

Becoming a Compelling Storyteller

The Art of Storytelling

Renowned American screenwriter and creative writing instructor, Robert McKee, once said that stories are the currency of human contact. They are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. Everyone loves a good story and a story well-told has the power to inspire, to motivate and to involve its reader. Stories also help a person to relate and retain information in a way that straight facts and data can't always achieve on their own.

While McKee was almost certainly talking specifically about his work as an author and role as mentor to numerous award-winning Hollywood screenwriters, his simile applies beyond books and films. Whether we realise it or not, stories and how we tell them are an integral part of business, public relations and marketing. Corporate culture is based upon the story of your company. Mission and vision statements are stories meant to portray your promise to stakeholders. Each piece of direct mail, the pictures in an advertisement, the quotes in a press release, the content of a website, the messages in emails, status updates and tweets - these are all stories used to communicate a purpose, a call to action. These are the stories that grow businesses and build relationships.

With that said, being an effective storyteller - one who can identify which stories to tell, when to tell them and how to make them compelling - is an art form that's not inherent to everyone. Luckily for those of us who aren't born storytellers there is a plethora of experts willing to share their insight. In this Blue Paper, we bring the best of it to you: Why stories matter, what makes them great, an overview of the different kinds of stories, how to use them in your business and marketing efforts and much more. Keep reading to find your fairytale.

Importance of storytelling in marketing

Storytelling has been used since the dawn of human existence to convey events in words, gestures, images and sounds. Stories express thoughts, explain the unknown, detail history, imagine the future, bring context to situations and warn of potential consequences.

Storytelling in its most basic definition is a form of communication. It's how we make sense of the world around us and our place and relationship to others. Stories provide stimulation - the knowledge to act - and inspiration - the motivation to act. Sometimes our stories are fictional, while at other times they're



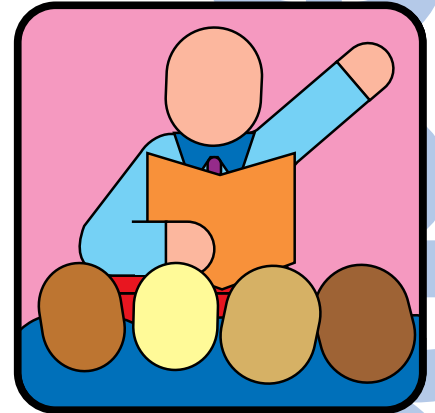
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not ... but regardless, they all have value.

Ronald Reagan, the late actor-turned-president who was known by Republicans and Democrats alike as “The Great Communicator,” didn’t start speeches on “the multi-lateral imperative of deficit reduction” with facts and figures. Instead, he’d tell you a story about a little girl in a yellow dress. Within a minute or two, when even the most cynical listeners were unconsciously disarmed and pulled in by the parable, Reagan would move over to the hard business of the day’s talk.

Why? Because it’s true that storytelling is virtually the most effective way to not only capture human attention, but to get people to remember. Something in our hardwiring actually hypnotises us when we hear the words: “Let me tell you a story ...”

Our unconscious can’t resist letting stories in, and their stamp on human nature is everywhere. We’re born to tell stories - whenever something great or horrible happens to us, when we have a new restaurant to recommend, an excuse to offer ... we often develop stories to deliver the news.



In a business context, storytelling has many uses and a multitude of benefits:

- Stories - about products, customers, employees - make brands relatable to stakeholders. “That girl in the advert is frustrated with her car insurance, just like me!”
- Stories - about business approaches, attitudes and promises—build brand loyalty. “That guy in the testimonial was so happy about his purchase; I’ve got to check that company out.”
- Stories - about recent events and announcements - create awareness. “I just read on their blog that they have a new programme and it sounds like it could be fun. We should try it out!”

Storytelling can also be used to pitch new ideas, to demonstrate expertise, to explain complex issues and problems, to change behaviours and to create brand champions, especially when your brand leverages the stories about you that others are creating and sharing. Storytelling is a powerful tool that business and marketers everywhere need to know how to harness and once they do, the benefits will become apparent.

Elements and varieties of stories

So what makes a story a story and not just a flat message? A careful recipe of very specific elements.

