

SMART BRAND STORYTELLING:

Proven Strategies To Help You Grow Your Business



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Introduction

If you are not yet telling brand stories, you are missing out on a powerful and proven tool that can help you grow your business and hook your audience long enough to listen to you.

Message from Susan Mangiero, PhD, CFA, MBA, MFA Content Strategist, Ghostwriter, and Award-Winning Author

I created this 2025 book excerpt of "Smart Brand Storytelling" for you. It's sub-titled "Proven Strategies To Help You Grow Your Business" because this form of content marketing works. As a thought leader, I know you want tips about new ways to amplify your message. Use the fact that our brains are wired for stories to your advantage. Learn what I discovered about the potency of brand storytelling during my 12+ months of research and interviewing creatives, marketing pros, and sales executives.



Stories Matter. Stories Stick.



Listen to the Scientists

Fire Up The Neurotransmitters



Scientific studies show that stories encourage neural activity and fluctuations in our hormone levels. Chemicals are released when we emotionally engage with a story's hero. Stories provide a way for you to elicit audience emotions such as empathy, fear, relatability, and trust.

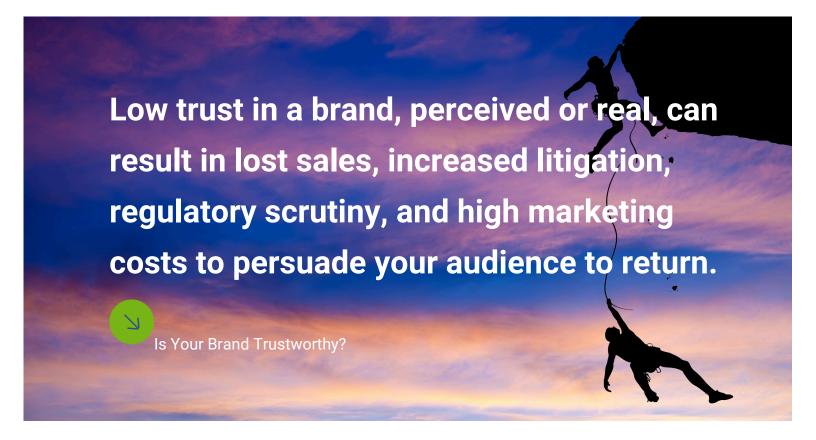
Emotional Resonance Hooks Your Audience



Think of your brand story as a box. You need a hook to excite people enough to look inside. If they like what they see, your brand story has succeeded in helping you reach your goals for sales and visibility.



Assess Your Trust IQ



Industry Trends

Research studies repeatedly validate the importance of consistent ethical behavior, excellent customer service, protection of customer data, purpose-driven operations, and respect of employees as integral to becoming and remaining a trustworthy brand. According to Edelman's latest trust report, the current trust deficit is acute and must be addressed by those in charge. The first step is measuring your trust score.

Opportunities

Decision makers demand transparency before they will agree to buy anything from you. If you seek to influence, persuade, and sell, you are wise to create content that educates, elucidates, empowers, enlightens, and explains. Deftly-told stories about people, processes, products, and services reflect a willingness to be transparent. Excellent brand stories are emotional. They resonate. They are memorable. They matter.

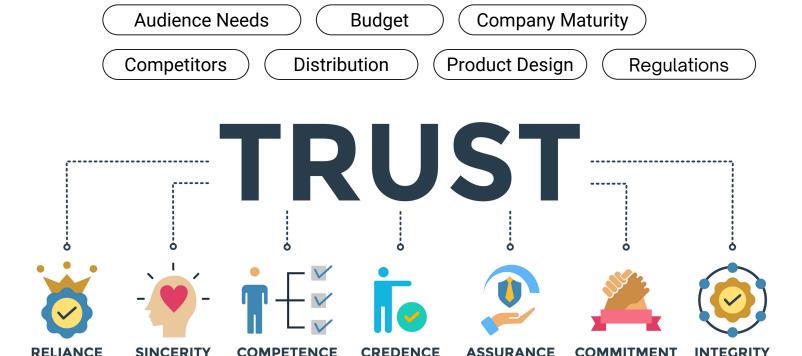
Close the Trust Gap

Brand stories help to foster loyalty and forge a bond between buyers and sellers.





Create a content strategy that reinforces your commitment to transparency and lets you tell stories that bring your brand to life. One size does not fit all. Your content plan should incorporate relevant factors to optimize your resources and meet goals.



Show Your Humanity

Brand stories that evoke empathy are popular, encourage action, and discourage passivity.



Strengths And Weaknesses

Effective brand stories, the kind that spur decision makers to buy from you, are memorable and relatable. They drive affirmative change by appealing to hearts and minds. To tell good brand stories, you must be sincere. People don't trust phonies.



What Can Set Your Brand Apart

Create buyer personas and then energetically solicit feedback. Offer educational programs. Set up focus groups. Conduct surveys. Hire an experienced content strategist. Always be listening and learning.



Power Up Positivity

Studies show that happy consumers are more receptive to new ideas.



