

STORYTELLING

In Business



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Introduction

Storytelling isn't just for preschool. It is a big part of our culture and what makes us human. We grew up with stories and they are the ideal medium to help us remember important pieces of information. We've been telling stories since the days we sat around a fire in caves.

This ancient form of communication and information sharing may seem pretty outdated in a day and age where we walk around with laptops and smartphones. Yet, there is still a place for storytelling in our lives and in business. Stories help us make connections and remember important events and that's exactly what makes storytelling the perfect tool in business.

In this short report we will go over the role storytelling can play in your business, what its strengths are and how you can start to incorporate it into what you're already doing. Telling stories is a great way to have your content make more impact, create a deeper connection with your audience and increase the conversions of your sales material. It's a powerful tool that you should have in your marketing tool belt.

And the best part? Storytelling is such a big part of our history and who we are, it comes natural to most of us. All it takes is a little practice and a few ideas to get you started and you'll be ready to tell stories that improve your bottom line.

What is Storytelling in Business?

Storytelling is about so much more than sharing your favorite fairy tale stories with your children at bedtime. It is a way we capture and remember human experiences and how we have retold them for centuries. There's a reason why each culture had their bards and that Shakespeare is well remembered to this day. We value stories and the people who make it their profession to tell them. And since the dawn of time, stories have been used in business as well.

We use them to connect our products to our audience. Stories help us see how a product or service can fit into our life. Stories are way to get past the pure facts and figures and show how a product can benefit us, how it can solve our problems and how it can make a difference. Stories can motivate us and inspire us in a way facts and figures can't. Weight loss stories are the perfect example.

Let's say you come out with the hot new diet and your research shows that participants lose an average of 20 pounds in 6 months. Sure, you'll get some interest, but what if instead you share the story of a young, overweight mom of two toddlers who loses 35 pounds and is finally able to play with them at the park. She's sticking to the diet, feeling and looking better and she happily shares how she's setting a good example for her kids and plans to be around and active for them for a long time. Isn't that a lot more powerful and motivating than the facts and figures? And if you can add some pictures to tell that story, all the better.

That's what storytelling in business is all about. It's about sharing information in a way that's relatable and memorable. It's about creating emotion and motivating your audience. It's a powerful tool that's helpful in any aspect of your business, be it reaching a larger or different target audience, getting them on your list, or closing the sale.

We'll talk more about the power and place of storytelling in the following two chapters, but for now realize that it is about more than spinning a pretty tale for your customers to get them to buy your product.

It's about creating an experience for your customers and helping them improve their lives. It's about creating loyal customers and loyal employees. It's about building a lasting business.

What Makes A Good Story?

A story is a particular way of compiling information in a way that makes it relatable and memorable. A good story will sweep you up and move you right along. It will make you empathize right along with the main characters. A truly great story will transform you. It will help change your perspective and learn something.

A story can make you think, help you make a decision or illustrate a point in a way that's not only easier to understand but also easy to remember. Storytelling is a craft and a powerful strategy that you can use to entertain, capture and influence your audience.

Why Is This Important In Business?

That's all fine and good, but what does it have to do with your online business, you ask? When you have the power to grab your reader's attention and take them on a journey, you can use storytelling to help grow your online business.

Your prospects have to know, like and trust you before they are ready to make a purchase. And the easiest way to do that is to share something about yourself, your life and what has gotten you into this business. You can use storytelling to show your passion for your market and illustrate how you can help them.

But it doesn't stop there. Storytelling is a great way to build a memorable brand. And with a strong brand comes ever-growing reach and a loyal customer base that's ready to buy from you again and again. Think about some of your favorite household brands. There are many different carmakers out there, different companies that build washing machines or make skin care products. Yet, somehow you're attracted to a particular brands.

Maybe you keep going back to Volvos because they are reliable family cars. You buy Maytag washing machines because of there is no doubt in your mind that they offer the highest quality product and best customer service. And you keep going back to Aveeno Skincare Products because they are all-natural and gentle on your skin. These brands have worked long and hard to share their core stories, what makes their brand, and we automatically associate those traits with those companies. And they've done it mainly with storytelling.

