We empower businesses with results-driven content, technology and digital marketing solutions.

Big and small businesses alike are leveraging the power of stories to boost sales figures and improve their visibility.

What is business storytelling? And how does it boost the success of your business?
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The Birth of a Salesman: Sell Anything With a Good Story

Business storytelling has changed the face of advertising for good. The marketing world has now evolved a more cogent strategy to sell products with storytelling at its crux.

Some of the most prolific salespeople don’t just list out the features of the products they’re trying to sell. First, they do their research and identify the pain points of the consumer. Then, they come up with a strategy to position their product as the solution that can solve their problem.

This strategy is then laced with some emotional triggers to sway the consumer’s decision.

And it works.

Since the dawn of civilization, humans have been gathering around fires to narrate stories. For the longest time, human history was purely an oral tradition narrated by the elders. There’s no denying that the human brain is primed to perk up when it hears the phrase, “Do you wanna hear a story?”

And that makes a story the perfect emotional trigger to influence decision making.

Some simple neurochemistry is all it takes.

A story that can engage you emotionally will cause your brain to release either Cortisol or Oxytocin, depending on the context. Of these, Oxytocin — the feel-good hormone — can really influence a customer’s mood. Oxytocin motivates cooperation by enhancing empathy. Advertisers usually tap into this response to make viewers empathize with their brand.

Studies show that people are more likely to give to a charity if they’re told stories about how donations have improved lives rather than just asking for a donation to improve lives.

Brands are rushing to marketing agencies with briefs for ad campaigns that revolve around a well-told narrative. And agencies are delivering. We are inundated with ads on TV and social media that are designed to tug at our hearts or to inspire us to take action, and all of this to sell a banana smoothie.

This eBook takes a look at what business storytelling is and how big and small businesses alike are leveraging the power of stories to boost sales figures and improve their visibility.
WHAT'S YOUR STORY
A Good Story Can Change Your Business Fortunes

"Emotions make people buy, not just their needs. So it makes sense to appeal to their emotions rather than just their immediate needs."

Quick, tell me a story. One that teaches you to not let cockiness and overconfidence cloud your judgment. You probably couldn’t think of any.

How about if I asked you what Aesop’s message in The Hare and the Tortoise was?

Yes. That’s what a good story can do. Storytelling is not just another buzzword.

If you’re an entrepreneur pitching your startup to a group of investors with their heads buried deep in spreadsheets, how do you get your message across?

This was the problem facing Ursula Llabres as she was getting ready for a session with a room full of Microsoft Office 365 experts about Yammer, Microsoft’s latest acquisition in 2012. Llabres began her talk by narrating two customer stories about Yammer.

For the first time, in a day packed with back-to-back presentations, the executives put down their laptops and listened to her talk. Her storytelling approach even made some attendees request for another session later in the day.

Changing Times, Changing Strategies

Big brands who’ve dominated the scene of modern advertising are recognizing this industry-wide shift to storytelling.

Coca Cola’s recent move to content marketing that is focussed on storytelling is more evidence of this trend. According to a WARC report, Arpan Basu, a senior executive for Coca Cola India & South-West Asia had this to say, “We don’t call it a website anymore, it is a digital magazine. It’s a platform where we tell stories about anything and everything to do with Coca Cola.”

It didn’t take long for marketing analysts to realize that they had stumbled onto a new and untapped resource.

“Everybody is a publisher now, everybody is a journalist, everybody has an opinion. Earlier, as corporate communications professionals, we had to deal with just a bunch of stakeholders or journalists, give them information and they, in turn, would go and talk about what the company is doing,” adds Basu.
Emotions make people buy, not just their needs. So it makes sense to appeal to their emotions rather than just their immediate needs.

A Good Story is Good for Business
Brands have been telling stories for a long time, just not explicitly.
A business or a brand is an abstract entity to the human ego. It's very hard to elicit an emotional response when advertising a cream for diaper rash. But when done right, a good story can convey all your business goals, corporate beliefs and industry vision in a few short paragraphs. In this case, a single image of a crying baby with a frustrated mother will immediately resonate with the target demographic.

The founders of Warby Parker Eyewear had the right idea.
When one of the founders lost his eyeglasses on a backpacking trip, he found the cost too prohibitive to buy another pair. As a result, he spent an entire semester squinting and complaining.
Warby Parker’s brand identity portrays them as heroes in an eyewear industry dominated by greedy capitalists who charge an arm and a leg for something so basic to a consumer. Theirs was a story that countless students and even working professionals identified with.
Advertisers are going back to the drawing board and marketers are rebranding entire companies to catch up to this trend. Creative copywriters have managed to craft Dickensian stories about HP Enterprise ProLiant Servers. And it works too.
Stories are the best tools to convince a small business owner about the importance of having reliable IT infrastructure. Stories take a product or a service and transform it into an experience the customer cannot do without.

