
The Power of Storytelling: How to Win a Client's Heart

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Key Points to Positioning, Marketing, Personality and Expression

Communicating effectively is about establishing community. Etymologically, the words communicate and community are linked. It is one relationship to another and can be one relationship to a billion. In creating image, culture is evidenced. And culture, cultivation – these are inextricably tied to community and “communing”. Your expression to an audience should be authentic from the inside out – it should be felt in the heart. It should be honest, yet elastic and resilient. Everything must change; nothing is in stasis. Establishing firm guidelines for how you communicate with others is in similar need of responsiveness to the context of your communions.

Storytelling is at the heart of these relationships. The empathetic heart suggests more powerful telling. Any business, person or proposition is, at its center, a story. Think of it as a kind of campfire experience. In brand development, we tend to think of the brand, which in ancient meaning is fire – a story to be told and likewise heard with equal passion.

And stories are sensate – they should be built as complete experiences, not merely a series of words, or simply an image, but a grouping of indications. Integrating the context of the story, as a complete experience, is more memorable. Integration of layers is a way to enrich mnemonic content. People remember different things. To communicate effectively, you need to express to all the senses, capturing an index of their mimetic attraction. Memory is mindfulness, so fill their minds, their senses, to reach as many levels of being as you possibly can.

Storytelling is about Reaching to Emotion

- There are components to the story – “players” such as: chemistry or evocations, attractants, feelings and emotion, mutual affinity, character and personality, relationships to attributes.
- There are patterns of interaction – any story has a curve of drama, a building that leads to the pitch, the highest point. These are coupled with threads, ethnicity, themes, anthropology and sub-plots.
- Stories offer a bigger world perspective, enhanced experience, learning, transformation, change in personal identity, positive associations and entertainment.

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- Stories, in the context of marketing brands, must be initiated with a premise – a brand promise. The promise is fundamental positioning: to think for this product in this category to this audience, what is the strongest reason or benefit to believe and buy. This empirical statement is the main theme of the story.
 - Brand stories are “players” in mimetic code – scent, imagery, typography, brandmarks, sound attributes, icons, shape and form, touch, photographic treatment, name and colors.
 - Brands establish patterns of interaction – they have a drama curve, in their telling, which is evidenced in: merchandising, in-store experiences, advertising, direct digital or printed mail, motion design, packaging, etc.
 - Brands, with powerful stories, imbued with the above, have conclusions. These conclusions end in a better consumer experience, increased awareness, increase in sales, higher emotional appeal, marketshare increases, positive associations, premium pricing, etc.

Recommended Readings

Kao, John, *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity*, HarpersCollins Publishers, New York, 1996.

Schmitt, Bernd H., *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, Relate to Your Companies and Brands*, Free Press, New York, 1999.

Schmitt, Bernd H. and Alex Simonson, *Marketing Aesthetics: The Strategic Management of Brands, Identity, and Image*, Free Press, New York, 1997.

Schrage, Michael, *Serious Play: How the World's Best Companies Simulate to Innovate*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 2000.

Scott, Susan, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life*, Viking Press, New York, 2002.