If big brands use this strategy on a regular basis, shouldn't you be able to make it work for you and your online business as well? Storytelling is an important part of marketing your business because it works. It's worked for a long time and it will continue to work, because we have such a long history with stories.

Telling Stories With A Purpose

It isn't just about spinning a good yarn though. Yes, you can grab your audience's attention with any good story, but in order to make a profit, you have to tell stories with a purpose.

Before you start to tell a story (and we'll go into a lot more detail on the different ways you can incorporate stories into your online business in chapter 3), you need to figure out what you want to accomplish what with that story. What's your end goal? What do you want your audience to do at the end of the story?

- Is it to give your readers a chance to get to know you better?
- Is it to entice your website visitors to sign up for your weekly newsletter?
- Is it to convince your readers that they need your latest product?
- Is it to show how your coaching program can help them reach a goal?
- Is it to showcase your expertise in a particular area?
- Is it to build your brand?
- Is it to grow your reach via social media shares or a guest blog post?
- Is it to get the attention of media outlets to help grow your reach?

Once you know what your end goal or your purpose is, you can craft a compelling story that helps you reach that goal. Along the way, you'll be entertaining your readers or listeners, leading them along on a path that will help you fulfill your purpose.

Storytelling in business only becomes powerful when you do it with a purpose, with an end goal in mind that helps you grow your reach, your customer base, and your bottom line.

The Power of Storytelling

So far we've been focusing on what storytelling is and the history behind it. We've also established in the last chapter that this is something we can use to grow our online business. Now let's go a little deeper into the power of storytelling and how it can help with business. In particular we're going to look at how storytelling can help us establish and strengthen a brand, how it can help us sell and how it can help us keep the people around us motivated.

How Storytelling Can Help With Branding

Let's start with branding and more particularly how storytelling can help you with your brand. Before you can make a sale, before you can grow your mailing list, before you can get more people to read your blog, people have to be aware of you. That's where branding comes in. It doesn't matter if you have a website or business name you want people to remember or if you and your name are the brand. The basic idea is the same. You grow your brand and your reach by telling your story.

Think about why you got into this business and what your goal is aside from making a decent income. What can you offer your audience? How are you helping them and why did you chose this particular niche. Who do you want to help, who are the people that you are providing solutions for and what's driving your passion for the business?

Let's look at an example. Joe has a website that helps people figure out what types of financial aid, grants and student loans are available for college students. His site has lots of free information, as well as a paid member's area where he offers more personalized help. He also sells a course that walks customers through the process of applying for financial aid and grants. His brand is "The Shoestring College Student" and his

brand story is about his own journey as a college student who had to pay his own way with the help of financial aid, grants, scholarships and part time jobs. His passion is to make it possible for anyone to go to college. His mission is to help his audience navigate the complicated world of financial help for college students. His goal is to save them time and effort so they can get to college sooner and focus on school work instead of wading through form after form.

What's your back story? Why did you pick a particular niche and what is your personal connection to it? In other words, why did you get into the business you're in? Once you answer those questions, you have plenty of material to share on your website, in your emails and in your sales materials that will build your brand. These personal bits of information also allow your readers to get a glimpse of the person behind the website and the brand. It allows them to get to know you and that builds trust.

Telling your story strengthens your brand and it gives your audience something to share. They can retell the stories and since they have a good grasp of what you and your brand are about, it is easy for them to send more traffic your way. Let's say Grandma Marie comes across your website via a Facebook post. With your brand and your mission clearly established (let's use the college loan example again), it's easy for her to share the "Shoestring College Student" brand with her grandson who's a freshman in College.

Storytelling can also showcase your expertise and establish you as the expert in your field. Let's say you're blogging about personal finance. You share how you were able to pay off \$20,000 in credit card debt and student loans over the course of 2 years. Part of your story is also how you've helped hundreds of other people get out of debt over the past few years. Through these stories, you are establishing your expertise. You're showing your audience that you know what you are talking about and that they can trust your advice.

