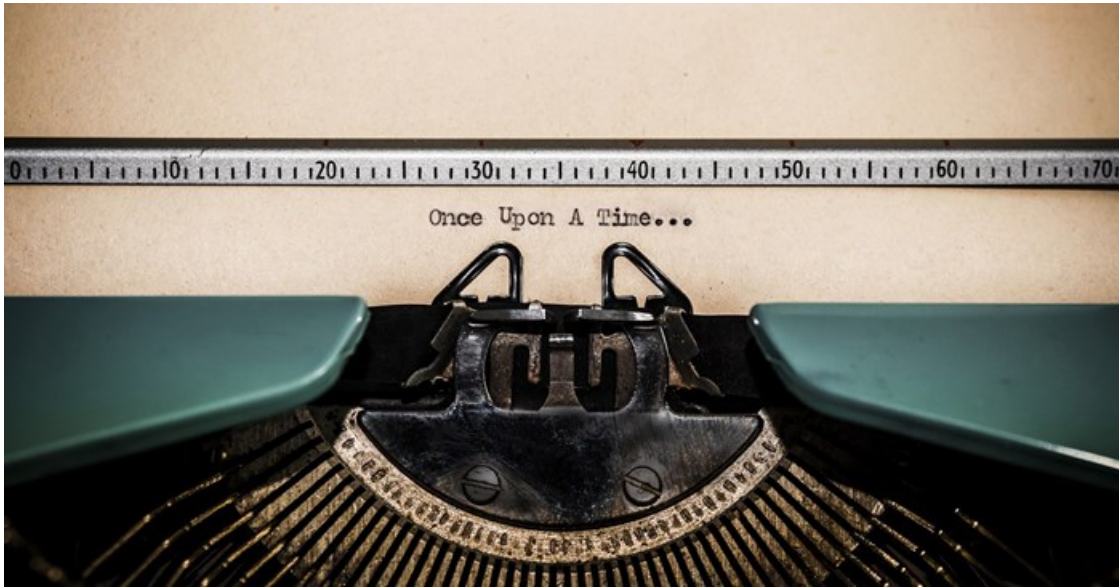


Is your brand telling the true story?

 By [Yaw Dwomoh](#)

13 May 2019

Stories are a powerful part of the human experience. Yes, we see them told at bedtime to children listening in rapt silence, but they're also told daily in election campaigns, fundraising drives and in business, through brand storytelling. With brands clamouring for market share, it's worth taking a step back to look at how telling your brand story through heartfelt, emotive storytelling can connect with and earn your customer's trust.



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"Brand storytelling" might be a relatively new term, but it follows the same powerful principles as the stories of old. In all good stories, the reader is immersed in the story through senses, actions, words, and thoughts, and not the writer's scripted summarisation and descriptions. When brand stories are told well and with integrity and authenticity, customers are captivated – often for life.

A [report](#) by Olapic on "Customer Trust" suggests that 76% of 18 to 24-year-olds trust content shared by real people rather than advertising. This confirms what we have always known - customers buy from people (not companies) they trust.

The problem is that when these stories are crafted for CEO and marketing team sign-offs, instead of being told with the reader in mind, it can come across as fake and leave the customer cold.

So where do you start crafting brand stories that connect with your client?

1. Find someone you trust to tell your story well

Brand storytelling is not 'spin'. It is always based on the truth. Expert brand storytellers extract the brand story through conversations and immersion in the brand's environment and culture.

A great brand storyteller will place human connection, above sales talk. Focusing on profits repel customers. Purpose and passion attract them.

What if you don't have a story? Everyone has a story, no matter how small. Tell stories about the people who work for you, your customers, your product, its ingredients or materials and how you choose them, or the people in the community around you.

Find a brand storyteller who will extract your story and take the time and care to understand and tell it with authenticity to illuminate your brand's power.

2. Tell the truth

“ *Trust is earned when actions meet words.* ” – Chris Butler ”

A customer who suspects they've been fooled is a customer lost. You will quickly find that brand stories backed by duplicitous practices are a teetering tower that can come crashing down at any time.

Yes, you could tell your clients that you offer 0.2% more interest on your savings account, but if you are recovering it by charging 1% more in bank charges, you will be called out faster than you can say Twitterstorm.

That doesn't mean you have to be embarrassed to tell people about the good you do, but make sure you are doing it well. If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the road to losing your customers is paved with good deeds done for the sake of doing them.

In this era of consumer activism and social connectivity, it is crucial that a brand's communication strategy is anchored on authentic, compelling, engaging and inclusive brand stories that take consumers on an emotive discovery.

3. Pull, don't push

Think back to your childhood. A good story – a real one – will draw your customer in and elicit an emotional response in the same way those bedtime stories did.

Every brand was created to fulfil a specific need or a “want to need.” Your brand story should show how you fulfil the need, rather than “what you sell”. It should be about your people rather than your product specs.

Historical advertising was invasive, and it assumed or demanded the customer's interest in their product. Brand storytelling earns the customer's attention for **who** he or she is dealing with, without talking shop.

Convey the values your customers will connect with. Your honesty, your care for the elderly, the planet, children, your customer's health or for the suppliers you use.

Such stories should permeate the media clutter and seek to achieve both commercial and social success. In doing this, your brand's story and customers do your bidding in securing a slice of spend in both business and domestic budgets.

4. For heaven's sake, don't make it boring

Research conducted at Stanford University showed that 5% of listeners remembered a single statistic during a speech, while 63% remembered the stories.

Keletso Nkabiti, brand strategist at specialist brand storytelling company, Idea Hive says:

“ Facts are boring, and customers are growing smarter by the day. Aim to create human experiences first, through characters that they can relate to. Make it memorable. ”

Your brand's story is the most important story you can tell. In such a competitive market it seems counterintuitive not to push your product, but a compelling brand story will be the door that will allow customers to invite you in.

They are women, mothers, teenagers, stockbrokers, grandfathers and football lovers. If you don't treat them as statistics, they will show their loyalty in your bottom-line.

ABOUT YAW DWOMOH

Born in Ghana, Yaw Dwomoh is the Managing Director of Idea Hive, a specialist Brand Storytelling company based in Johannesburg that enables medium-to-large brands to craft their brand stories in a way that is authentic, connecting with customers in a way that captures their hearts and their purchasing power.

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