introduction to the main character is relatively straightforward. In your case study, you might not use the actual name of the client. Instead, you might say something akin to "a 50-person law firm in a large Midwest city ..."

The next part of the case study is the introduction of the problem or challenge. In terms of a narrative arc, this is the conflict. For a law firm, this is going to be the issue facing the client, such as a lawsuit, an acquisition, the need for an internal investigation, etc. For Jaffe, our client's problem would be related to marketing.

Grisham, Campbell & Tolkien LLP had historically been known for its M&A work, but wanted to demonstrate its capabilities in employment litigation to attract new clients and cross-sell to existing clients.



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The Plan

So we've established conflict in our story – that the fictitious firm wants to enhance its reputation in a particular, and fairly competitive, area of practice. Now we need a mentor or sage to help our protagonist overcome this challenge.

The sage archetype in a case study is you, or more specifically, your law firm. This archetype appears in many famous narratives, from Gandalf in *Lord of the Rings* to Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*. This character is wise and possesses the knowledge to assist the main character in overcoming conflict to eventually achieve victory.

Grisham, Campbell & Tolkien LLP turned to Jaffe for assistance. Jaffe interviewed key members of the firm's employment law practice to understand the practice group's strengths and differentiators. Jaffe also inquired about matters the firm had worked on. This led to the identification of a matter in which the firm successfully defended a well-known Fortune 500 company in a high-value wrongful termination lawsuit.

Jaffe's marketing consultants used the story of the matter to develop a case study, one that positioned the Fortune 500 company as the protagonist and the firm as the learned mentor that helped guide the firm to safety. Jaffe packaged the case study as a combination of text and graphics to tell the story through words and accompanying visuals because Jaffe knew that prospects respond well to visual information.

Jaffe formatted the case study as a one-sheet to be printed out and included in new business pitches and RFP responses, with a digital version that could be added to the firm's website and shared on social media.

The Result

In terms of story structure, once the mentor has provided assistance to the protagonist, the protagonist is well-equipped to overcome the challenge. In terms of a case study, overcoming the challenge is signified by describing the results of the intervention used to resolve the protagonist's problem. For a law firm's client, the results might be the dollar amount of a judgment, the reputational damage spared by a successful settlement negotiation or some other positive outcome.

In our case study of a case study example, the resolution is the impact of the case study.

Six months after Grisham, Campbell & Tolkien LLP developed its case study, the firm had included the one-sheet in multiple business pitches, resulting in the acquisition of three new clients. Additionally, attorneys in other practice areas provided the case study to their clients, resulting in eight instances of successful cross-selling. And on the website, the case study had become one of the top-viewed pages, after only the firm's homepage and attorney bios.

Making a Case for Case Studies

Case studies can be a powerful marketing tool, largely due to the inherent power that a

good story holds over its audience. Whether you are a legal marketer or an attorney tasked with overseeing your firm's marketing function, it's important to stay on top of your firm's successes. Create some sort of system where wins are shared and details are captured so you can leverage your success to beget more success. (Submissions to certain [law firm rankings](#), such as *Chambers*, can also be a great resource for case study information.)

If you need help with identifying stories worthy of a case study, writing a case study or conveying a case study visually, contact me, Keith Ecker, SVP, Marketing & Branding, at kecker@jaffepr.com. I love a good story, and I want to help you tell yours.