



# 17 WAYS TO USE STORIES TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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### Introduction

OK, you got the memo: You need to use stories in your business. Most business owners will think, “This means I need a rags to riches story: “How I Suffered To Get Here.”

The truth is ...

- You need a portfolio of stories, not just one.
- You don’t need a rags-to-riches story (and if you have one, you might be better off to remove it from your marketing).
- Stories will simplify ALL aspects of your marketing. You’ve heard of gamification -- using games to get prospects involved? We’re talking about storification -- using stories to improve the marketing of your small business.

So exactly what will storytelling do for you? Well, for starters, here’s 17 ways ...

### **(1) Open presentations, blog posts and emails to your list with a story.**

One of the maxims of stand-up comedy is, “If you don’t get the audience laughing in the first 30 seconds, you lose them.”

And in today’s crowded content world, you grab your audience’s attention with a story -- but not just any story. Audiences have become jaded with Ted talks. They’re used to ordinary stories.

Use a story that’s directly relevant to your content, so you’ll lead your audience into the message you want to convey. When a story seems tacked on (“somebody told me I need a story here”) you might as well not use one.

## **(2) Use stories as case studies for your lead magnet.**

A lead magnet is an ebook, video, or other small piece of content that your target audience will be eager to read. Ideally your lead magnet will be so irresistible, you'll get prospects sharing their email contact information to get it. You use these emails to create a targeted list.

Case studies can be a particularly effective way to develop a lead magnet. Tell 3 to 5 stories of clients who experienced success with the solution you're presenting. Alternatively, tell 3 to 5 stories that communicate the idea you want to present.

One of my lead magnets shares stories of 4 successful business owners who brand themselves with 4 different types of stories. My goal is to attract signups from business owners who are interested in storytelling, branding, or both.

See <http://mycopy.info/frbrst>

## **(3) Write a book, lead magnet or white paper as a story.**

Why just add a story, when you can write your whole book as a story!

Chuck Rylant, a California-based business coach, used this storytelling format for his recent book, *How To Be Rich: The Small Business Owner's Guide to Attracting Customers and Clients*.

His book tells the story of an imaginary business owner -- David, who owns a car repair shop. The story builds suspense skillfully as David comes close to losing everything and then recovers, using the techniques and tactics the author, Chuck, teaches his own clients. It's a compelling book that's actually hard to put down.

## **(4) Stories help you present social proof.**

Social proof means that you look to people are influenced by learning about the actions of people like themselves. In his book *Influence*, Robert Cialdini explains that his young had trouble learning to swim until he found another kid the same age who swam.

Marketers use testimonials as social proof. The idea is that you'll say, "Mary's a lot like me. If she benefited from that program, I probably will too."

Most business owners rely on testimonials, some on every page of their website. Get your best clients to write their testimonials in the form of a first-person success story. You can use this format:

Opening: "When I called Cathy I had no website, just a bit \$4000 bill from a no-show developer."

What you did: “Cathy wrote the copy and found a designer who captured my vision. We got the whole thing up and running in just 4 weeks.”

What was the outcome: “Lots of compliments on my website -- and 100 new subscribers since we went live 2 weeks ago!”

### **(5) Many marketing pros brand themselves with stories.**

Recently I was listening to a teleseminar by a well-known media coach. I was struck by her unique speaking style: smooth, confident and conversational. That’s her brand. Not a logo or color scheme in sight.

When you listen closely you notice some finely honed marketing techniques. She seems to be telling stories, but every line and every anecdote has a purpose. It sounds effortless but she's worked a long time to create that impact.

Some other examples:

-- A successful marketer brands herself on her personal story, from fumbling start-up to confident international success (and a bank account that's growing along with her business).

-- A consultant brands himself by his experience in an unusual occupation that seems completely unrelated to his present field ... until you learn the whole story.

### **(6) Reach your niche by understanding their backstory.**

If you hang around the online marketing arena, you’ll hear a lot of solo-preneurs obsessing over finding the perfect niche. Even if niche-finding isn’t high on your priorities list, you’ll soon be invited to dozens of classes, workshops and webinars, all encouraging you to ponder this topic.

To understand your niche, imagine your client’s best backstory. For instance, one niche for a career coach might have this backstory:

“I’ve been really frustrated with my job. I think I’m going to have to move to a new company or even a new career. Every day I dread coming to work, because I feel like I’m stifled. I’ve gone as far as I can and there’s no room for growth here.”

Learn more <http://cathygoodwin.com/storyniche>

### **(7) Write your headline for a blog post or sales letter.**

Your client's backstory will often be the best resource for your headline — even when you don't share the story anywhere in your copy. For instance, Connie Ragen Green recently shared a headline she wrote for a multi-million dollar home in California: "The paparazzi will never find you here!"