In literature, these elements are:

- **Theme** - The idea or point of a story formulated as a generalisation. Dominant themes are often those pertaining to innocence/experience, life/death, appearance/reality, free will/fate, madness/sanity, love/hate, society/individual, the known/unknown.
- **Character** - People imagined by the storyteller and perhaps the most important element of literature.
 - **Protagonist** - Major character at the centre of the story, often the hero.
 - **Antagonist** - A character or force that opposes the protagonist, often the villain.
- **Plot** - The arrangement of ideas and/or incidents that make up the story.
 - **Causality** - One event occurs because of another event.
 - **Foreshadowing** - A suggestion of what is going to happen.
 - **Suspense** - A sense of worry established by the author.
 - **Conflict** - Struggle between opposing forces.
 - **Exposition** - Background information regarding the setting, characters and plot.
 - **Complication or Rising Action** - Intensification of conflict.
 - **Crisis** - Turning point; a moment of great tension that fixes the action.
 - **Resolution/Denouement** - The way the story turns out.
- **Setting** - The place or location of the action; the setting provides the



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historical and cultural context for characters. It can often symbolize the emotional state of the characters.

- **Point of View** - The perspective from which the story is being told, and who is telling it.
- **Language and Style** - A writer's use of language reveals his or her tone, or attitude towards the subject matter.

In business and marketing, many of these elements are the same - they should be considered when using stories to communicate with stakeholders - and knowing these elements will help identify the stories worth telling.

Marketing expert Duke Greenhill offers further insight into the elements of storytelling by referencing the famous philosopher, Joseph Campbell, and arguing that while active storytelling from the business perspective isn't new, it's often misused.¹

"The idea that brands are stories is not novel," shares Greenhill. "But as a filmmaker-turned-marketer, I'm sensitive to how often brands focus on tactics, or, dare I say it, politics and compromise. They therefore lose sight of their monomyth—that narrative that identifies with consumers' values and transcends mere sales propositions in favour of an eternal, universal truth."²

The concept of the monomyth is Campbell's and he's best known perhaps for his ideas that created the basis for what is often referred to as transcendent storytelling. His thoughts on transcendent storytelling were arrived at through the understanding of the power of mythology and the notion that every narrative has a basic pattern - one that he identifies as the known, the unknown and the unity. Greenhill demonstrates this using the Apple brand as an analogy.

The known³

For Campbell, this is where a transcendent story begins. It is the moment the reader finds the hero in a world he understands but one that is somehow dissatisfying. For a brand, it's the moment when it launches and either breaks through or fizzles.

¹ Greenhill, Duke. "Need a Brilliant Brand Strategy? Go See a Movie : MarketingProfs Article." MarketingProfs: Marketing Resources for Marketing Professionals. 18 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2011/4650/need-a-brilliant-brand-strategy-go-see-a-movie>>.

² Greenhill, Duke. "Need a Brilliant Brand Strategy? Go See a Movie : MarketingProfs Article." MarketingProfs: Marketing Resources for Marketing Professionals. 18 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2011/4650/need-a-brilliant-brand-strategy-go-see-a-movie>>.

³ Greenhill, Duke. "Need a Brilliant Brand Strategy? Go See a Movie : MarketingProfs Article." MarketingProfs: Marketing Resources for Marketing Professionals. 18 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2011/4650/need-a-brilliant-brand-strategy-go-see-a-movie>>.



For Apple, the transcendent story began in 1984. Apple bought every available advertising page (39 in total) of Newsweek's popular post-election edition to launch its first product. But the launch failed because Apple got bogged down in the details. The Newsweek adverts strove to differentiate Apple from IBM in *technological* terms, when they should have differentiated in terms of *values*.

Apple corrected its mistake with a seminal Super Bowl spot in which a leggy supermodel, wearing a Mac tank top, ostensibly saves a mass of oppressed people by hurling a sledgehammer into the image of their Orwellian captor, IBM.

The ad was simple, mythic and clear: IBM (the antagonist) is the machine of the boring status quo (conflict), and Apple (the protagonist) is the machine of an imaginative, beautiful future (resolution).

The unknown⁴

In the unknown phase, according to Campbell, a monumental event thrusts the hero into the unknown: a life-or-death journey. A brand enters the marketplace and must achieve market share or die.