Which brings us to another important point. Storytelling is a great tool to help establish rapport and trust with your target audience. Stories give your readers a little glimpse into your life and who you (the person behind the brand) are.

And as you know, you need that trust if you're planning on making money with your website and your mailing list. Use those stories to give your audience a glimpse into your life and work on establishing that trust.

Last but not least, let's talk about how we can use storytelling to grow brand loyalty. Sticking to the same basic story, along with a quality product can help you build a brand with a large loyal following. Think about Tide Laundry Detergent. Their brand strategy is that they are the best at getting out stains and cleaning your clothes really well. When you think back on the commercials over the years, that's the story they've been telling over and over. Now go to the store and look at the laundry detergent section. If yours looks anything like mine, half that aisle is filled with Tide products. They have a huge share of the market and loyal customers like my mother-in-law who would never even consider buying a different brand.

How Storytelling Can Help You Sell

We've touched a little bit on how storytelling can help you sell your products as a result of growing a loyal and trusting audience. Now let's go into a little more detail on how storytelling itself can help you close those sales.

First and foremost storytelling will help you grab and keep your readers attention. A good story will hook them in with the headline or the first couple of sentences. As long as you keep your story interesting, valuable, and to the point, you will keep their interest until you've had plenty of time to work in the benefits of buying and are ready to ask for the sale.

Think about it. If you're looking at just the facts or even a list of benefits, it's fairly easy to quit and move on as you start to lose interest. With a story on the other hand, we're a lot more likely to make it to the end. We've been conditioned from childhood to wait for the end of the story. It's hard to give up on a book, a movie or a TV show episode halfway through once we've gotten hooked. That's exactly why stories work to our advantage when it comes to closing the sale. They help us keep the reader engaged, allow us a chance to make some valuable points, and show what our product can do for him or her.

Stories can also evoke strong emotions and we can use those to our advantage when it comes to closing the sale. Let's go back to the "getting out of debt" example. As you tell the story, share how often you were lying in bed at night worrying about how you would pay the power bill or make sure there was enough money for groceries for the week. Explain how desperate things got when you were living paycheck to paycheck and suddenly your car stopped working and the washing machine gave out a week later. Play on those emotions and use them to connect with your readers who are in similar situations now. Show them that there's a way out of this desperate financial situation, that there's light at the end of the tunnel. And then close the sale.

Another strong way to use storytelling when you're trying to make a sale is "before and after" stories and strong testimonials from your customers. Share their stories and give your readers a chance to identify with those customers. Show them that you can help them as well. There's a reason testimonials and case studies work so well ... and it goes beyond the simple facts that are shared. It's the story behind it that speaks to us.

How Storytelling Can Help You Train And Motivate Your Employees and Independent Contractors

Let's wrap this chapter up by looking at how storytelling can help motivate employees and independent contractors. While we've focused on our customers and target audience so far in this report, it's also a great internal management tool.

As with your customers, you can build a lot of trust and loyalty with storytelling. Share a little about yourself, what this business means to you and how it will affect your loved ones.

Storytelling is also one of the best management techniques when it comes to relaying information. Stories will stick. More than a handout, a list of facts or a PowerPoint presentation, they will help your employees and independent contractors remember core facts and information about your business.

Think about core values that you want to impart on your co-workers. What do you want to make sure stays on their mind as they work through their assignments or take care of your customer support? Those are the things you want to share via stories to make sure they are remembered and implemented day in and day out.

To recap, the power in storytelling lies in the fact that they are entertaining, inspiring and most importantly memorable. It's a great tool to have in your content creation and copywriting tool box.

In the next chapter, we'll look at a variety of examples to help you figure out how you can start incorporating storytelling into what you're already doing in your online business.

Storytelling Examples

This chapter is not full of stories, but rather a collection of times when you could use a story and a general idea of what kind of story could be used in that scenario. The idea is to give you plenty of examples and ... well, ideas on how you can start to incorporate storytelling into what you're already doing with your business.