Myth-building Will Destroy your Brand
Forget big brands. Even sellers on eBay make a profit out of the storytelling trend. Malicious scammers on eBay have been hawking junk lying around their house for a small fortune with the power of storytelling for a while now.
This is something brands cannot afford to do. Building a false narrative to project your brand as undertaking a “hero’s journey” can do more damage than just sticking to old-school marketing.
Storytelling is one of our most natural instincts. Stories inspire trust and respect for the storyteller. Maybe it’s because we believe the storyteller to be a faithful raconteur. Whatever be the cause, this is a level of trust so fundamental that using a made-up story to evoke emotional response among consumers will backfire spectacularly when the truth gets out.
And in the age of the internet, the truth always gets out.
Inspiring Business Stories that Reinvented a Brand

Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories that you tell.

-Seth Godin

When we meet someone in real life, to know them better, we ask them questions. We try to understand their story and to tell our own (at least to an extent). Here, the ultimate goal is to connect and to find someone of the same nature, similar likes/dislikes, and beliefs. Someone who can relate to these stories and empathize with us.

This rule is the same for businesses too. Storytelling has become an integral part of building the brand. It shapes the outlook of the business and helps consumers develop a connection with your business.

No matter how you tell them the story, the only trick is to be authentic and true. If you do it the right way, it helps you construct a successful brand. People buy your products simply because they love and believe the stories you share with them.

In today’s age of brand experience, emotional engagement is important, and storytelling is the heart of such movements. Let’s look at three brands that are building their business empires with their authentic storytelling.

Burt’s Bees

Burt’s Bees is an American skin care products company that markets internationally, making around $250MM in revenue.

Surprisingly, when you go to the About Us page on their website, you won’t see the word skin care anywhere on the page. The page starts with a statement, ‘True to Nature’, which is followed by ‘At Burt’s Bees, we champion the benefits and importance of nature in our lives and work to protect its beauty and diversity.’

The page contains four points mainly: they use 100% natural products and ingredients, they don’t do any animal testing, they do responsible sourcing, and they use recyclable packaging. The About Us page closes with their philanthropic efforts.

Without even mentioning a single word about their products, they are giving the customers enough reasons to buy products from them; as good corporate citizens bound to protect the environment.
Yerdle
Yerdle is an app-based service that builds and operates on resale programs. It finds value in recycled goods and operates a resale program for brands like Patagonia and Eileen Fisher. Yerdle is considered as the pioneer of the circular economy.

Yerdle, which was started in 2012, decided to leverage the benefits of storytelling to further build their brand and deepen engagement. With that intention, they announced an award program. The categories in Yerdle Award Program had different categories such as Best Supporting Member, Best Giver, Most Spirited, Best Shopper, Loyalist, Best Friend Socialista, Daybreaker, and Newbie.

This story-driven campaign saw users sharing the spirit of the brand in such a way that it triggers engagement, generate an emotional response, and build community interaction.

Airbnb
Airbnb is an online marketplace that allows homeowners to offer their house, or a part of it, for rent. Travelers can use this site to book a stay in these homes. This is how Airbnb started. The story of Airbnb becoming a million-dollar company without owning or managing a single property, in such a short time, is inspiring and wonderful.

The game-changer was the decision to build their empire on the power of storytelling. Without the customer, there is no product at all. For Airbnb, the customers – both hosts and guests – themselves constitute the brand. So, the company provided a space for these hosts and guests to share their experiences. Instead of telling the story of the company, they provided a platform for the customers to tell their stories.

It is a fact that people might feel a little anxious and uncomfortable when staying in a stranger's home. But when Airbnb used videos, articles, and images to tell the customers’ stories, it helped potential guests understand their hosts (and their houses) better and put their mind at ease.

Stories provided the answers. Stories were and are the key. These brand stories not only tapped into people’s emotions but also helped them connect with these brands and their services. Storytelling is not just a new marketing technique. In fact, science has proved that descriptive storytelling has a great impact on the human brain.

But, to create a story that resonates with the customer, it is crucial not only to include them in the story but also to highly engage them. From origin stories to customer stories, there are different types of stories. And what works for one might not work for another. Deciding on what kind of story to tell is just as important as the story itself.
In the digital age, consumers are in complete control of the content they devour. Cold calling, email blasts, and unsolicited brochures were annoying methods for customer outreach even during their peak popularity. Enterprising marketers resorted to studying consumer behavior and started sending marketing material that was tailor-made for the consumer.

