

# Story Marketing for Small Businesses

## What Exactly is a Story?

Stories wrap data and details in a sensory package that provides energy and meaning. A well-told story delivers both information and sensation that moves the recipient to action. They may cry at the movie or at the end of the book. They may pick up the phone and call their city councillor. Or they may buy your product.

That is what story marketing does: it harnesses the power of storytelling, blending it with the expert messaging of your company and intent of your marketing plan, and delivering to the customer an experience that will attract their attention and encourage them to follow your call to action. It is the documentary that educates while entertaining, the song that lifts our mood while lyrics rewritten to match its tune help us memorize facts for a biology test. It is the story that speaks to your customer and encourages them to support your brand, campaign, or cause.

## Story for Your Brand

The story you will create for your story marketing campaign needs to attract the attention of your audience, while engaging them in your message and call to action.

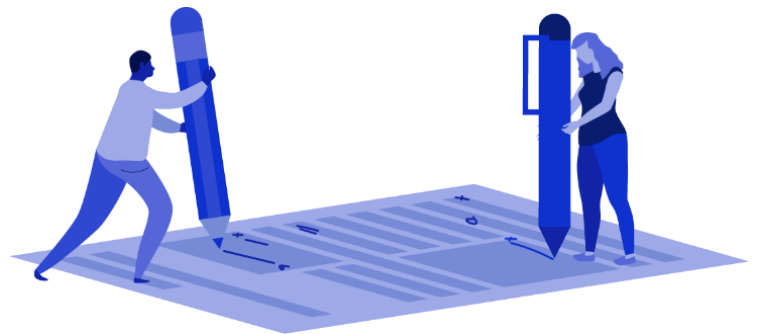
The most successful story marketing campaigns are based upon stories that turn the complex into simple concepts and make clear the connections between a purchase and the good life.

## Ingredients of a Good Story?

Whether the story is fact or fiction, novel or movie script, entertainment feature or corporate marketing tool, the same key ingredient groups remain the same. They are:

1. **A hero** - the main character who drives the storyline and the audience response.
2. **A challenge**– something or someone the hero must defeat, defy or overcome.
3. **A satisfying resolution**

Stories can be as simple as words and pictures for beginning readers, or highly complex with multiple supporting characters and storylines, epic adventures and intricate detail.



As marketers, and as company stakeholders, you are always seeking to bridge the gap with clients and win their support. As story marketers, you will be crafting your company story in a way to bridge that gap to a specific destination. Brand awareness, sales, product download, charitable support – you choose the result, and craft a story to match.

## Understanding Your Customers

Most companies do not have the option of meeting each individual customer personally. There are a number of ways, however, your company can get acquainted with your ideal customer, such as through engagement of customers with your company, customer support calls, web visits and social media. What are they sharing and liking, and who are they friending and following? Metrics from your own social media platforms can yield this data. Also, surfing through the abundance of public information can yield some clues. Consider these specifics:

- What information sources are they surfing or connecting with?
- What questions are they asking?
- What captures their attention: news clips, contests, random draws, or gifts?
- Then seek to answer:
  - What makes them happy
  - What they fear
  - What solutions they need
  - What could attract them to your product or service

## Resources for Editing

- [Oxforddictionaries.com](http://Oxforddictionaries.com)
- [Grammarly.com](http://Grammarly.com)
- [chicagomanualofstyle.org](http://chicagomanualofstyle.org)
- [editorsforum.org](http://editorsforum.org)



## Polishing a Rough Draft

Some general rules:

- All drafts benefit from polishing
- All drafts need editing
- The process is never-ending; the finish line is set by deadline, desire, and purpose of the story

If the goal was indeed to win the Pulitzer Prize, one of the most prestigious prizes in American Literature, the editing process would be different and more extensive than the process applied to a draft being used in your story marketing campaign.

That said, giving time and energy to the polishing process will increase your return on investment and your chances of success with the harshest critic of all: your audience.

## The Editing Process

- Check spelling
- Check punctuation
- Check word usage: remove repeats, include strong verbs, add more color
- Check accuracy of any quotes or statistics
- Strong introduction to engage your audience immediately in your scene, characters, and what will happen next
- Flow of your story: does it connect from one idea to the next, along the path from challenge to resolution
- Clear call to action at the end
- ‘Tighten’ sentences to read more clearly: remove unnecessary or weak words
- Reflow larger paragraphs into smaller paragraphs
- Consider if a series of single sentences should be grouped into a paragraph
- Ensure a ‘rhythm’ to your story with sentences of varying length