

BLOG

Brand Storytelling Drives Engagement Through the Roof



By [Stephanie Van Ness](#)
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Some of my fondest childhood memories involve bargaining with my dad to let me stay up just a few more minutes, *pretty pleaseeeeee*, so he could read me one more bedtime story. I couldn't get enough of once-upon-a-times. I'd listen with rapt attention as he read aloud, his fingers playing with the dog-eared pages of my favorite books — classics from Maurice Sendak, A.A. Milne and E. B. White.

I'd imagine myself in the fantastical worlds he was describing, where beasts roamed and animals talked. If it was a story I'd already heard, I'd make him read my favorite parts again and again. Even now, decades later, I still remember not only the stories *but the feelings they evoked*.

My point is, stories are powerful. They teach us. Entertain us. Inspire us. That's why marketers have seized upon them as a way to build customer engagement and engender brand loyalty.

Storytelling Cuts Through the Noise

Storytelling as a marketing tactic is hardly new. But it's only relatively recently that the technique has moved from trendy to essential. That's because marketers have finally realized that old-school advertising tactics like bragging ("we're the best in the business") and promising ("we deliver exactly what you need") don't work as well on modern audiences.

Millennials and Generation Z, in particular, simply tune out these types of messages. Or worse, take to social media to express displeasure with a brand.

But, stories speak to them.

That makes sense since **humans are wired to absorb information most effectively when presented in story format**. It was a dark and stormy night activates not only the language-processing parts of our brain — the logic center that responds to facts and figures — but also the areas that light up when we actually *experience* an event. Areas related to emotion.

It's the reason you can recall song lyrics but not a PowerPoint. It's the reason movies like *Manchester By The Sea* or any Disney or Pixar flick with an anthropomorphized monster, dog or robot as protagonist can make you cry. Country music siren Carrie Underwood has built an entire career on he-done-her-wrong songs because the stories she weaves ("carved my name into his leather seats; took a Louisville slugger to both headlights...") speak to her listeners on a visceral, not intellectual, level.

In other words, stories make a beeline for our emotions.

Stories Drive Emotion

For today's brands, building an emotional connection with customers is pivotal to a powerful sell. Storytelling helps shape how people view a company, elevating it in consumers' minds from simply a purveyor of comfortable t-shirts with cute slogans, for instance, to a \$100 million brand — Life is Good — that *stands for something*.

Sure, people buy from Life is Good because their shirts, hats and accessories are cute and whimsical. But consumers *also* buy because they feel good about supporting a business that has clearly defined its core values, which are shared by the company's customers.

How does Life is Good communicate these values? You already know the answer. Company founders, the Jacobs brothers, have even written a [book](#) about these core values. The book chronicles their entrepreneurial journey from selling t-shirts out of the trunk of their car to make a few bucks to building a thriving national brand based on a philosophy of optimism. It's this philosophy, told via clever storytelling, that truly draws consumers. Buying Life is Good merchandise makes people *feel good*.

The lesson? A potent marketing story, one that is authentic and genuine and demonstrates what a brand stands for, elicits an emotional response that *triggers action* on the part of consumers, as well as builds loyalty.

Stories Help Us Understand

According to storytelling guru [Robert McKee](#), to be effective marketers must create a narrative that causes the consumer "to think, 'Well, I've got to look into this. This could be the answer to my problem. This could improve my life.' And so they take a step then to buy that product or hire that service."

In a Skyword [interview](#) he said, "The natural way in which people think is to storify their experiences. This is how you remember, this is how you try to anticipate the future. You put the past or future into story form in order to make sense out of life and try to understand what your life has been like, to try to prepare for the future."

For marketers, that's great news because it means their customers and prospects are primed to absorb brand messaging through story. Just ask Life is Good.

With a captivating story, effectively told, marketers have the luxury of addressing a receptive audience, one they can compel to take action. And that's what marketing is all about. In an upcoming blog I'll offer some tips for amping up your own storytelling efforts and share examples of other brands doing it well.

ViewPoint knows a thing or two about telling a compelling story. If you want to explore how we help businesses connect with their audiences drop us a note at info@viewpointtouch.com.

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An experienced copywriter with J-school training and a marketing bent, Stephanie has spent her career helping businesses shape their messages. When not at her keyboard, she's off honing her slapshot, wrangling two excitable golden retrievers or looking for another compelling story to tell.