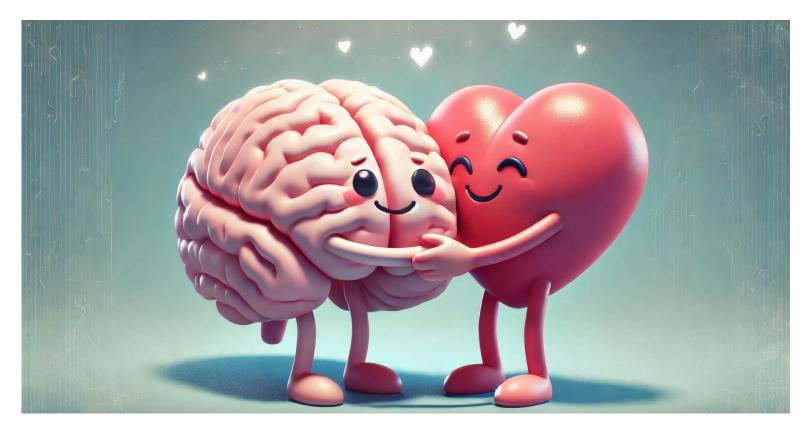


Positive content can boost brand favorability by 49%.



People are said to be 20% more emotionally engaged with positive content.

Positive content can be silly or serious. What's important is that you focus on the upside of your solution to a prospect's problem. Your stories should illustrate risks and returns.



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Celebrate Your Hero

Protagonist Needs

The central element of a brand story is the hero (customer). Your goal is to establish a bond between the audience and your hero. You want a Happily Ever After ending where the beleaguered hero triumphs over adversity by solving his problem with your product or service.



Power Versus Price



Your brand story should be personal and empowering. Told well, your brand story should evoke intensive emotions such as fear, happiness, or love. You must hook your audience and then keep their attention. Don't discourage prospects by talking about price upfront. They need to know why they should invest in your story.

Prioritize Personalization

Include setting as a supporting character. It reinforces the notion that you understand your hero (customer). Wegmans tells inspiring brand stories about its collaborations with local bakers and neighborhood food suppliers. Procter & Gamble's Olympic ad campaign, thanking moms from different countries, went viral with its unifying focus on love.



Promotion



Once you create a relatable and ideally likeable hero, produce your brand story in all the mediums that matter to your target audience. Apple's award-winning stories about The Underdogs is a smash video hit on YouTube. Salesforce includes its fun mascots at conferences. They also appear in print, social media, and customer training videos.

Personalize Everything





Audience Research

Distribution Channels





Tailored Messages

SEO Analysis

Research validates the need to customize your story narrative, tone, and format for each one of your buyer cohorts. Utilize data and interactive feedback to stay current with their buying preferences. Feature them in case studies. Engage them with interactive content.



Banish Boring Content

You can't sell to people who aren't paying attention to you.



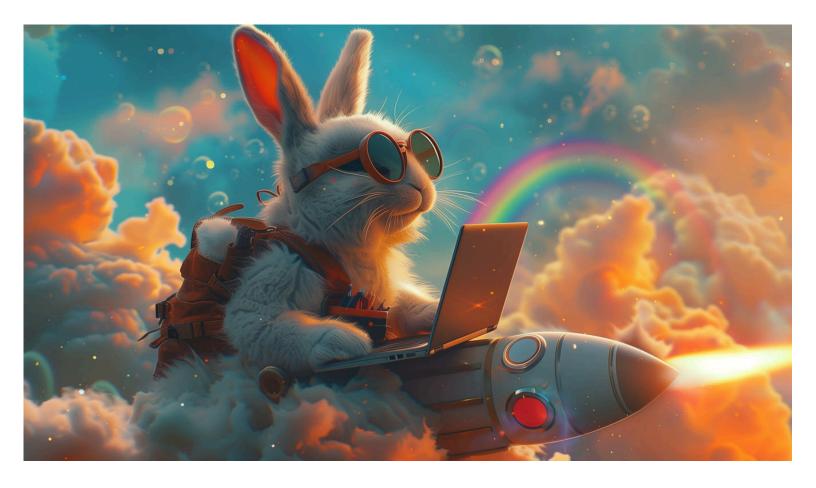
8-12 Today's Attention Span In Seconds 74% Firms Using Content For Leads

75% Buyers Influenced Buyers Who Need To Trust A Brand

Since we know stories help promote brand trust, it's important for you to optimize your content budget to finance narratives that emotionally resonate with your audience. Begin with a compelling hook. You might ask a thought-provoking question, offer an intriguing quote, cite a riveting statistic, or give a paradox that sets the stage for introducing your story's hero and her quest to solve her problem. Add conflict for drama.



Lead With Laughter



91%

People Who Like Brands To Use Humor

95%

Leaders Who Fear Using Humor

Neuroscience studies suggest that humor can positively impact our mood as well as our brain and immune system. When laughter increases neurotransmitters like dopamine in our body, it's easier for us to learn, stay motivated, and focus.

