

BUILDING BUSINESS WITH STORYTELLING

By Neil Osborne

The highest compliment you can pay a brand is to retell the stories it shares about itself. An even greater one though, is being able to repeat those stories accurately... because they were so engaging, they couldn't help but be remembered. So how and why do brand stories work?



People remember what's interesting. Therefore, to make a brand memorable, you need to think more like a writer than a marketer - and create brand stories that are so engaging, customers want to share them. To do that, you need to appeal to hearts, not heads - by mixing emotions with facts - and make every word count.

WHY DO STORIES ENGAGE?

Put simply, we place ourselves into the stories. We identify with similarities to ourselves in the characters, plotlines and themes, and anything else that aligns with our own history or current situation. Why? Because we're social creatures. We have a need to compare ourselves with others and feel a connection to them, so we habitually put ourselves in their (brand) shoes.

As Digital Storyteller, Billee Howard, said in Forbes magazine, "Emotional engagement is the sister to rational engagement. Rational engagement is based on the stimulation of the mind, whereas emotional engagement is based upon the stimulation of the heart. In today's age of brand experience, it seems that emotional engagement is proving to be more and more critical to achieving winning results and effective storytelling is at the heart of this movement."

WHAT MAKES A GREAT STORY?

With any form of communication, your first level of response is based on how it makes you feel. That then creates connection, causes engagement, stimulates learning, solidifies memory and inspires people to take action. As entrepreneur and #1 NYT bestselling author, Peter Guber, has said, "Move your listeners' hearts and their feet and wallet will follow."

Brand stories based on emotions (not facts, features or benefits), are the most powerful way to spread your beliefs and ideas. They are a business owner's best friend.

HOW DO YOU CONSTRUCT A GOOD BRAND STORY?

Storytelling (or writing) doesn't come naturally to everyone. To get an idea of what you should go for, here's a quick rundown on the structure of a story:

1. Every story has three parts: a beginning, middle and an end.
2. Generally, those three parts follow a sequence: the setup, the struggle, the solution.
3. The setup is the opening: it provides context, sets the scene, introduces the characters.

4. The struggle is the hook for the story: it adds confrontation, builds conflict, engages emotions and matches the pains of your customers.

5. The solution overcomes the struggle: it can be an idea, an action, an item or an emotion.

A great brand story is realistic. It depicts your brand, warts and all - because it's often in the struggle to overcome challenges, that we engage the greatest emotions. Always acknowledge the brand's dilemmas and the path that was cluttered with risk, loss and renewal. That's reality.

And it's those aspects, that are the story-making gold.

Neil Osborne is an elite sales trainer and brand coach who is unique in the salon marketplace. He has devoted more than 30 years of his working life to the Salon Industry and has been responsible for dramatically growing brands and businesses by helping them launch, develop and change their sales results with his salon-specific, results driven methods. Contact him at The SALES CATALYST, 1300 302 859 or go to www.thesalescatalyst.com.au