

# How to Think Like a Storyteller



You've likely heard how telling your business story can help you connect to your audience. However, for storytelling to be effective for your business you don't want to treat it as a marketing trick that you use on occasion when you're writing copy for your website. For the most conversions and amplification of your message you want to think like a storyteller.

Here's how you can become an expert business storyteller, even if you can't tell a story (or a joke):

1. **Don't shy away from friction.** The story is in the struggle, even when it comes to business. If you leave out the challenges, you're leaving out the interesting pieces. You're also leaving out the part that people identify with. If you explain what you were struggling with – feeling like a fraud for instance – there are people in your audience who will understand because they feel the same way. When you leave out the struggle you leave out the very thing that helps you connect to your audience in the most powerful way. Always remember the difficult times and the solutions that helped you because people are looking for solutions.
2. **Go big or go home.** Storytelling has become a marketer's parlor trick. But for the most effective storytelling you need to go larger than your company. You're not doing business in a vacuum. Your efforts have a much broader application than what they do for your bank account. Don't dwell on your own success but rather focus on the path and guidance you help provide for others. Show how you assist your customers, but better yet, highlight how that assistance is allowing them to make a difference in the greater world. Think of what you do as it contributes to the ripple effect. Tell the others' story (the outward ripples) more than your own.
3. **Talk about yourself.** Before you begin creating a monologue of how awesome you are, when I'm referring to talk about yourself, I mean sharing details about your life. This goes back to struggles, lessons, and happy moments. You want your audience to see you as human, not a braggart. Think about how effective stories are in teaching a lesson. Look for ways to tie in things that happen in your everyday life with your business. This could include your own customer service reflections from being a customer of other businesses or even things that you've learned from your children or grandchildren. Don't

be afraid to share cute stories. Again, you want people to identify with you. Sharing stories from your life can help them do that. If you want to become a natural storyteller, you need to start recognizing the stories that are transpiring in your own life. If you don't feel comfortable naming your closest family members, give them nicknames. But tell the stories.

4. **Look for employee stories.** This goes along with always keeping an eye out for a good story. Don't assume only the owner or managers of a business are the keepers of the business story. Spend time with those on the front line who are speaking directly to your customers. Hear their concerns and their challenges and condense those things into a single word. This can become your story theme. For example, if support hears over and over about the frustration with something taking a long time, think about what stories you have in your personal life that can relate to that. Just as a publisher may tell a writer to “write to the market” or write about what people most want to read, you need to think of your business story and your audience and find ways to produce or disseminate stories that meet the needs of your audience.
5. **Think visual, audio, and written.** Some people love to read, others prefer movies, other's love audiobooks. When you take on your business story, make sure you create stories in multiple mediums, unless there's a reason your (entire) audience dislikes one of them. If you are not a gifted oral storyteller, that's okay. There's likely someone in your circle who is good at that kind of storytelling. Think of employees or your friends. Employ their help. Don't just ignore the power of oral storytelling or any of the other kinds of storytelling.

Storytelling is a commitment and an ongoing component in your marketing. It should not be a cheap trick to be pulled out when it is convenient. You want to hold your audience's attention and engage with them. Storytelling is an incredibly effective method for doing so, but to be successful at it you need to cultivate the mind of a storyteller – and that means looking at the world as a story waiting to unfold.