



# EIGHT TIPS FOR CRACKING CONSTRUCTION CASE STUDIES

**Make the most of your completed projects, and show potential clients you mean business!**

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## Don't throw your work away!

Your construction case studies are sales gold. They show would-be clients how you meet their business needs, while demolishing their fears about what might go wrong, and building up their confidence in your ability to handle things. Each piece of complex work you have handled with speed, efficiency, grace and professionalism boosts their level of comfort a bit more.

Done right, case studies:

- show clients you can **meet their needs, successfully manage their risks** and – of course – **bring projects in on time and within budget**
- puts a **focus on the people** in your business and how they meet client challenges
- **form a record of past work** you have carried out, enabling easy reference and circulation by everyone from board members to sales people
- help colleagues understand **how to market your products and services**
- **give you something new to send out**, post on press release sites, send to industry publications – as well as forming the core of your brochures and website. Project pieces can also spice up your proposals, making them look professional and focusing attention on your achievements.

Think about it: project write-ups are often the only thing multi-million pound contracts leave behind – apart from the building itself. Marketers must make the most of them.

## Being Boring

Unfortunately, some companies have nothing concrete to show potential clients. Others focus on the wrong things.

Take the following: “In early 2007, Bob’s Builders completed the construction of two new high-specification three-storey office blocks at Whizzo Business Park in Macclesfield. Over 28 weeks, we took possession of this £1.4m scheme after the erection of the structural steel frames of the two units, completing the external envelope, mechanical and electrical installations and core area fit out, as well as associated external works and landscaping.”

Is this sprout really all that can be grown from a **£1.4m, six-month project**?

It’s clearly very dull. No one would mistake it for John Grisham. But what else is wrong? At root, it’s little more than a list of the features of the completed building along with the start date, project budget and duration. It’s not exactly mouth-watering. Any contractor worth her salt can come up with a technical solution; what clients want to know **how it solved their challenge and provided them with benefits**.

I’m sure it’s **underestimating the importance of keeping a record** that means companies don’t devote the extra two days’ work to their programmes.

No doubt it is misunderstanding **that case studies can help potential clients understand what you are all about** that gives rise to boring stories

But with Takooba’s **eight great tips**, you’ll never make those mistakes again...

### Tip 1) Focus on the process, not the project

Of course you are proud of the completed building – and you’ve got photos to prove it! But just listing the materials, specifications and methods like Bob, above, neglects the all-important way you went about working with the client, the brief, the architect, the subbies, the suppliers...

Think about it: when clients read about your company, they are really trying to find out if **you can meet their challenges, solve their problems and follow their brief**. Your case study should reflect that.

Here are some of the things clients worry about:

- **Can the contractor stay within the project budget?**
- **Will they help me create something my boss will like?**
- **I’ve got to cut the energy bills – is this team the right one?**
- **I’ve got to fit all these people in – how is this even possible?**
- **This site is a nightmare, and the neighbours are going to complain about the works!**

Each time you complete a successful project, you answer one or several of these questions, or others, guiding clients along as they figure out what they need to get done.

### Tip 2) Believe in the task

Treat the process with the respect it deserves. Organise a face-to-face meeting with the team after handover (before they disappear elsewhere). Do **not** let them “send you something by email”! Explain the purpose of case studies and how they can enhance new business. Assure them they will get to see what you have produced.

Write a list of typical client needs in this type of project. Make sure you know how they were met in the project under consideration. Ask follow-up questions until you understand the nitty-gritty and double-check if something doesn’t make sense. This is important! Don’t worry about looking stupid if you don’t understand – you’ll look sillier if you get it wrong.

### Tip 3) Detail the problems your team overcame

Highlighting problems might seem like marketing madness, but these are challenges your team has overcome! Talking openly differentiates your skills and gives you a story to tell. And people love stories.

Types of problems the team successfully solved might be:

- **suppliers or subcontractors who went bust or couldn’t find materials**
- **sudden requirements for value-engineering due to materials rises**
- **deadlines that suddenly shift**
- **flora or fauna that had to be moved**

Of course, real problems tend to be far more unpredictable than this. That’s why you have to ask the team what they had to fix. Assure any nervous colleagues (again) that they’ll be able to see the copy so they don’t get nervous about annoying the client.

#### Tip 4) Quote the client

A comment from a client in your case study makes it trustworthy. In essence, you'll have a case study that **speaks client-to-client** about how great you are. And you can always go back to your clients to update case studies when projects have been occupied for a time to see how they are meeting needs in operation. Perhaps clients can make use of your case studies on their web site, doubling your exposure. Don't forget to check copy with the client as well.

#### Tip 5) Think like a journalist

Any news or feature article has one main idea – the one trumpeted by the headline. You, too, can focus on the most interesting part of your case study and hang everything from that. One eye-catching detail is enough to gain interest in the story from wider industry members.

#### Tip 6) Don't forget the geeks!

While you should tell a great story in your case study – and include a headline – you also want to keep the building nerds happy. Make sure you have the type of build, the type of contract, the lengths of the phases, etc. Then there are other things that could make a good headline. How much waste did you recycle? Were there any unusual processes used in the construction that could be written up and marketed? All this can go in a separate "data box."

#### Tip 7) Share the love

An interesting case study is a great way to get into the building press. Only approach one editor at a time, though – news outlets usually only publish in longer articles. Start at your top choice then work your way down.

If there is no interest, you can still put them on outlets like Microsoft Business Hub, Drupal, Amazon Web Services, PRLog.com, BigNews.biz and OpenPR.com. These will boost your site's search rankings as well.

#### Tip 8) Index them properly

Once you have a few unindexed case studies, you'll realise that it's hard to find them – especially when you are putting together a proposal in a hurry and someone is looking for a "green office project in the North-East." You want to tag them according to various categories, including sector, form of contract, budget, method of construction, year, project team, location, and any special features that were used on the project.

## About Takooba's case study expertise

For over nine years, as a reporter for Building, AJ, BD, OnOffice, CJ and elsewhere, Michael talked with construction and architecture pros **about how they solved problems** when they made buildings. That produced the best articles – and it's the what produces the most convincing marketing materials

For more on our methods of research, interviews and customer profiles to create **case studies that sell**, [click here](#). Or, if you want to discuss your case studies and how to spruce them up, do give me a call on 07717 501 254 or [Michael@takooba.co.uk](mailto:Michael@takooba.co.uk) .