After the success of the Super Bowl launch, Apple realised that attacking IBM as a technology company was a losing battle and contrary to Apple's monomyth.

Instead, Apple re-emphasised its values with the 'Crazy Ones' campaign, which featured significant historical figures, all known for their refusal to accept the status quo, like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Albert Einstein, and John Lennon - and a new slogan: 'Think Different'.

Apple stayed on its authentic, narrative track and secured an alliance with values like art, innovation and freedom. It's no wonder that, to this day, if you're a banker you're likely to use a PC, and if you're an artist you are more likely to have a Mac on your desk.

The unity⁵

At the unity stage, the hero has survived the life-or-death ordeal and lives in a new world with a deeper, unified understanding.

A brand achieves market share, it enjoys consumer loyalty, but it also understands that it is obliged to stay true to the values that got it there.

⁴ Greenhill, Duke. "Need a Brilliant Brand Strategy? Go See a Movie : MarketingProfs Article." MarketingProfs: Marketing Resources for Marketing Professionals. 18 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2011/4650/need-a-brilliant-brand-strategy-go-see-a-movie>>.

⁵ Greenhill, Duke. "Need a Brilliant Brand Strategy? Go See a Movie : MarketingProfs Article." MarketingProfs: Marketing Resources for Marketing Professionals. 18 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2011/4650/need-a-brilliant-brand-strategy-go-see-a-movie>>.



Apple's unified understanding is simple: It is not a technology brand but an aesthetic one, and its monomyth is built on values like design, freedom and imagination ('coolness'). Today, Apple's brand strategy remains true to those values: What would make a computer company think it could enter the portable music market? Music is cool. Music is art. Music is imaginative.

"Apple, like The North Face, Coca-Cola and Lexus is one of an elite group of brands that created an emotional bond with its customers - a bond that transcends commerce," says Greenhill. "Apple customers don't simply like their products, they love them." The very thought of returning to a PC, not using an iPhone or buying another brand of tablet is absolutely inconceivable.

Greenhill also points out that Apple's customers are deeply, emotionally involved, just as the viewers of a great film or the readers of a great novel.

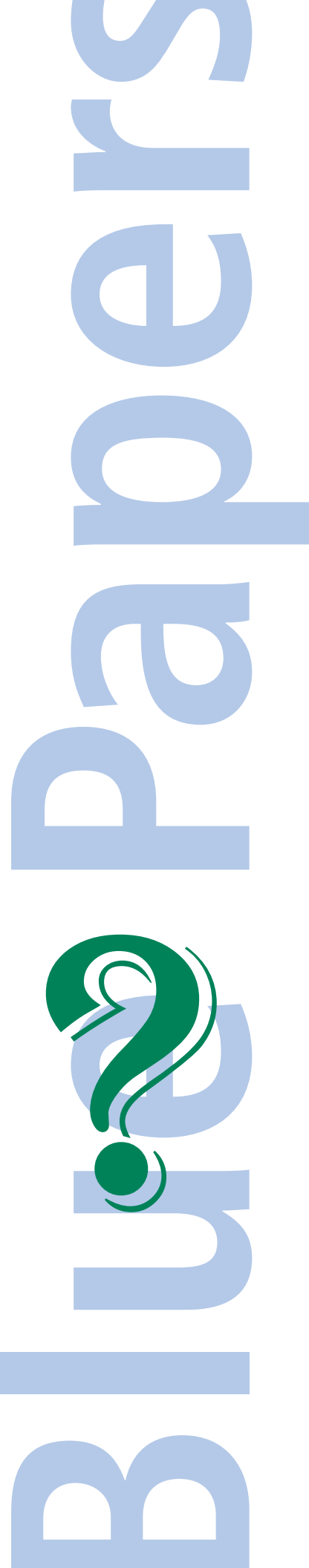
"Settle on a brand's authentic truth and core values, and use Campbell's monomyth to construct a story around them to achieve transcendent brand equity," advises Greenhill.

