



LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Storytelling as a tool for marketing & communication

DESIGNED FOR

PRODUCERS AND
ENTREPRENEURS

LOCAL EXPERIENCES

STORYTELLING AS A TOOL FOR MARKETING & COMMUNICATION: WHY TELL YOUR (FOOD) STORIES?

Once known as an alternative approach to more classic communication methods, storytelling has become a valuable commonplace tool within the context of business and marketing to better communicate the core message of one's entrepreneurial endeavour. Nowadays, storytelling is broadly used by companies, entrepreneurs and marketing experts to build a strong brand identity and to attract consumers/clients to choose one product/service over another. Through stories we create meaning and context, share experiences and form our identity.

When it comes to willingness to buy and interact with products or services, storytelling has the power to affect the consumers'/clients' hearts rather than solely their reason and intellect. Storytelling can even be used as a means to foster an internal company culture and affinity by visualising concrete company goals, core values and visions for the future in a more creative manner.

For storytelling to work and for it to be received well, one has to make sure to be truthful and transparent in using this tool. Storytelling can go wrong if it is based on lies and/or unreasonable exaggeration. It is therefore essential to underline that storytelling should always be linked to real experiences, real events and real emotions.

Successful storytelling is just like a good story that touches the listener and therefore creates a (positive) feeling, which then leads to a will to engage with the given product, service or brand. Storytelling, when done right, paints a picture for the listener and hence creates a better understanding and fosters action.

In practice, storytelling is a way to avoid making empty, dubious statements or listing facts as to why a consumer/clients should choose your product/service. By telling a captivating story about your products/service and making it relevant to your consumers'/clients' needs and wishes, you will have better luck in shaping solid relationships to them.



How do you tell a good story?



1. HARVEST YOUR STORIES

THINK

Reflect on your business/product/service:

- Key choices, decisions or action that has brought you to where you are in the present moment?
- Be personal: Use your own experiences
- Describe feelings, thoughts and reactions.

Example : *“Every morning when we set to sea, I feel the cool seawind against my face. Its smell energizes me and gives me a sense of calm. It makes me think about how my father and his father before him have gone fishing in these same waters for decades. I’m filled with pride over my craft and our family business that now rests on my shoulders.”*

WORK

Write down a handful of titles/themes that are relevant to your business/product/service and write on separate cards. To get started, in a small group or in pairs, draw one card at a time and start talking about what kind of stories come in mind connected to that specific title/theme. These small tidbits of stories can later on be brought together for a larger, more overarching base for your company’s storytelling.

Example: One card could say: *“My first day in the production kitchen”, “Our first labels”, “Our first customer” etc.*



2. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE

THINK

By formulating a clear purpose, both your story and its message will have a direction. This will make it easier for the client/consumer to both connect and understand what you offer. By stating a clear purpose, you also give the client/consumer a role.

Example : *The purpose of your storytelling is to sell more weekend holiday packages to city dwellers. In your storytelling you then portray an office worker who is tired and stressed due to countless hours in front of the computer and time spent commuting in public transport during city rush hours. You then juxtaposed this reality to that of a laid back weekend getaway in the countryside. You describe and visualize the purpose of a holiday package for this city dweller; how he/she can go from being stressed to feeling at ease and relaxed.*

WORK

Define what you want the recipients to know, feel or do. Say you want to attract more guests to your remote countryside bed and breakfast, you might start by describing your location in such a way that it appeals to a stressed, hardworking city dweller looking for an escape. The use of soothing language will create a sense of peace and calm.

Example : *“When was the last time you walked barefoot through a meadow still humid from the morning dew? Have a glass of red wine with your special someone under a starlit sky – Susanna’s Bed & Breakfast awaits you”.*



3. PAINT THE PICTURE

THINK

When constructing your narrative, consider all your senses and never take for granted that your consumer/client knows how something feels, smells or tastes. Perhaps there is a lovely “Kodak-moment” linked to your business/product/service – use it, both visually and descriptively. Also reflect on how you might be able to state dry facts in a more figurative manner.