This alarming trend called consumer data mining led to a controversial case where retail giant Target was able to correctly infer that a teenage girl was pregnant even before her father knew. This resulted in some unwanted negative PR for Target.

This led to a course correction where marketers looked at more subtle ways to advertise their catalog.

The Beginnings of a Business Story
At first, the change was organic. One by one, people began to realize the power of using a story to make consumers come to you rather than using backhanded techniques to shove products down their throats. And then came the pioneers who correctly identified the winning formula and started training their peers in the art of storytelling.

It wasn’t long before the entire advertising world was privy to this formula. People love stories. Stories elicit emotions. And emotions make people buy. A small jump for brands but a huge leap for the advertising industry as a whole.

Soon, every savvy marketer began to use stories to sell products. What followed was a market saturated with feel-good stories, inspirational accounts, and emotionally stirring anecdotes to sell everything from talcum powder and cocoa beans.

The storytelling trend has been a hit or a miss for many brands, but that doesn’t need to be the case with your brand. By crafting stories with a definite purpose, you can still connect with your readers in an effective way.
The Creative Guide To Business Storytelling
Type 1 Customer Stories

On Land Rover’s 70th anniversary, the company released a video titled ‘The Land of Land Rovers’. The video gave us a glimpse into the daily hardships the locals endured while moving supplies and people between two villages in the remote Himalayas. To do this task, the people swear by their fleet of 42 1957 Land Rovers. “I don’t feel safe in any other vehicle,” says a man featured in the video.

Sweeping panoramic shots of the Himalayas are spliced between shots of Land Rovers trudging through what can only be called the most dangerous roads in the world. The drivers are unfazed by the precarious driving conditions. They place complete trust in their Land Rovers and have done so for more than 40 years.

This is an example of customer storytelling. When your brand has a positive influence on people, they’ll come out with positive testimonials themselves. But it doesn’t hurt to go out and gather details about how your brand/product is changing lives and crafting it into an enticing story. Building a brand image this way is guaranteed to last.

Type 2 Origin Stories

From wallpaper cleaner to the ubiquitous toy — that’s the story of Play-Doh. The putty was initially marketed as a wallpaper cleaner as homes heated with coal would leave a layer of soot residue on the wallpaper. This need decreased over time as people switched to different, cleaner heating methods. Kutol, the company behind the putty, also noticed that many teachers were using their product in classrooms to build models.

This sparked new life into a struggling company. After removing the detergent from their compound, adding a few different colors, some new scents and rebranding themselves as a children’s toy seller, they released the product we now know as Play-Doh.

A story like this explaining the birth of your product will go a long way into cementing your brand into the customer’s mind. People always remember interesting stories even if they don’t use the product themselves. This helps in keeping the brand memory alive.

Improv comedian Michael Dublin started Dollar Shave Club as a solution to the absurdly high cost of shaving razors. Their subscription service that delivers men’s grooming products epitomizes the reason for their existence — cost and convenience.

This origin story is reflected in their motto as well, with some clever punning — Shave Time, Shave Money.

Type 3 Event Stories

Launching every product with over-the-top stunts has been BrewDog’s modus operandi since they began in 2007. The Scottish craft beer giant bet early and big on content to survive in the cutthroat UK beer industry, investing in their own online streaming service and building massive hype around all their products.

Positioning themselves as punk brewers (whatever that means) BrewDog made news by...
driving a tank through the streets of London to raise awareness about their ‘Equity for Punks’ crowdfunding scheme. BrewDog built a punkish, anarchist theme around their product launch events in line with their company’s origin story — that of an unholy anarchist brewer competing against the Goliaths of the brewing industry. Calling all beer lovers to invest in the company with such stunts have worked well for BrewDog, earning the company more than £1 million in funding.

Type 4 Product Stories

How does a clothing company stay in business for over 165 years? Since starting out in 1853, Levi Strauss & Co has continually reinvented their product line. And each time, they did so with a subtle story. They got their initial momentum by marketing their rugged pants to gold miners of California during the gold rush. Next came the rebellion era where they positioned their denim as the in thing among rebellious youth and hippies of the 60s and 70s.

Now, the brand is marketing its products to millennials who don’t want to live under the label of ‘business casual.’ Every ad campaign that Levi’s has ever run has stuck to a theme resonating with that generation. By using storytelling, Levi’s has been able to promote their brand without describing or promoting their products.

Whatever your brand or your product, mastering the art of business storytelling in your pitches will help consumers better connect with it. Storytelling is now the standard way to sell products.