In a more specific sense, companies and organisations use all of these elements to tell different kinds of stories of their own. In her book "The Story Factor" author Annette Simmons suggests that there are six kinds of stories that all business leaders and communicators should be able to tell well⁶:

- **Who I Am** - Stories of self-revelation, like how a business came to be
- **Why I am Here** - Stories of motivation, like why a customer decided to buy
- **The Vision** - Tales of where we are going, like the announcement of a new product
- **Teaching Stories** - Tales of why and how, like videos on how best to use a brand's service
- **Values in Action** - Stories of how values intersect the real world, like how a charity helps its cause through its programmes
- **I Know What You are Thinking** - Tales to overcome objections, like a political broadcast to address opponent's policies

Lois Kelly, author of "Beyond Buzz: The Next Generation of Word-of-Mouth Marketing," drills in on these ideas and takes them one step further to explain specific kinds of stories that business professionals and marketers need to know - stories that involve brands that people like to talk about.

⁶ Simmons, Annette. *The Story Factor: Secrets of Influence from the Art of Storytelling*. New York: Basic, 2006. Print.



She maintains that if you're pitching your company to investors, customers, partners, journalists, suppliers or employees and you don't use at least one of these story lines, you probably have a problem. Marketing expert, blogger and founder of AllTop.com, Guy Kawasaki sums up her "Nine Best Storylines for Marketing"⁷ :

- 1. Aspirations and beliefs.** More than any other topic, people like to hear about aspirations and beliefs. Sun Microsystems' Scott McNealy's point of view about ending the digital divide is aspirational, as is Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard's views about how companies can grow by reducing pollution and creating more sustainable business strategies. Aspirations are helpful because they help us connect emotionally to the speaker, the company and the issues. They help us to see into a person or company's soul.
- 2. David vs. Goliath.** In the story of David and Goliath, the young Hebrew David took on the Philistine giant Goliath and beat him. It is the way Virgin Atlantic took on the big carriers in the 80s, the way the once unknown Japanese car manufacturers took on Detroit, and the way social media is taking on the media giants. Sharing stories about how a small organisation is taking on a big company is great business sport. Rooting for the underdog grabs our emotions, creates meaning and invokes passion. We bet on outsiders at the races and like to listen to the little guy talk about how he's going to win and why the world - or the industry - will be a better place for it.
- 3. Avalanche about to roll.** The mountain is rumbling, the sun is getting stronger, but the rocks and snow have yet to fall. You want to tune in and listen to the 'avalanche about to roll' topic because you know that there's a chance that you will be killed if caught unaware. This theme taps into our desire to get the inside story before it's widely known. It's not only interesting to hear someone speak about these ideas, they also have the ingredients for optimal viral and pass-along effect.
- 4. Contrarian/counter-intuitive/challenging assumptions.** These three themes are like first cousins, similar in many ways but slightly different.
 - **Contrarian** perspectives defy conventional wisdom; they are



⁷ Kawasaki, Guy. "The Nine Best Story Lines for Marketing." *How to Change the World: Guy Kawasaki's Blog*. 5 July 2007. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. <<http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2007/07/what-people-tal.html>>.

positions that often are not in line with -or may even be directly opposite to- the wisdom of the crowd.

- **Counter-intuitive** ideas fight with what our intuition (as opposed to a majority of the public) says is true. When you introduce counter-intuitive ideas, it takes people a minute to reconcile the objective truth with their gut instinct about the topic.
- **Challenging widely-held assumptions** means that when everyone else says the reason for an event is X, you show that it's actually Y. Challenging assumptions is good for debate and discussion, and especially important in protecting corporate reputation.



5. **Anxieties.** Anxiety is a cousin of the 'avalanche about to roll', but it is more about uncertainty than an emerging, disruptive trend. Examples of anxiety themes abound:

- Financial services companies urging baby boomers to hurry up and invest more for retirement: "You're 55. Will you have enough saved to live comfortably in retirement?"
- Tutoring companies planting seeds of doubt about whether our kids will get the A levels they need to get into Uni.

Although anxiety themes grab attention, go easy. People are becoming skeptical, and rightly so.

6. **Personalities and personal stories.** There's nothing more interesting than a personal story with some life lessons to help us understand what makes executives tick and what they value the most. The points of these personal stories are remembered, retold and instilled into organisational culture. Roberto Goizueta, the respected CEO of Coca-Cola, said he hated giving speeches but he was always telling stories - often personal ones such as how he and his family fled Cuba when Castro took control and we left with nothing more than his education.

