Case study -- worked example

An illustrative case study written to show the constraints and reflection sections in use.

> *An invented example, not a real client. It exists to show the two sections most case studies omit: the constraints, and what would be done differently.*

Non-paid enquiries from 8 to 21 a month in two quarters, on a flat budget

The client

A 40-person B2B software company selling to operations teams. Anonymised at their request.

The problem

Around 40 enquiries a month, almost all from paid search, at a cost per enquiry the founder described as unsustainable. Organic search contributed almost nothing because the service pages had been written for a product line discontinued two years earlier.

The constraints

- A fixed media budget, with no increase available.
- One subject-matter expert with roughly four hours a month.
- No developer time until week six.
- A six-month window before the next funding conversation.

What we did

- Fixed measurement first: conversions were being double counted and paid traffic was landing in the organic bucket, so no channel comparison was trustworthy.
- Rewrote six service pages around bottom-of-funnel terms rather than publishing anything new.
- Paused two paid campaigns targeting research-stage terms and moved the budget to the terms that converted.
- Chose NOT to start a blog, which was the original request. With four expert hours a month it would have produced thin pages and no enquiries.

The result

Non-paid enquiries rose from 8 to 21 a month over two quarters. Blended cost per enquiry fell by roughly a third, with no change in total budget. Paid volume fell deliberately, which the monthly report stated explicitly each month so the drop was never read as underperformance.

What we would do differently

Fix the tracking before agreeing the objectives, not in week two. For the first month we were reporting against numbers we later found were wrong, which meant re-baselining and an awkward conversation that better sequencing would have avoided entirely.

Why this structure works

Section	What it does for the reader
Headline result	One sentence with a number and a period. This is the only part most people read.
The client, briefly	Sector, size, market. Anonymise if you must -- "a 40-person B2B software company" works.
The problem	What was actually wrong. Specific, not "they wanted growth".
The constraints	Budget, team, timeline, technical limits. The section that makes it credible.
What we did	Your decisions in order, including what you chose NOT to do.
The result	What changed, over what period, measured how, from what baseline.
What we would do differently	The section that separates a practitioner from a brochure.
Client quote	Only if real and approved. A fabricated quote is fraud, not marketing.

Getting approval

- Ask at the start of the engagement, not at the end -- put it in the contract as a confidentiality carve-out.
- Offer anonymity as the default. "A 40-person SaaS company" removes most objections instantly.
- Send the draft for approval, not a request for permission in the abstract. People approve what they can read.
- Offer to omit absolute figures and use direction and proportion instead.
- Give them a deadline and a default: "if I do not hear back by Friday I will publish the anonymised version".

Mistakes

- A result with no baseline. "Increased traffic 300%" from what?
- No constraints, so it reads as marketing rather than work.
- A fabricated or paraphrased client quote.
- Client logos used without permission.
- Written as a narrative about your process rather than their problem.
- No stated period, so a two-year result reads like a two-month one.