To make it as easy as possible, the examples are broken down into different areas of your business. You'll find examples for your website and blog, for your optin pages, your emails, short reports, sales pages, info products, and finally podcasts, webinars and seminars. While this is by no means an extensive list, there should be plenty of ideas and suggestions here for you to give storytelling a try. And who knows, this list might just spark some ideas for other areas and situations where you can put storytelling to good use.

Your Website and Your Blog

There are various places and pages on your website and blog that lend themselves to storytelling. The one that will benefit from a good story more than any other is your about page.

Your about page is one of the most visited pages on your site. Check your stats if you don't believe me. It's also often the most neglected page and one that can really benefit from some good storytelling. Take a look at what you have right now. Does the page represent what you and your online business stand for? Are you sharing why you are passionate about this topic and what makes you an expert in your field? Tell the story of how you got started with this, how you've learned about the topic and what you are doing to help out others "just like you". In other words, tell

your story and give your readers a glimpse into who you are and what you are doing with the site.

Your blog is another great place to get personal and share some stories. For example, share what you are doing as you are creating a new product. Share your inspiration for it or why you think there is a need for it. Maybe it all started with an email conversation you had with a fellow reader. Share those stories along with the progress you're making to build anticipation and interest for the product your creating.

Your blog is also a great place to share what's going on in your personal life. Your readers love getting to know you a little better. And if you can, turn the stories you share into lessons for them or even better bring it back to a product or some other content on your site. For example, you could share the story of how you made a deal with your son that you would match any funds he makes and saves with his part-time job so he can buy a car. Transition that into how important it is to max out on employer matching 401K funds.

Case studies are another great way to use storytelling on your site as a marketing technique. Find your most successful customers and ask them if you can share their story on your website or blog. You don't have to use their full names if they have privacy concerns but if you can, get their picture. Share a little background and then go into the story of how they took what you are teaching and applied it. Share their results and the impact it has made on their life.

Those are powerful stories that will help the rest of your audience decide if what you have to offer is for them. It proves that your teachings or products and services are working. That builds a lot of trust and makes it easier for your prospects to become paying clients and customers.

Testimonials are another great way to include stories into your site. Here the story is told by the customers themselves, whereas the case studies

are stories you are sharing. As before it help to build credibility if you can get the picture of the person writing the testimonial.

But how do you get those testimonials in the first place? Sometimes you're lucky enough to have a customer approach you about writing one, or they'll just go ahead and send it in. That only happens rarely. Usually you have to be a little more proactive about it. There are two different ways to do this:

- 1) As you receive emails, comments and social media posts where customers are raving about your product or service, ask if you can use it as a testimonial on your site.
- 2) Ask your current customers for testimonials. If you already have a good relationship with a few of them, approach them individually and ask them for one. Or send out an email on occasion to your entire customer list asking them about testimonials. It can be helpful to share examples of other testimonials so they get an idea of what writing one of their own would involve.

Last but not least, think about the regular content you write for your site. These could be articles or more traditional blog posts. Instead of sharing bullet point after bullet point or dry examples, rework your content into the form of a story and see what kind of reaction you get from your readers. Chances are you'll see more engagement and more sharing across the board whenever you deploy your storytelling techniques.

Optin Pages To Grow Your List

Optin Pages are another great place where storytelling can help you. The main goal of these pages is to convince a visitor to hand over his or her email address and sign up for your newsletter, e-course or random update.

10-15 years ago it was pretty easy to grow a list. Today, not so much. People have gotten a lot more careful about entering their email anywhere online. It takes a little more convincing these days to get the optin and that's where storytelling can help. If you don't already have dedicated optin pages set up, take the time to do so now. Think of them as little sales pages where you tell a little story that ties into the option offer and what they can expect once they sign up. Wrap it up with a call to action asking them to sign up below.

As with the about page, it can be helpful to get a little personal. Share what's gotten you into this niche, or what caused you to create this particular optin or list. Let's go back to the personal finance example. Maybe your optin focuses on 10 simple ways to save at the grocery store. Your story could be about how you started tracking where your money went and that the biggest place for quick and easy savings was groceries. Share how tracking what you were spending on food and tweaking it to take advantage of coupons, saving on buying in season etc. made it possible to go from going further into debt each month to slowly but surely paying off those credit cards. Wrap it up by letting them know you've compiled what you've learned into a short report and it's theirs when they sign up below.