7. **How-to stories and advice.** Theoretical and thought-provoking ideas are nice, but people love pragmatic how-to advice: how to solve problems, adapt to change and overcome common obstacles. To be interesting, how-to themes need to be fresh and original, providing a new twist to what people already know or tackle thorny issues.

8. **Glitz and Bling.** While Robert Palmer sang about being addicted to love our society is more addicted to glamour and celebrity. Finding a way to logically link to something glitzy and glamorous is a guaranteed conversation starter. Mercedes-Benz is handing over the conclusion to a series of adverts to its Twitter followers. The story will be aired at the beginning and middle of the TV show X Factor (6th October 2012) with Twitter users then able to vote for the conclusion which will be screened the next day. The story, promoting the firm's new A-class, features singer Kane Robinson and a professional driver who are chased by authorities while on their way to a secret gig.⁸



9. **Seasonal/event-related.** Last, is tying your topic into seasonal or major events. Talking about industry predictions at the start of a New Year or using sports based links and promotions during the Olympics or Wimbledon are examples of this type of story.

It's these elements and varieties of stories that can help make or break a business or organisation's approach to storytelling so familiarise yourself with them today.

Characteristics of a great story

A story worth telling is worth telling well. But what exactly separates a story from a great story? American author and entrepreneur, Seth Godin offered some insight in an article he wrote for Ode magazine. Here are a few key points⁹:

- A great story is true. Not necessarily because it's factual, but because it's consistent and authentic. Consumers are too good at sniffing out inconsistencies for a marketer to get away with a story that's just slapped on.
- Great stories are trusted. Trust is the scarcest resource we've got left. No one trusts anyone. As a result, no marketer succeeds in telling a story unless he has earned the credibility to tell that story.
- Great stories happen fast. First impressions are far more powerful than we give them credit for.

⁸ <http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/1152769/mercedes-asks-twitter-users-choose-outcome-tv-ads/> Brand Republic 1 October 2012, Web 3 October 2012.

⁹ Godin, Seth. "How to Tell a Great Story." Ode Magazine | The Online Community for Intelligent Optimists. Apr. 2006. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. <http://www.odemagazine.com/doc/32/how_to_tell_a_great_story/>.

- Great stories don't appeal to logic, but they often appeal to our senses.
- Great stories are rarely aimed at everyone. Average people are good at ignoring you. Average people have too many different points of view about life and average people are by and large satisfied. If you need to water down your story to appeal to everyone, it will appeal to no one. The most effective stories match the world view of a tiny audience - and then that tiny audience spreads the story.
- Great stories agree with our world view. The best stories don't teach people anything new. Instead, the best stories agree with what the audience already believes and they make the members of the audience feel smart and secure when reminded how right they were in the first place.



Just as knowing what elements comprise a story will help you recognise and create great stories, so too will recognising the things that make a great story truly great.

Developing a strategy and cultivating stories

Storytelling for a brand or a business or organisation is like any marketing effort in that it starts with research and strategy. Start the process by identifying goals, pinpointing target audiences and developing a basic message from which stories can be weaved.

Telling a story often involves breaking that story into parts/chapters/acts and developing the plot to lead prospects along. When the storytelling timeframe has been stretched, it can offer the opportunity to add ongoing news elements and updates to your story to make it more seasonable. In many companies, this turns into lead nurturing and drip marketing campaigns - both ways to weave a story around content and slowly build interest.

Telling a story also requires that you involve your listener by building the story around them, talking about a situation that they are most likely to be in. Depending on the medium, you can even get them to participate in the storytelling process - social media platforms, encouraging comments on product sites and blogs, customer satisfaction surveys ... these are all means of asking consumer's questions to let their answers move the story forward, all the while engaging them and building a relationship.

It's helpful to look at the kinds of stories mentioned above as individual strategies for storytelling in the marketplace. For example, consider these themes that double as storytelling strategies:

- Breaking News
- Educational
- Thought Leadership
- Product Launch
- Brand Awareness
- Crisis Management
- Community Relations
- Corporate Social Responsibility



**BREAKING
NEWS**

Combine these with the knowledge of what makes a good story and you're well on your way to winning.