Now there's a back story. Connie would have identified her prospective buyers - people who were famous (or wanted to be famous) for the right or the wrong reasons. They probably wouldn't have told their agents up front, "Find me a place to hide!" But most likely they've had experience with TV trucks parked in front of their homes.

True, the word "paparazzi" captures the essence of "unwanted media attention." But that's not what makes the headline successful. It's the way the headline responds to the audience's backstory. See <http://cathygoodwin.com/storyhead/>

#### **(8) Replace your elevator speech with your elevator story.**

A prosperity coach introduced herself at a networking meeting: "I help clients manage their finances. For example, one client was a recently divorced woman who just suffered a devastating financial loss. She was afraid she'd have to declare bankruptcy. Two years later, she's living in her own home and buying investment property."

Everyone in hearing distance leaned over to ask her, "Can I have your card?"

#### **(9) Introduce your new-to-the-world idea to an unfamiliar audience**

A company finds space for people and groups who want need a place to hold events.

I had trouble with the concept myself, till he shared his story.

"We were searching for a place to hold a birthday party for my teenage daughter. We wanted a place big enough for 30 people, where we could bring our own music and fix our own food. And we didn't want to pay hotel prices.

"Then a friend of a friend told us about a church that rented out its reception hall during the week. It was a great facility, conveniently located, with a really nice kitchen.

"So we wondered: how many halls like this go unused because nobody knows about them? "Since we're well-connected in the tech world, we built an app. When you become a member, you get access to hundreds of great places. Let the parties begin!"

#### **(10) Become a sought-after panelist or podcast guest.**

When a host asks if you'd like to be a guest, she'll often ask what you can contribute to the panel or podcast -- something different from the other guests. That means, "Share a story. Don't just show up and start sharing your wisdom."



You might be expected to share your own story. For instance, on my Pivot Your Business summit, I interviewed 12 people about pivot they'd made in their own businesses as well as from corporate life to self-employment. The expertise they shared grew from their own experience. You can learn more here: <http://mycopy.info/pivotcalls>

If a panelist hadn't personally experienced a business pivot, he could have told a story about a client, showcasing his unique way of helping others deal with pivoting. Or he could have shared a story that illustrated an element of business pivots that most people ignore.

### **(11) Transform ordinary things into valuable objects.**

Some years ago an anthropologist and a writer teamed up on the Significant Objects project. They visited local thrift stores, buying 129 objects, each valued no more than \$2. They invited professional fiction writers to create short fictional stories about each object. Armed with stories, the experimenters sold \$128.74 worth of thrift-store junk for \$3,612.51. A mug, bought for thirty-nine cents, went for \$31.00.

Of course the stories were revealed as fictional. Buyers received the object they purchased, along with a copy of the story.

Unlike these writers, business owners and marketers can't invent histories and stories about what they sell. But you can let your imagination roam freely as you focus on how objects might be used.

"This coffee was made for meeting your friends for intimate conversations. The hearty flavor encourages you to linger over a second cup as you bond even more deeply..."

### **(12) Plan your business pivot.**

Borrow from sci-fi and tell a story of "Forward To The Future."

Imagine that it's 3 or 5 years from now. Tell the story of how your new pivoted company went from here to there. Is your company still around? How big is it now?

You're not fortune telling or planning, just exercising some imagination. It's a good way to see whether your brand will grow with you. Of course you may get derailed or you may realize along the way that (a) you're not interested in growing this way or (b) the world has changed so much it doesn't make sense anymore.

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### **(13) Promote your expertise without sounding pushy or boasting..**

Even established, high-profile business people often are reluctant to claim their bragging rights. They've been brought up with sayings like:

"The nail that stands out gets hammered down."

"If you're really good at what you do, the world will find you."

"Humility is a virtue."

These ideas make sense in a purely social or personal setting, such as a family reunion. Most families doesn't want you to show up at the reunion and announce, "I just made a ton of money, my kids got into Harvard on full scholarships and our rescue mutt aced his obedience class the first time around."

In a professional setting, when you don't share your success, your audience will feel awkward and even alienated. You're suggesting that, by hiring you, your clients are exercising very poor judgment.

The truth is, when you're selling yourself, your marketing success depends on your ability to brag - without sounding like a used car salesman. The best way to do this is to find your unique success stories and share them in all the right places.

If you're a productivity pro, you probably have a story about helping a client find an extra five hours a week without sacrificing her goals.

If you're a dog trainer, you'll have people on the edge of their seats when you share how you replaced your chewed-up couch with a beautiful new one -- and it's still looking good five years later.