How can you take your story and what you're offering in your optin and craft a story around it?

Email Marketing

Since we're on the topic of emails, let's move right into how we can use storytelling in email marketing. If I had to pick one place where telling stories would be most effective, it would be in the emails I send to my lists each week.

The main reason to use stories in your email marketing is to keep it interesting and entertaining. If you've been noticing that your open rates

are starting to drop, give storytelling a try and see if you can't improve them. Why is this important? Because getting your subscribers to open their emails is the single most important thing. If you can't get them to open and read your messages, it doesn't really matter what else you do (and how well you do it).

Yes, part of the open rate will be influenced by your subject line, but the overall tone, interest and value of your email messages is just as, if not even more important. You want to entertain your readers as well as informing them. You want them to look forward to your next email. And the best way to do that is to start incorporating stories in your emails.

There are a few different ways you can do this effectively. The first and simplest way is to open your email with a little info on what's going on in your life. Share what you did over the weekend, that your daughter turned seven yesterday, or that you went out and watched the latest Marvel movie last night. Then move into whatever your message is about.

Your readers will open your emails partly from curiosity about what's going on in your life. Your mission then is to grab their attention and keep it long enough to get them to click on the link in your email, presell them to your latest affiliate offer, or get them interested in your upcoming product launch.

The second way to do this is to come up with stories that are related to whatever it is you are talking about. If you're getting ready to promote an affiliate offer for a product that makes something quicker and easier, you could share a story of how you used to do things before you found this great tool and then share how it has improved your life. While this is a great strategy, it can be hard to always come up with stories that closely tie into and enhance whatever the purpose of your emails is. Do it when you can, but don't be afraid to share something unrelated but personal when you can't.

Storytelling in email will work best when you do it consistently. Commit to giving it a try for at least a month or two and see how your readers respond to this new, more conversational and personal style.

Short Reports and Info Products

Storytelling is also a great technique to use as you're writing short reports or creating info products. Let's go over a few different places where stories would make sense.

The first place you want to tell a story is right at the beginning. The introduction is the perfect place not only to share what the report, eBook, course or whatever your info product may be is about, but also what prompted you to create it in the first place. Give a little back story and grab their attention from page one.

Throughout your product, use stories to illustrate points and make sure your customers and students remember the most important points you want to get across. We discussed in an earlier chapter that one of the big benefits of storytelling is that it makes things easier to remember. Use that to your advantage in your info products and courses.

Another great place to put your storytelling skills to good use is in the "About the Author" section. Think of it as the info product version of the about page of your website. It's a small section that tells the reader a little more about who you are and why they should listen to you.

Sales Pages

The sales pages for your products are another great place to use storytelling. Since stories grab our attention and make us read more, they are perfect for the beginning of your sales pages.

While you can get away with stories that are only loosely related to what you're moving into next in blog posts and emails, for your sales pages, you want to pick something that is closely related to the product you're selling and fits well into the rest of your copywriting. Here you want to think of storytelling as a copywriting technique.

A good starting point may be to think about why you created the product you are selling. Was it something you needed yourself? What problem is the product solving and how did it affect you or your loved ones? Let's go back to our earlier example of the student loan and financial aid expert. The sales page for your info product on how to pay for college when you don't have a dime, could start with a story of how you were bound and determined to go to college even though your parents weren't able to help financially. Share how you made it work and then offer to help them do the same ... with your guide to College on A Shoestring Budget.

Another great way to use stories in your sales pages is to include case studies and testimonials. They are a good way to add credibility and social proof. A case study could be a great way to transition from your story to the actual offer. Start the sales page with a little story about how you faced this problem and the solution you came up with. Share a strong case study to show that this can work for others too, then move into the offer for your product.