It’s the most efficient way to sell your products without selling them. It’s time you mastered it.
How to Master the Art of Storytelling: Anyone Can Do It

I think what you have to do is put yourself in the shoes of that user and what they’re going through.
- tweet by Buddy Scalera (@BuddyScalera)

If you’re still wondering whether business storytelling is another fad cooked up by marketing MBAs, you’re already late to the game. Marketing wizards have written tomes on the effectiveness of storytelling in business. Startup founders have infused TEDx events with their unique take on storytelling.

If you’re not telling your story, people have already forgotten you. A story can convey your brand vision better than a boring mission statement.

We’ve already covered the power of business storytelling. Now it’s time to take a look at how to craft a compelling story based on facts and figures.

What Makes a Good Story?
Storytelling is a gift most of us are born with. But like most talents, it has to be nurtured. Somehow, storytelling has been confined to the realm of entertainment only. Advertisers are rediscovering the power of stories to not only entertain but also to engage and educate consumers.

In the traditional sense, storytelling involves characters finding themselves in a setting that serves to further the plot. And then there is the creation of conflict — the part where our emotions get deeply involved — that ends with a resolution.

Not every entrepreneur has the Tolkien-like skill to make this happen.

There’s Another Way
Business storytelling, on the other hand, follows a slightly different approach.

First, you identify a problem. A problem that is close to your heart, one that your business can solve. You begin to craft your story with this vital ingredient.

For James Watt and Martin Dickie, industrially brewed ale that dominated the UK market was the problem. They sought to bring the magic of craft beer to the public. BrewDog is now a multinational brewery and pub chain that does business in millions.

Bringing great restaurants closer to their
customers was the problem Will Shu faced. His startup, Deliveroo, recognized that this was indeed a problem faced by office workers in London.

If you’re running a business, chances are you’ve already identified a problem that needs to be solved.

If not, then what exactly is your business? All that remains is to use a simple story to rephrase the problem in a way the audience better identifies with.

Every Story Demands a Villain
Steve Jobs was a master storyteller. He anchored on to the public’s memory of George Orwell’s masterpiece 1984 in the 1984 SuperBowl ad spot when Apple portrayed Big Blue (referring to IBM) as Big Brother. The problem here, according to Apple, was IBM monopolizing the PC industry.

Before the ad was aired for the first and only time, Jobs made a speech in 1983 where he proclaimed, “IBM wants it all and is aiming its guns on its last obstacle to industry control: Apple. Will Big Blue dominate the entire computer industry? The entire information age? Was George Orwell right about 1984?”

Enter, the Hero
The most anticipated part of any story, in this case, the storytelling in business, is the arrival of the hero. That one crucial element that turns the tides and wins hearts.

In business storytelling, the hero is a proxy for the target audience. As someone they can identify and empathize with, the hero holds the key to any successful storytelling.

Jobs depicted Apple as the hero that would save the world from IBM’s monopoly. It’s an entirely different matter that Apple then went on to become the enemy they swore to destroy.

Nonprofits like the Mozilla Foundation have the best hero stories of them all. An entire company dedicated to keeping the internet free and open source — now that’s a powerful story to move the audience. Wikipedia, too, has used the hero narrative with great success. As a result, they find no need to advertise themselves, save for an annual donation drive.

Conflict Breeds Creativity
Insurance companies have mastered the art of using conflict in their stories very well.

Their ads are filled with imagery that shows our worst fears becoming reality. Your house swept away by a tornado. Your brand new Tesla wrecked in a head-on collision. The ads very effectively use conflict to drive home the utility of their product.

In a conventional story, conflicts are used to further the plot. In business storytelling, conflict A story can convey your brand vision better than a boring mission statement.
alone is enough to deliver your message. Once you've communicated the conflict part, you present yourself as the brand with a resolution to the conflict.

Keep the Target User in Mind
Companies that sell exam-prep materials and mock tests made this mistake early on when they advertised their products to high school students. When growth stagnated, it took some market analysis and field work before they realized that they had their target audience all wrong. It's the parents they should've aimed for since it's they who take any decision when it comes to their children's education. The parents and their children tread two different marketing paths with little overlap.

The first stage of every marketing campaign is to identify the buyer persona. Craft your stories to appeal to this persona. More importantly, identify the language this target demographic speaks. It's highly inappropriate to use a dank meme to advertise your hip-replacement product. It's also not a great idea to use '20s anecdotes in your story that is aimed at millennials. They just won't get it.

Keep Your Brand Image in Mind
Brands often make the mistake of trying to appeal themselves to an audience that obviously doesn't care for their products. A Gucci meme campaign is the last thing you want to see on your social media feed. There's nothing more cringey than seeing a luxury brand stooping to the level of using memes. The medium you use to tell your story is just as important as the story itself. When in doubt, consult a professional who knows his way around the business of business storytelling. There's a reason we call storytelling art. It's not a technique, strategy or just another marketing fad. And like any other form of art, you need an artist to craft your business story and generate leads.
Lure ‘em With a Story: Lead Generation Using Business Storytelling

Brand storytelling shortens the time taken by your target audience to understand the value your brand brings to them and it also tells why they should buy from your company. Here are key features of brand storytelling.