A life coach? Share how you helped a client conquer fear of heights and go on to climb Mount Rainier. You could even share how you climbed a small hill, if you can make that story fit your purpose.

#### **(14) Attract your ideal clients with your About Page.**

We've all heard many versions of the dead-broke entrepreneur who slept on a bare mattress in a church basement... followed by photos of the same entrepreneur's current mansion, boat, and private plane.

Who cares? Your About Page answers the question, "How will you be able to help me?"

If you tell your own story, focus on how you became qualified to do what you do. For instance, a massage therapist might say, "I became aware of massage when I injured my shoulder. I was surprised how helpful it could be. Since I couldn't go back to my previous career, I investigated massage. My background has helped me do research on the

different types of massage, so I can tailor the techniques to each client. My experience as a corporate employee helps me interpret a client's problem with sitting at a desk all day."

What if your own story will be irrelevant your clients? Suppose you're a fitness trainer who's won body building contests. Most of your clients will be more interested in how you can transform their couch potato body into a high-energy person who looks great in their jeans.

### **(15) Strengthen your message.**

Your message gets stronger when you can present it in the context of a story, preferably a story growing out of your own experience.

A job interviewer asked an executive this question: "What's your approach to change management?"

The executive being interviewed was stumped. Finally she drew on a story:

Like many dog owners, she became frustrated with dog owners who wouldn't pick up after their dogs in the neighborhood dog park. She tried cajoling, threatening and negotiating. Nothing worked. So she began handing out small bags in a friendly, non-threatening way. More people, she reports, began doing the right thing and following the park's rules.

"So, this experience helped me understand that you can't force people to change, you need to involve them in the process and give them choice," she concluded.

Telling this kind of story represents a risk. Yet edgy stories are most likely to strengthen your message.

### **(16) Create your own course.**

Both storytelling and course modules take their audiences through a transformation. If you think of the student as hero of the course story, both story and course culminate in a change to the hero's life. She may be in a different place, geographically or psychologically. He may have changed from a frog to a prince via your personal branding course.

Conceptualizing your course as a hero's journey story framework helps you figure out how to structure your course and keep your students committed. When you write up your student's experience as a transformation, you get a sense of what the course needs to deliver.



Get your free 7 Step Cheat Sheet To Developing and Profiting From Your Online Course:  
[Click here for immediate access!](#)

### **(17) Get clear on your own beliefs and motivations**

You're working on a big project for your business. You're making good progress. You've got lots of evidence that prospects love your product and are eager to buy. Then things start going wrong. One of your home appliances goes on the fritz and urgently needs attention. You planned to record in your peaceful home office and the city brings a crew with jackhammers to dig into the nearby street. Your tooth starts hurting and you need an emergency appointment with your dentist.

How do you tell yourself this story?

Version 1: Things like this happen. They're blips in the radar. Nothing to stress about – I've got more than adequate resources and I'll have a happy ending.

Version 2: I'm being tested. If I can get through this, I can do anything.

Version 3: The universe has just handed me a warning to stop what I'm doing. I must be on the wrong path. If I'm on the right path, doors open and things come easily.

The story you tell yourself will grow out of your experience and prior beliefs.

You can make a choice to tell yourself a particular story. Some business owners find an inspirational story they read to remind themselves of their "why." When they need a boost, they review testimonials from clients, letters and reminders of why they're working.

# What next?

Now that you've seen the opportunities for growing your business with storytelling, I'd encourage you to identify your own stories and begin using them.

Often it's hard to take a step back and assess your own business, so I offer some ways to work with me. My Power Hour Consultation can address your challenges immediately, or can be the first step toward a longer copywriting or coaching program.

The Power Hour Consultation

<http://mycopy.info/cc>

If that link doesn't work, copy and paste it into your browser.

If you'd like to learn more about storytelling, check out my home study course – Build Your Brand One Story At A Time.

<http://mycopy.info/storybrand>

## About Me



You've probably heard that storytelling can grow your business. But how do you know what kinds of stories to tell? How can you choose which stories to share for maximum impact? And how do you build your brand ... one story at a time?

I help entrepreneurs and owners of small businesses...

- Use storytelling to create compelling, high-converting materials to support their marketing
- Develop and implement promotional message strategies through copywriting, as Done For You and Done With You
- Use storytelling purposefully to build a memorable, client-attracting brand

I've been on the Internet for over a decade. With that experience comes a passion for helping business owners gain maximum rewards from their marketing. My superpower is helping clients differentiate themselves in a meaningful way, so their marketing becomes more productive and more enjoyable.

You can reach me here: <http://CathyGoodwin.com/contact/>