

Big Sky Communications

YOUR PARTNER IN SUCCESS



[Choosing an Agency](#)

[Leveraging Customers](#)



resources | Leveraging Customers in Marketing and PR

Customer Validation Makes for Strong PR

By [Marnie McLeod Santoyo](#)

- [Establish a Centralized Customer Success Program](#)
- [Tactics for Program Development](#)
- [Engage Customers Early](#)

While marketing and public relations campaigns are essential to any company's promotional efforts, sometimes the most effective way to communicate your corporate message is to have a satisfied customer extol your company's virtues.

But unless you have a well-defined customer success program, finding willing clients to share their enthusiasm about your company or its products can be difficult. Colleen Muller Padnos of Big Sky Communications, Inc. shared her more than 14 years of experience in establishing strong customer reference and success story programs with attendees at the Silicon Valley IABC lunch program in February. "There's no better way to communicate your messages than to have the customer tell your story for you," Muller Padnos said. "You can say all kinds of things in your advertising, but if you can get a customer to validate that for you, it will be much more impactful."

Establish a Centralized Program

Muller Padnos said the most effective way to get customer support for such communications efforts is to first establish a centralized customer success program, one from which all departments in your company — from sales and marketing to public relations and executives — can draw from. The program can be the basis for developing everything from quotes in annual reports to sales references and marketing case studies.

Program Development Tactics Include:

- Get buy-in from sales management: The more you involve the sales force, the easier it is to get leads. One of the strongest ways to convince a sales force of the value of building a customer success program is helping them view it as a valuable source for referrals and

prospective clients.

- Establish focused interview objectives and questions: This is key, Muller Padnos said, for ensuring customer success stories or testimonials that reflect your company's corporate messaging. Make sure customers also can offer "hard" or "soft" ROI talking points to share in the testimonial.
- Be sure your project manager or team is savvy about customer service: Remember that a central customer success program will be seen by customers as another resource for asking questions or relaying challenges they are experiencing.
- Be patient: It can take a while to build a good stable of customers and even match appropriate customers for your specific communication needs. Muller Padnos said for every 10 contacts comes one qualified customer who is willing to sing your praises.

Engage Customers Early

One of the key things to remember about developing a customer success program is to engage customers early in the process, if possible, and keep them interested in participating. "The more you can do proactively to engage customers throughout your communications programs, the better off you'll be," said Muller Padnos.

Marnie McLeod Santoyo is a Freelance Writer and Editor with 14 years experience in journalism, corporate communications and public relations (www.scribeforhire.com). She also serves as Vice President of Communications for the Silicon Valley Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (SV-IABC). Established in 1979, SV-IABC (www.sv-iabc.org) is a leading resource for Silicon Valley business communicators, providing valuable programs, network-building opportunities and ongoing professional training and career development.

[◀ previous page](#) | [▲ top of page](#) | [next page ▶](#)



[home](#) | [about us](#) | [clients](#) | [people](#) | [resources](#) | [careers](#) | [contact us](#)