Another key way to message with stories is through the development of a 'micro-script' or a very short set of words, usually a sentence or even less, that people not only like enough to remember, they like it enough to repeat it. Think of them as not just sound bites, they are story bites. These contain a metaphor or rhythmic words, and they work instantly because they trigger full stories, or they connect with stories already running in the brain.

The following are taglines, window stickers, names for legislation, or simply conventional wisdom—but they are all micro-scripts that people love to pass along to others:

- What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.
- Location, Location, Location.
- Where there's smoke, there's fire.

Many marketing professionals agree that micro-scripts are a big piece of how businesses need to tell stories today. In the new digital landscape, the volume of messages and information has grown and the rate at which we hear stories is fast - through social media channels alone, more than 500 billion distinct messages are generated per second, shrinking the average attention span from 29 seconds to an incredible nine seconds per person, per message. Micro-scripts help to lead into the larger stories that brands tell to capture more of that attention span and appeal to stakeholders.

Choosing a medium and a channel

Just as important as the story itself, is the way in which you communicate the story to your intended audience. First, take into account the target audience that you've identified previously as the primary recipients of your message. Then, consider communicating your story to them through channels that make the most sense.

Generally speaking, all marketing and public relations channels are potentially good mediums - press releases, pitches, printed materials, video, social media, email, direct mail and face-to-face interactions.

To make it really interesting for your listeners use different marketing mediums to tell different bits of the story, narrate some parts of it as video, photographs, an online game, a podcast, a questionnaire or an email. Every time you send out a message to your prospects, use a different medium for storytelling, this breaks monotony and makes the communication more interesting. Ensure the story is fully available on all these formats, but when sending it out, send it out in bits and pieces. If your concept is interesting, you will have them hooked and they will wait for your next update.

Marketers can use the technique of storytelling while writing case studies and whitepapers as well. Talking of real life scenarios and how the events panned out make interesting and inspirational reads. Also, when the narration is relaxed and free flowing it is easier to absorb and understand. Think of [TED videos](#) : TED is a not for profit organisation that spreads ideas between members interested in Technology, Education and Design – its speakers turn the most complex of scientific ideas into content consumable by masses by weaving a story around their technology in a way that is highly shareable through social media and email is enough to amaze anyone.

Measuring the impact of your stories

Measuring the effectiveness of your stories is simple - benchmark them with goals and consider the stories your brand has created in comparison to those who have elected to tell your stories for you. In essence, measure storytelling efforts as you would any marketing efforts but with special attention to the effectiveness of subject matter and relevance of the channel used.

Website traffic, social media conversations, email conversions, sales figures - these are all great indicators for doing so.



How traditional organisers use storytelling and social media

It is an interesting thought that Filofax, the personal organiser company, uses social and digital media to promote its products. At first glance you could be forgiven for thinking that the electronic world is the greatest competitor and threat to companies like Filofax who still promote and sell traditional, paper based organising systems.

When most people have pretty much every app already available on their smart phone or tablet, why would anyone need to buy a personal organiser these days? The answer it seems is pretty similar to why people still buy books; despite the doom-mongers who predict printed books will become obsolete and everyone will use e-readers to read books, newspapers and magazines.

It seems that there are still plenty of people who just love the feel of a real book, real tabs, files, calendars and folders. Filofax users have posted countless videos on YouTube that tell how they set up their organisers, how they've been personalised etc etc!

As Jessica Stephens, Group E-Marketing Manager for Filofax in the UK explains¹⁰ "We're very lucky as a company because our product lends itself to storytelling and, as a result, the stories that come out are massively personal and evoke a hugely emotional response." She confirms that the company uses email newsletters to stay in touch with customers and also social media sites like Facebook to enable users to share their personal stories. People love reading about real-life situations and relating them to their own life experiences. Filofax generated a huge response to its campaign that asked its Facebook fans: 'Have you ever lost your Filofax?' They were inundated with stories which demonstrated how essential customers felt their Filofax to be.