78%

Buyers Want To Pay More For Happy Brands

55+

Age of Buyers Who Prefer A Serious Tone

Some companies are concerned about using humor lest they offend their target audience. Others regularly use kindhearted humor, even going so far as to hire comedians to work with their marketers. Buyers rank trust and relatable humor as important.

Set SMART Goals

Optimize your content plan with a set of clearly articulated goals to attain specific objectives. SMART is an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based objectives.

SPECIFIC



Assess Your Priorities

- Who are your buyers?
- What do you want to accomplish regarding credibility, growth, profitability, sales, and visibility?
- When do you plan to start implementing your content strategy plan?
- Where will your content appear?
- Why are your content-driven goals important?

MEASURABLE



Establish Benchmarks

- What qualitative metrics are you going to use to determine if you are meeting your content goals?
- What quantitative metrics are you going to use to determine if you are meeting your content goals?
- How often will you measure the impact of providing content to your buyers?
- Who will do the measuring?

ACHIEVABLE



Be Realistic

- Does your budget support your content goals?
- Will you need to engage designers and writers to achieve your content goals?
- What can you accomplish in the short-term?
- Can you meet or exceed what your competition is doing in terms of contentdriven marketing?

RELEVANT



Reinforce Your Mission

- What are your business values?
- What is your brand voice?
- Will your content style, format, and distribution sync with how your buyers consume information?
- Will your content reflect current cultural, economic, and operational realities?

TIME-BASED



Establish Deadlines

- When are you ready to commit resources to creating a content strategy plan?
- What is your priority for delivering different types of content?
- What impediments, if any, could prevent you from achieving the first phase of your content strategy plan in the next quarter?

90%

Performance Increase
With SMART Goals

43%

People Who Meet Goals When Goals Are Set

A well-defined content strategy plan will, at a minimum, specify the business objective, end users, content plan owner, budget, writers, format, tone, frequency, structure, distribution channels, marketing performance metrics, and editing rules.

26%

B2B Execs Who Rate Their Plan As "Very Effective"

42%

Impact Of Unclear Goals
On Plan Effectiveness

Evaluate when and how you want to include brand storytelling as part of your content strategy. Identify the core story theme. Create a main character. Develop 2+ mini 3-act structures with conflict and resolution. A/B or split test your story to select the best one.

Measure Story Results

Phase 1



Create A Story Budget

Identify the \$ amount and % of total content budget for brand stories, who owns the budget, and deadlines.

Phase 3



Assess Outcomes

Review current KPIs and ROI on at least a quarterly basis by audience and type of format. Benchmark against goals.

Phase 2



Finalize KPI And ROI Goals

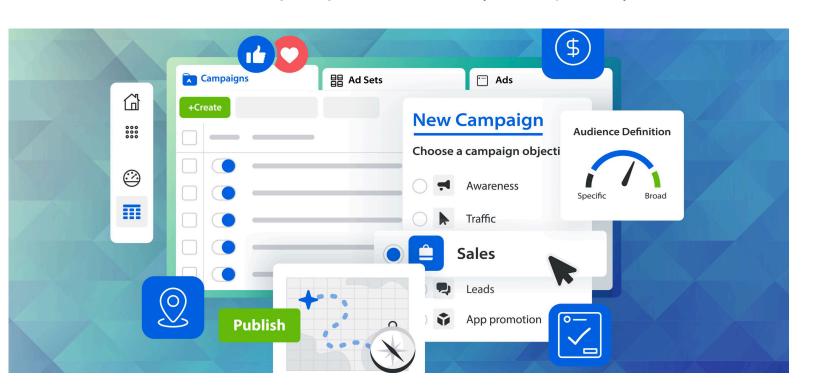
Identify both qualitative and quantitative KPIs or Key Performance Indicators by format and buyer cohort.

Phase 4



Modify Plan If Needed

Modify your story budget, themes, and formats as needed after your Phase 3 analysis. Incorporate buyer feedback.



Summary

Brand Storytelling = Proven Strategy



Done well, brand storytelling can be a powerful tool for any B2B, B2C, or individual influencer to use. Potential benefits include attracting buyers, attracting talented job seekers, building brand awareness, building trust, differentiating from competitors, increasing sales conversions, strengthening brand reputation, and turbocharging profitability.



Closing Message

Creating content to attract prospects and keep your current customers is paramount, especially with increased competition and shorter attention spans. Brand storytelling is a tried and true technique for many users. As the bestselling author Seth Godin said, "Marketing is no longer about the stuff you make, but about the stories you tell." If you agree, reach out. I'd love to talk about your content needs.



Let's talk if you are a thought leader who wants to grow your sales, add more consulting clients, speak more often, raise capital, explain a product or service, launch an employee initiative, amplify your expertise, optimize your content budget, and/or extend your audience reach.

With 20+ years working in the business, finance, and investment industries, I'd love to help you create high-impact, high-return content that sets you apart from your competitors, empowers your customers, builds customer trust, and anchors your reputation as an innovator.

Email susanm@ipaintwithwords.com or sign up for a complimentary discovery call by visiting https://calendly.com/bizwriter.

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