Storytelling in business has gained traction lately. Not many have accepted its effectiveness, but it has elevated the value of brands. We already know that today’s youth will not read boring and soulless content. Any content must have a flow that connects with the audience in some way or the other, cutting through the clutter.

Storytelling can be used for lead generation because:

• Stories are in contrast to statistics and facts because people relate to stories better.
• People are interested in stories because a story quickly catches their attention.
• People connect with stories and are likely to engage with them in no time.
• Stories build trust in the brand.

Key Things to Do Before and After Writing a Story

Understand the audience
Understand the audience, their pain points and what they value is key. Knowing who you are talking to is a crucial first step to storytelling. Find out the topic of interest of your target audience and their trusted brands.

The story must have a purpose and structure
The story must have a purpose. Understand what you are conveying to the audience and how your story relates to the actions you want the audience to take. Create the story with a structure which includes specific time periods and relatable characters. It must have an arc, i.e., a beginning, a middle, and an end.

For example, a story can start with how something was not working for users and how the company applied innovation to make it work. Other examples are the old way of doing things versus the new way, with versus without, and so on. Your writing must sell the story attached to the product, not the product itself.

Make your audience believe in your brand
Articles that resemble a hard-sell with usage of some words do not interest an audience. A writing with a focus on the result or outcome of the product or service is what your audience wants to read. Such a writing can be used to persuade the audience to use the call-to-action button.
Features of Good Business Storytelling

Add creativity and authenticity to the writing
A business story must be creative. You could use a plot and a story arc in the writing by introducing characters. These characters must be someone your audience relate to. They must also be authentic allowing the readers to provide you with a response.

Business storytelling is also never fictional. It involves a character talking about real events and situations. The writing about a product or a service must answer possible questions that the audience has, through the character.

The characters can be similar to the audience, one who has the same problem but has overcome it due to the usage of the product or the service. Like a novel, a business story must have a conversational tone. It must talk to your audience like you talk to your family and friends.

Vodafone employed one such character creation called zoozoos, which are humans in animated costumes acting out a story. These characters have created a strong brand recall offline and online. They are everywhere, on TV and in social media. Their Facebook page has more than 19 million fans.

The story must have perspective
Tell the story with a new perspective. Create a scenario where the objective of your blog is to market the product or service. If possible, add twists and turns to the story to enhance your audience’s imagination, and open their mind to the product/service.

Use visuals to augment your storytelling
Help your audience visualize the story through GIFs, images, infographics or videos. We have already discussed why publishing a wall of text will not work for everyone. Some readers scan, not read. Sometimes stories must be told with many images and less text.

Inspire your audience towards your cause
The most effective stories are inspiring. Your stories must speak to the audience without being preachy if you want to pull them to your cause. Through the character you have created, you can tell the story of your business, the hurdles the company overcame and what not.

Driving Traffic and Making Sales
By writing content and driving traffic to your website with amazing stories, you can collect your audience’s emails and make sales. According to 62% of responders of a Gallup survey, social media content creation does not influence sales, but social media content can be used to drive traffic to the sales page.

It is true that colors and fonts in a website keep the audience longer, a Hubspot study.
says companies publishing 16 articles a month will get four times more leads than companies publishing zero to four a month. Successful entrepreneurs know this. Once the visitors are on your website, you must make offers to the audience to buy your products or services. Or else, you will keep creating content, but stay broke.

**Famous Business Storytellers Who are Generating Leads**

**Richard Branson and Virgin Group**

The Virgin Group are marketing experts. They have grown their company since day one through storytelling. Their blog, email newsletters and social media accounts are filled with dynamic and interesting content. All their stories are conversational in nature and narrates true events.

Throughout his life, Branson has inspired entrepreneurs through stories. However, his social media profiles, which has millions of followers cannot make sales, which Branson already knows. So his social media profiles have links to Virgin's website where his audience are made an offer to buy his books.

**Jeff Bullas**

Jeff Bullas is a social marketing influencer and another example. Throughout his web writing career, he has garnered enough followers on social media. He inspires his readers by telling stories about his ventures. He is also a proponent of business storytelling and has written and spoken at length about it in his interviews and workshops.

Jeff Bullas also writes to generate leads to his website where the audience is made an offer to join his webinars, and he has a page where he can be booked to speaking engagements, and more.