WORK

Describe, describe and describe as well as you possibly can. Use language and imagery that create and lead to mental images. The receiver will thus have the opportunity to relate to your experience and be touched by it. This is how you generate emotional reactions and ultimately a will to act.

Example : *Rather than saying your cheese is artisanal and certified organic, show how the cows on your small-scale farm are treated as beloved family members; how they feed on fresh, green grass and how your children play with them lovingly. Show even how you milk the cows by hand and how you then transform the milk into cheese with no machinery involved.*





4. TRUTH IS KING

THINK

Trust in the power of your own stories and dare to communicate them. If you think hard enough it won't be difficult to come up with heartfelt true stories and real human experiences connected to your business/product/service. We all have stories to tell, we might just not be that accustomed telling them.

WORK

Tell about something that has actually happened, even bad or challenging experiences. In this way your story (and your company) will be much more reliable and you yourself can with a clean consciousness stand for every word in your story. Be mindful though, nobody wants to solely hear a sob story - always present a solution to your problem/challenge/negative experience.

Example 1 :

You own a charming bed & breakfast close to nature where you wish your guests to have a soothing and relaxing stay away from the city. Unfortunately, there happens to be a highway close by.

- Instead of emphasizing the nature-aspect of the experience and risk disappointing the guests upon arrival due to the proximity of the highway, choose to talk about how easy it is to get to your location from the city; how close it is and how fast you can be there; how it's "just a short drive away".
- It is pivotal to understand which attributes you do have and which you do not have. A lack isn't always a lack if looked at from the right perspective.



Example 2 :

It has become popular to show processes behind the scenes even when the end goal is far away. It is okay to start an Instagram-account and publish pictures and videos from your hotel's renovation months before the actual opening. Show how something didn't go as planned; how a wall had to be torn down; how something went wrong etc.

- But remember, if you chose to base your storytelling on an obstacle/dilemma/problem that you have faced in your business, in the end, always show how you solved it or worked your way around it. Storytelling should always have a positive/"feel good" tone in the end.





5. RIGHT TONE, CONTEXT AND FIGURE OF SPEECH

THINK

At this point, you may want to polish your story and make it clearer and sharper so that it truly says what it is intended to communicate. Check that your language suits your audience and that your context is relevant. If you are uncertain, better keep it simple.

WORK

Delete unnecessary words and avoid professional jargon. In addition, use the unspoken. Be clear with the message, but at the same time let some things just glimpse between the lines. In the unspoken, tension, meaning and symbolism are created. This brings the story to life.

Example 1 :

"We believe in mouth-watering food. Food that's delicious, easy to cook, and crazy good for the environment. And that's Oumph! Really good food, made from beans, with a climate impact so low that you, and everyone else on this planet, can eat it every day. Epic. So welcome to Oumph! We're so happy to have you on our journey!"

- This text is clearly meant to speak to a young and hip audience. In combination with carefully curated imagery, film and package design, the concept of the product is crystal clear. Visit website <https://oumph.uk/> to get a closer look.



EXAMPLES OF GREAT STORYTELLING

Example 1 :

How to showcase authenticity; an alternative approach

This AirBnB video is about taking the traveller to the hidden treasures and away from the beaten track. It offers the traveller a way to connect with the place (in this case Paris) that goes beyond your average touristy experience by inviting the traveller to tap into the very soul of the city by offering a more personal relationship to the destination. It is also a great example of showcasing an alternative perspective on something that everyone already has a presupposed idea about.

Link to video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBcKLDUw61w&feature=emb_logo

Example 2 :

How to deliver a moral message; show not tell

To talk about a serious issue such as drinking and driving can be a heavy topic to communicate. To choose an unexpected angle – the point of view of a dog – is a great way to show not tell. This storytelling strategy is an effective way to tap into emotions in an unpredictable way.

Link to video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=56b09ZyLaWk&feature=emb_logo

Example 3 :

How to communicate inexplicitly; an invitation to a location/a product

By asking a rather abstract question "What is the soul of Skåne", the spectator gets a glimpse into the producers' realities and therefore also the region and what it has to offer. It is a fun and intimate way to present tourist information.

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqpG6cv4bBs&feature=emb_rel_pause

