

Four keys to telling your brand story

Stories are like bellybuttons. Everybody has one.

In the business world, if you don't know your story, you are just another commodity. You're replaceable.

Your brand story is how you differentiate yourself from the rest of your competitors, especially when they are offering the same or similar products and services. It is the reason you do what you do. It's where you come from and where you're going. It's what inspires you as a company and as an individual.

It also fuels what you do with that inspiration, influencing everything from the way you approach customer experiences to the way you market your brand or products. It provides an emotional component that makes your company stand out from the rest.

Your brand story is an opportunity to connect with consumers. If your story is well told, it invites them to interact with your brand, rather than only having exposure to it.

So, how do you tell your story in a way that sets you apart?

1. Know who you are. Take a second and think about what makes your company stand out. Is it the way your business started? The unique customer experience you provide? Or maybe you have a passion for supporting the local community?

Every company has a story to tell. A company may sell athletic shoes. This is a part of the story, but the story goes beyond what they sell.

Maybe this company donates a pair of shoes to non-profit organizations for children. Maybe they are connected to these specific organizations because the company founder has a passion for child welfare.

Your customers want to know your whole story. They want to be able to connect with your brand on an emotional level, which creates that long-lasting brand loyalty and relationship.

2. Don't be afraid. Never hesitate to bring your story into your market-



ing strategies and tactics — it's a great opportunity to set your brand apart from your competitors!

If you are straightforward about your brand story, communicating exactly what your brand is all about, it will become easier for you to let that story flow into all of your marketing efforts, from how you express your brand visually to how you communicate through written and digital content.

Don't be intimidated by brands or competitors that seem to have their story dialed in. Your story is unique. It's compelling in its own way. It just needs to be told.

3. Be consistent. Your brand story is much more than a catchy tagline you use to attract attention. Your brand story is the backbone of your brand and is used as a driving strategy for the present and for the future. In other words, it's meant to live!

When you know who you are as an entity and you understand your story, you can support it with consistency in voice, imagery, tactics and other marketing initiatives.

It's important that your story remains consistent across the board. Is that Facebook post consistent with your brand? Would someone familiar with your story read that communication and recognize your voice? Each touchpoint is an opportunity for you to tell or support your brand story.

One idea that can help you with this consistency is to write down a list of key brand attributes. This list would include terms such as "genuine," "honest,"

"service-oriented" and "loyal." Physically creating a list will give you something to refer back to when you're approaching opportunities to tell your story through different marketing efforts.

4. Be yourself. Don't get stuck trying to be everything to everyone — it's impossible! Once you know who you are, be yourself! Embrace your story and the pieces that make it special.

Be genuine and let your brand story show your customers, rather than tell them, why they should care about you. Once you're clear in your own identity, the way you communicate your unique brand story will attract customers who appreciate your values and consistency.

These four keys to telling your brand story serve as a helpful reminder for you as you develop and communicate your brand story.

If you have difficulty coming up with your brand story, keep at it! If you don't feel like you have a strong brand story, use this as an opportunity to explore who you are and how you want to communicate your brand and company.

If you are confident in your brand story, use this as a chance to take a closer look at all of the different touchpoints where you are communicating that story to your customers. Is it being communicated correctly? Is it consistent?

Telling your brand story goes beyond what is written or communicated through your marketing. It also influences what your customers believe about you.

In telling your brand story well, and establishing that connection with your customers, you are also giving your customers a story to tell others about your brand. Make sure it's a good one! ☺

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