**Nike**

Nike has been leveraging on storytelling since the late 90s. In the 2018 season, NFL superstar Colin Kaepernick protested against racial injustice and police brutality. Nike used him in their 30th anniversary campaign. With ‘Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything’, it was clear that Nike stood with Kaepernick.

In the ad, Colin talks about his story of passion and sacrifice. The ad suggests the viewers to go beyond any prejudice and discrimination. The ad ran on social media. Nike received threats of boycott for the ad. However, it received leads, spiking sales of shoes endorsed by the superstar athlete and it also caused Nike’s stocks to rise to an all time high in September 2018.

**Airbnb**

Airbnb makes a second appearance in our analysis simply because of how successful they’ve been with using storytelling as a marketing strategy. A platform to share living space, Airbnb’s blogs have stories of travelers using Airbnb to book space. It also used persuasive techniques to turn people into hosts. The company’s social media channels have rich content with millions of followers.

Airbnb’s audience is composed of both hosts and guests, its content has in-depth features and videos offer insight into both experiences. They also work with local photographers and directors to connect with hosts and guests to tell moving stories. It also curates user-generated photos and videos to use them on the website.

In summary, storytelling is an investment and is sure to pay off. It is essential to differentiate your brand with storytelling. It could be the factor that makes your content go viral.
How to Use Storytelling to Make Your Content Go Viral: It Doesn’t Get Easier Than This

HostingFacts.com estimates that over 4 million blog posts are published every day in 2019 and over 500 million tweets are sent every day. Out of this gargantuan information pie, what is your brand’s share?

To create top quality content, whether in the form of blog posts, video ads or email campaigns consistently is huge labor by itself. And not all quality content gets the share count it deserves. All the hours you spent researching your topic and crafting a compelling article that solves a consumer pain point will be counterproductive if your content does not have the legs to run the information marathon.

Brands have devised innovative ways to ensure their content travels farther before its inevitable death. Zany marketers sometimes resort to stoking controversies or latching on to another trending topic to gain mileage. But controversies eventually die down and trending topics are just that. The one thing people remember and recall often is a good story.

Mastering the art of storytelling to drive brand engagement will guarantee your brand the consumer’s mindshare, which in turn will increase your pocket share as well.

Trend Your Way into the Consumer’s Mind

Piggy-backing on trending topics to create viral content may have a short lifespan. But if your story is worth sharing, it has the power to spread like wildfire. There are some downsides to this though. Firstly, everyone is doing it, so there is no guarantee that you’ll get noticed. Once a trend gets spotted in the wild, marketers jump to take advantage of it.

Secondly, once the trend has moved on, what next? You can’t milk it forever.

But if you have the budget and the resources, then this is not such a bad idea. Amul, the Indian dairy giant, has been using this strategy for decades now.

On the occasion of former US President Barack Obama’s visit to India in 2015, Amul ran the below print advertisement.
The Amul girl is iconic in India. The pun game is also top notch. The tagline, “Buddy Buddy Baatein” is no doubt cheeky, yet endearing. When India successfully launched the Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), Amul was not far behind on the cheeky humor.
Encourage People to Share Their Stories

A woman, who is totally not an actor, looks worriedly into the camera. On the one day she gets to relax at home, her in-laws decide to pop in for an impromptu visit. She is worried as she suddenly remembers the dismal state her bathroom is in. Something she didn't care about until this moment. But her worries are soon washed away because a has-been actor once invaded her house with a toilet product, a microphone and a camera crew. And now she will mix equal parts of this product with some photoshop to clean her bathroom with one swish. Ignoring the obvious lack of creativity here, you cannot deny the element of relatability in this advertisement. Relatability is perhaps the strongest driver to get a consumer to go out of their way to buy a product. Content too will strike the strongest chord when it is relatable.

What better way to generate relatable content than to ask the consumers themselves to share their experiences with your product? This way, you can take the user-generated content and use it to attract more people to your brand.

We're getting somewhere now.

Nestle understood this when they added nostalgia to the mix and launched their Me & Meri Maggi campaign in 2011.

Users were encouraged to share a memorable experience in their lives when a bowl of Maggi was their companion. The campaign received entries from people with stories like:

Official numbers are hard to come by, but it’s safe to say that the campaign went viral with submissions coming in from every corner of India.
Evoke Strong Emotions

The World Wildlife Fund ran the #LastSelfie campaign on Snapchat in an attempt to raise awareness about endangered species among millennials. One of the snaps featured an endangered gorilla with the caption, “Better take a screenshot, this could be my #lastselfie.”

Another featured a baby orangutan with the caption, “In 6 seconds I’ll be gone forever. But you can help save my kind. #LastSelfie.” The ‘6 seconds’ is in reference to the Snapchat feature where images fade away after a time limit.

