

How to create a **Case Study**

Why write a case study?

A Case Study is a core way to gather a narrative about the impact of volunteering by telling a compelling story. A good case study can be a powerful tool, emotionally connecting with your audience to highlight the difference volunteering services make to patients, staff and volunteers.

This step-by-step guide will help you to create a human story within the context of a high impact volunteering intervention.

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All about creating a Case Study

Before you start writing:

Identify your objectives

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are you trying to achieve from using case studies?
- Who is your audience? What are their preferred communication formats (reports, videos, presentations etc)? What are they interested in? (Figures, how to scale the work, the impact, benefits to patient and staff?)

Identify your case study

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the twist in this case study?
- Why is it distinctive? What are the impacts of this case study?
- Do I have strong evidence to back this up (Any stats, figures?)
- Can my audience relate to this case study in anyway?
- Were there any challenges and how were they overcome?
- How can I tell this story in the most compelling way?



Start writing

A good case study needs to

- Have a good twist
- Be easily related to
- Be emotionally engaging
- Be inspiring.
- Have clear explanations of the impact of his/her work to patients' lives.
- Have a good happy ending.
- Who is your audience? What are their preferred communication formats (reports, videos, presentations etc)?
What are they interested in? (Figures, how to scale the work, the impact, benefits to patient and staff?)

Build up your case study using the PROVE method

The PROVE method provides a simple structure for writing your case study.



P

Point

P – Point

Get to the point of your case study quickly. In one or two sentences, state the change that your intervention has made for the main stakeholder and one key piece of evidence to grasp the readers' attention. A quote or testimonial can help to personalise your point in an engaging way.

The Dementia Activities Volunteers restore moments of identity to patients who may otherwise lose their hobbies and interests whilst in hospital or through their disease. Our programme led to a 28% improvement in the mood and wellbeing of patients with dementia.

“An angel arrived in the form of a volunteer who invited my husband to a Memory Lane Lunch Club....in that moment, my husband was my husband again in a way I never thought possible.”

R&O

Reason
&
Opportunity

R – Reason & O – Opportunity

Imagine you are a playwright and this is Act 1 of your story. State the reasons i.e. the need or gap that the intervention helped to address. The opportunity is the wider context that made the opportunity timely and achievable. Consider:

- What was the stakeholder experience before the intervention?
- What was ward life like for patients before the intervention?
- How was the situation before the intervention affecting patient care?
- Why did you choose this time to introduce the intervention?

To continue the earlier case study example

Prior to the Dementia Activities Volunteers, elderly patients often relied on nurses and health care assistants for companionship. Staff reported feeling frustrated that they could not do more, however their priority remained the day to day business of nursing care. Patients and carers did not have a clear place to discuss the psychosocial needs of their loved ones, or an opportunity to continue with the types of activities that patients enjoyed in their own homes. Our evidence has demonstrated that the hospital missed an essential opportunity to increase the mood and wellbeing of patients and enhance the dementia care they provided.

V

Verify

V – Verify

This is Act 2 of your story. You want to define how the volunteering service intervened and the problem was solved.

- How did you go about introducing the intervention or change? This is your detailed narrative and may have more technical information about how and why the intervention works. Be sure to break it down so that the reader truly understands what you did.

We recruited over 50 Dementia Activities Volunteers from our local community. They received expert training from a range of clinical professionals, including Speech & Language Therapists, Dietitians and Physiotherapists in order to understand the existing standards of Dementia Care and the toolkit of techniques and approaches that clinicians felt were appropriate for volunteers to provide. The focus of training was to equip volunteers with techniques such as reminiscence therapy and a range of media including art, music, communal meals and talents that volunteers brought from their own lives, such as beauty therapy to create opportunities that actively invited patients to participate at a level that was possible for them. Given the challenges and emotional maturity that this role required, volunteers received regular support through 121 mentorship with the ward psychologist and group support in order to reflect on their practice and take an action learning approach to enhance their skills and comfort-levels in the role.

E

Echo

E - Echo

Leave your reader with an echo of the original point of the intervention and the strongest results that you saw. Use a quote or specific example to humanise your data if you can.

Dementia Volunteers therefore demonstrably increased the mood and wellbeing of patients, released time to care for more complex patients and resulted in volunteer satisfaction levels evidenced in the retention rates for this role. In one carers' experience, she states "My husband ate his meal and chatted for the first time in his three-week hospital stay." This role restores the best possible level of functioning for patients who may otherwise have deteriorated in their mood and wellbeing through the daily stressors of a hospital experience and unfamiliar environment.

Video animation

Video animation



EXTRA TIPS

A few extra tips to help you create your case study

1. Make a call to action.

What do you want your audience to do? Learn more about your programme, provide funding, share this case study with their peers, etc.

2. Be open to formats that you can use.

They can be reports (maximum 600 words) or a video (maximum two minutes).

3. Language.

Write your case study with a narrative that is memorable. Avoid using jargon. Use plain language (imagine a 6 year old child is reading your case study) making sure sentences are short and concise.

4. Use pictures and infographics.

Design your case study so it's visually appealing. A picture says a thousand words.

5. Get help and support.

The Helpforce Team are happy to help if you would like to talk through or answer any questions you may have with the case study that you are working on. Ask for support from your team, friends and family who can advise whether the case grabs their attention and tells a good story. They can also proofread your work.

6. Once you have completed your case study please share it with us!

Case Study template



Helpforce Case Studies



For more examples have a look at some of our own stories and videos on <https://helpforce.community/category/stories/>

further reading



Books

"Fundamentals of Writing: How to write articles, media releases, case studies, blog posts and social media content"
by Paul Lima



Articles

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/how-to/how-to-write-an-engaging-case-study>
<http://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/>



Examples: volunteer case studies

http://scottishhealthcouncil.org/patient_public_participation/volunteering_in_nhsscotland/volunteering_case_studies.aspx#.Xiqx3Gj7TIU

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/volunteering-acute-trusts-england/case-studies>

<http://www.voluntaryimpact.org.uk/volunteer-case-studies/>

<https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/full-time-volunteering/case-studies/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/wiltshire/get-involved/volunteer/volunteer-case-studies/>



Examples: CQC - how case studies can influence service improvement

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/evaluation/driving-improvement-case-studies-eight-independent-hospitals>



References:

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/case-studies>