Testimonials work well sprinkled throughout the sales page, but also toward the end, after you've made the offer. They are there to convince the prospects who are still on the fence about buying and need just a little more convincing to push that buy button.

Podcasts, Webinars and Seminars

So far most of our storytelling examples have focused on places where we use writing. While that makes the most sense for most parts of our online businesses, there are also cases where we talk ... and that's where storytelling gets to shine in its traditional form.

Storytelling is a great tool anytime you speak to promote your online business. Maybe you're invited as a guest on a podcast, or maybe you have one of your own. Then there are webinars and in-person seminars and workshops.

As we've established throughout this report, storytelling is a great tool to use when you want people to remember what you're talking about. This is where storytelling really shines when you're talking on a podcast, a webinar or teaching a class.

Make sure your stories are short, to the point, and serve a purpose. As with most other cases we talked about, it helps to start with the end in mind. What point do you want to make? Once you made that decision, work on the story around it.

The biggest difference in using storytelling in oral form vs. written form is that you can't edit and tweak as you go. Craft your story and then practice, practice, practice until you can deliver it in your sleep. The more you speak and use storytelling in your talks the easier this will get.

I hope you've found these storytelling examples helpful. Give a few of them a try and more importantly, use this list to inspire you to come up with your own twists and takes on incorporating storytelling in your online business.

Conclusion

I'm sure by now you are convinced that storytelling is a worthwhile technique to check out and I hope you will give it a try as you move forward with building and growing your online business.

We started out taking a look at what storytelling is and the long history of it. We spent chapter one learning more about what it means to use storytelling in business. We learned what makes a good story and how we can apply those lessons to our online business. Last but not least, we wrapped up chapter one with a section on telling stories with a purpose.

Chapter two was all about the power of storytelling. We went into detail on how to use storytelling to grow your brand. We went over using storytelling as a sales technique and how to include it in your copywriting. We also briefly discussed how we can use the art of storytelling to motivate our employees and independent contractors.

The biggest chapter of the eBook is chapter three where we looked at various different ways that we can incorporate storytelling in our business. The end result was a long list of examples broken down into the following categories:

- Your Website and Blog
- Optin Pages To Grow Your List
- Email Marketing
- Short Reports and Info Products
- Sales Pages
- Podcasts, Webinars and Seminars

Think of this list of examples as a starting point for your own journey of storytelling in business. Definitely give the different ideas we've

discussed a try, but don't feel that you're limited to just those areas. Use storytelling wherever it makes sense to you and what you do.

Storytelling is such a powerful way to connect with your audience, keep them engaged and share your content in a way that's easy to remember.

If you're lucky enough to have been brought up in a storytelling household, this technique will come easy to you. All it takes is a little thinking and focusing on what the purpose of your stories are. If you're not a natural born storyteller, don't worry. It is a skill that's easily learned and while it may feel awkward at first, with a little practice it will quickly become second nature.

It's an easy and fun way to share content, relay information, close the sale, and most importantly make a difference in the lives of your readers and customers.

Recapping Storytelling Benefits:

- We grew up with stories and they are the ideal medium to help us remember important pieces of information.
- We use stories to connect our products to our audience. Stories help us see how a product or service can fit into our life.
- Stories are way to get past the pure facts and figures and show how a product can benefit us, how it can solve our problems and how it can make a difference.
- Stories can motivate us and inspire us in a way facts and figures can't. Weight loss stories are the perfect example. Storytelling in business is all about sharing information in a way that's relatable and memorable.

- A story can make you think, help you make a decision or illustrate a point in a way that's not only easier to understand but also easy to remember.
- Your prospects have to know, like and trust you before they are ready to make a purchase. And the easiest way to do that is to share something about yourself, your life and what has gotten you into this business.
- You can use storytelling to show your passion for your market and illustrate how you can help them.
- Storytelling is a great way to build a memorable brand. And with a strong brand comes ever-growing reach and a loyal customer base that's ready to buy from you again and again.
- Storytelling in business only becomes powerful when you do it with a purpose, with an end goal in mind that helps you grow your reach, your customer base, and your bottom line.