The story was a powerful one. It was shared wildly on Snapchat and even jumped social streams as people began sharing this creative campaign on other platforms.

Newspapers picked it up and global focus was once again successfully shifted towards the protection of endangered species.

If you can position your brand or product in a way that will elicit such strong emotional reactions, then virality is a given.

Sharing is Caring

Orchestrating a viral event is really hard. Sometimes, campaigns go viral without making use of any clear-cut strategy. But not everyone is so lucky.

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge checked all the boxes for a viral campaign. The rules were simple: participants can either dump a bucket of ice water over their heads and donate $10 to The ALS Association or skip the water and donate $100. They have 24 hours to complete the challenge and, if they choose the ice bucket, they have to upload a video as proof. Participants then tag additional people to take the challenge. It relied on nominating another person to take up the challenge or make a donation in lieu of pouring ice cold water over themselves.

Criticisms about water wastage and people’s vanities aside, the campaign raised $115 million for the cause. This was one campaign that was designed to go viral from the get-go. First, they worded it as a challenge thereby priming people to engage with the content. Second, they encourage participants to challenge friends, family, and celebrities to take up the challenge.

This was a condition laid out in the original challenge itself. Third, all of this happened in the public eye on social media. For a while, after the challenge broke out, there was no escaping the numerous posts on all social media sites. Television news shows also picked up on the trend early and helped in making the campaign go viral.

Most importantly, the campaign had a moving story to tell. The story of the everyday reality that people suffering from ALS face. Google trends peaked for terms related to ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease as people took to the internet to educate themselves. This is what every ad or content should hope to achieve. Motivate consumers to take the initiative to learn more about the brand or the product.

Brand storytelling value has been proven time and again as an enduring tool for marketing. So why not design your next viral campaign with a fascinating story at its crux?

One type of storytelling that can really strike a chord with the social media generation is visual storytelling. With bite-sized videos and GIFs, this channel is a goldmine for advertisers.
Stories influence public opinions about brands. Visual stories are the go-to means for brands to reach out to an audience with decreasing attention span. Explore how to craft visual stories and how they can be a game-changer for your business.

“A picture is not worth a thousand words,” said no one. A picture accompanied with an underlying story is more powerful than a few lines of text. Images help break the monotony of reading a wall of text. Image-based content is not the most used form today, maybe because it is harder to create and time consuming. But it surely pays off.

For example, Instagram has become a powerful platform to post brilliant visuals accompanied by a writeup. The platform has more than a billion users today, and the number is climbing. Despite the high number of users, Instagrammers who post powerful photos along with the story behind them garner a healthy following.

Some credible Instagram personalities have used this medium to post brilliant visuals and have gained millions of followers. Celebrities too have entered the Instagram bandwagon. Brands have used these Instagrammers and celebrities on Instagram to promote their products who command a hefty fee.

To put things into perspective, Kylie Jenner, model and businesswoman, earns $1.1 million per post followed by singer-entertainer Selena Gomez at $800,000 per post, and Portuguese football star Cristiano Ronaldo at $750,000 per post.

Look at some picture stories these global celebrities have posted. The lesson is to use visual storytelling in marketing anything from jewellery to clothes to cars in order to:

• Resonate with the audience.
• Get their attention quickly.
• Connect on an emotional level.
Why is Visual Storytelling Powerful?
We retain visuals longer because our brains are good at retaining images. We retain only 10% of what we read because our brain sees written letters as tiny images. We take time to recall them a few days later or in most cases have completely forgotten them. For instance, we recognize Leonardo da Vinci’s painting of Mona Lisa when we see it, but don’t recall information such as the year of birth or her city of origin.

However, with videos, the percentage of how much we can recall increases to 65%. We do better when we follow instructions with illustrations than with only instructions. This is why educationalists are prescribing audio-visual learning in schools.

Visual Storytelling Techniques

Show The Story Instead Of Telling
One unwritten rule of storytelling is that you must show scenes. Join any storytelling session and you will see the best storytellers show what happens in their story, not just read out some lines. In marketing, show the benefits of the product you are advertising. Showing someone using your product will do wonders for your marketing.

First Impression Matters
First impression matters in visual communication because a human brain is designed to make a quick impression. Your creative must have an appealing first image. It will take only a few seconds for the audience to decide if the visuals are worth their time or not.

Arrange Visuals Hierarchically
Hierarchy is an important part of a visual story. In an image, the most important items of your story must be the biggest item and they must be the closest to the top of the screen. This way, the audience sees them first and move on to the next ones.