Ten truths of branded storytelling

Hopefully, all this insight has prepared you to take your business's storytelling to the next level. But before you begin we want to leave you with a few final tips,

¹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKTsKpO2rQY> 15 June 2012 by emailvision Web 2 October 2012



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that we've found incredibly useful. Alain Thys of FutureLab calls these 'The Ten Truths' of storytelling¹¹:

Truth # 1: Seek the story to rule them all

Great brand stories stem from the reason a brand exists. Apple wanted to free creative spirits while slaying the Microsoft dragon. Coco Chanel set out to reinvent fashion and liberate women from tradition. Pepsi wants to be a catalyst for change for every generation. Dig into the history, people and promises of your brand to uncover its Unique Story Proposition (USP). Make this the anchor for every other story that you tell.

Truth # 2: Great stories come to you, if you listen

Once you have defined your USP, use every opportunity to listen for supporting stories from your staff, clients and customers. Encourage people to bring these stories through competitions, blogging and, perhaps most importantly, through actually listening to them.

Truth # 3: Amplify those stories that others can tell

The brands that win tomorrow are those whose customers tell the best stories. As you discover stories that match your USP, select those that are simple enough to remember and fun to recite. Minimise plot-twists and complex layers and highlight those aspects that reinforce your overall brand message. Test what sticks best, and when you've got it, put the weight of your media behind them so they can start living a life of their own.

Truth #4: Connect your branding efforts to your USP

Each advert, branded entertainment programme or promo is a 'mini-story' within the overall framework of your brand. It should always connect to your USP. Work with your creative team to establish parameters and rigorously apply them to each idea.

Truth #5: Connect your story efforts to your bottom line

A great story is nice, yet to make money it has to press the 'buy' button in the customer's brain. For this you need to ensure that your story 'trips' the age-old behavioural triggers like emotion, contrast, egocentricity, the power of beginnings and others. Use them, and people will respond.

Truth #6: Know your classics (but don't get hung up on them)

Writers from Aristotle to Vogler have successfully captured the essence of



¹¹ Thys, Alain. "The Ten Truths of Branded Storytelling." Futurelab | We Are Marketing and Customer Strategy Consultants with a Passion for Profit and Innovation. 6 July 2006. Web. 10 Apr. 2011. <http://www.futurelab.net/blogs/marketing-strategy-innovation/2006/07/the_ten_truths_of_branded_stor.html>.

storytelling into rules and recipes. However, when taking their guidance, it's easy to get intimidated by the need for story arches, archetypes, enemies, heroes, challenges. Study and apply their teachings, but don't let them get in the way of actually telling the story (even if it's not perfect). It's not just what you say; it's how you say it.

Truth #7: Storytelling is not just about words

Reflect your USP in everything you do: The way you design your product, the way you fit-out your shops, the way your staff dress and behave, the way you deal with your customers. Your brand's actual behaviour and culture is the loudest storyteller of them all and any dissonance will be noticed. Look at every touchpoint and benchmark it against the story you aim to tell. If there is a disconnect, fix it.

Truth #8: You don't need to tell it all

If you want to promote word-of-mouth, leave a little mystery. People love to guess the end of the novel. Use your story as a prelude or epilogue to the actual experience of using your product or service. If you truly live your USP, people can fill in the blanks themselves.

Truth #9: Let go of the illusion of control

It used to be that there was the comforting illusion that if you threw enough advertising at consumers, all would be well. In story-world, this illusion is gone. Good stories amplify themselves. But stories also evolve as they travel from ear to mouth.

Truth #10: You cannot fake authenticity

Last, but definitely not least, ensure your stories reflect the real behaviour of your brand. In the age of consumer-generated media any sign of insincerity will backfire. Every claim you make will be investigated by someone, somewhere. The footsteps you leave in search engines and social media cannot be completely erased.



Epilogue

Storytelling has been a means of communication since the dawn of human existence. In marketing, it can help relate brands to the people it deems most important and it can create champions of brands in these customers by inspiring them to tell their own stories or share the stories of others on the brand's behalf.

Simply telling people what to think about us is no longer enough in marketing, public relations and advertising - we have to show them.

So get going. Tell your story. Live happily ever after.

The End

**...and they all
lived happily
ever after**

The End

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