Use Colors In The Visuals And Take Advantage Of Light
Certain colors used in creatives induce certain moods in people. Use the right color schemes for the right emotion. Like color, using proper lighting has its advantages. Darkness in the picture signifies mystery while brightness signifies safety.

Follow A Narrative Arc
A story must have a narrative arc like a novel, that is a beginning, a middle, and an end. It must take the audience on a journey. It must also have a revelation or a climax, which is most probably at the end.

Audience Loves A Good Conflict
The protagonist who reaches the destination has definitely had a nice journey. But showing the protagonist jumping over obstacles or overcoming hard times will make it more interesting. In marketing, talk about a problem and how your company’s product will solve the problem.

End With A Key Takeaway In The Creative
Creating a bland photo or video without a message will be easily forgotten by the audience. The message or the key takeaway of the visual story must hit the audience hard.

To conclude, visual storytelling will connect audiences and engage their attention. Visual storytelling is a way to spruce up content with a little art. It is possible to get better at storytelling with practice. Applying these techniques discussed above will keep the audience truly riveted.
Using Infographics to Tell Your Brand Story: It’s Hip

Humans process images 60,000 times faster than text. Visual content is 40 times more likely to be shared on social media than any other type of content.

Infographics tell us enticing and interesting stories through data visualization. It is one of the best ways to tell a brand story. It also offers benefits for your content marketing. Learn how infographics came to be and how to make them.

We all know writing predates the internet. There are other things that predate the internet too. Two of them are infographics and memes. Archeologists have found walls in cities of the erstwhile Roman Empire with drawings, probably created by a citizen making fun of others. But that’s probably a story for a different day.

Infographics, though a radical idea then, has been recently bucked the trend of churning thousands of words into content management systems. All these words can be represented by a few graphs and images. Infographics have become a big part of content marketing. It is difficult to digest a story without an interesting visual, right?

How did the government perform in the last five years? What were people's spending habits over the decade? What's a public company's profit and loss statement? You don't want to turn to a fifty-page document to learn those. Few pages of bar charts with appealing colors and visuals might help in grasping the information better. A flood of information can be turned into charts for easy absorption.

Here's a quick fact for you. The bar chart, pie chart, and the line graph were invented by a Scottish engineer, William Playfair, in the 18th century. He was also the first to color code a chart. Charts showing the army spending of the British Empire, trade numbers of different countries, the Turkish Empire's land holdings, etc. He created them all.

Why Use Infographics?

We have already established that companies must use visual storytelling in their content strategy. These pointers tell us why infographics must be increasingly used.

William Playfair rightly pointed out that humans process images 60,000 times faster than text.
65% of the world’s people are visual learners.

- It increases the attention span and recall by 82%.
- Infographics can increase web traffic by 10%.
- Visual content is 40 times more likely to be shared on social media than any other type of content.

How to Make Your Infographics Tell a Story?

Infographic must tell a story to an audience without cramming it with just information. Here are the best practices for creating an appealing infographic.

Choose A Specific Topic

Choose a specific topic from your industry to talk about. Creating an infographic about everything from an industry may not be digestible. The canvas may be too short for it. Let it be relevant to people’s interests. Most of the times industry surveys help in understanding what’s relevant in the market. For example, artificial intelligence is the most trending topic in technology sector these days.

Collect Relevant Data

You need relevant data to be put on an infographic. Sometimes you might have the data, otherwise you must collect them. Conduct surveys if you have to or talk to experts who have a long list of the data. Cut out what is not needed and use only what is required.

Structure It Right

Every story needs an introduction, so start with it. This should be followed by a body with the data collected. Provide context if any, and conclude with a call to action.

Design The Story, Simply

Keep the design simple without adding a ton of illustrations. Use adequate font size and the right number of visuals. Stay away from large blocks of text and keep the copy short.

Image Source: http://techland.time.com/2013/11/14/the-time-invention-poll/
For example, Time magazine along with Qualcomm surveyed their readers from around the world and came up with a bunch of infographics about inventors and inventions. The TIME Invention Poll surveyed more than 10,000 people from different countries including China, Brazil, India, Mexico, Kenya, US, and Germany, among others.

Some of the questions asked in the survey were what are the barriers to invention, are inventors born or made, most important invention, most important inventive period, etc. What the Time magazine presented to their readers was their findings in neatly packaged visual stories. Observe that they chose to survey on a specific topic, that is invention. They asked the relevant questions, they started with a nice introduction and they have a great design.

The above mentioned points cover the basics of infographics, including why infographics must be used in your content strategy and how to use it.
At Verbinden Communication, we craft stories for our clients to succeed in a cut-throat market. Our creative gang will craft the perfect strategy to increase your visibility and reach.

Go viral with us!