

**Building a StoryBrand:
Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen
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Nobody will listen to you if your message isn't clear, no matter how expensive your marketing material may be. The human brain, no matter what region of the world it comes from, is drawn toward clarity and away from confusion. The more simple and predictable the communication, the easier it is for the brain to digest.

The first mistake brands make is they fail to focus on the aspects of their offer that will help people survive and thrive.

The second mistake brands make is they cause their customers to burn too many calories in an effort to understand their offer. When having to process too much seemingly random information, people begin to ignore the source of that useless information in an effort to conserve calories.

The key is to make your company's message about something that helps the customer survive and to do so in such a way that they can understand it without burning too many calories. If we haven't identified what our customer wants, what problem we are helping them solve, and what life will look like after they engage our products and services, for example, we can forget about thriving in the marketplace.

“If you confuse, you'll lose.”

Customers make buying decisions not based on what we say but on what they hear. If we want to connect with customers, we have to stop blasting them with noise.

Clarify your message

How long will we last if we keep talking about aspects of our products our customers don't care about?

A good story makes music out of noise

The brain remembers music and forgets about noise just like the brain remembers some brands and forgets about others. If a character or scene doesn't serve the plot, it has to go. When storytellers bombard people with too much information, the audience is forced to burn too many calories organizing the data. People don't buy the best products; they buy the products they can understand the fastest.

Story in a Nutshell

1. A character
2. A problem
3. A guide
4. A plan that calls them to action to avoid failure and end in success

So how do we make the story our company is telling clear?

Answer three questions:

1. What does the hero want?
2. Who or what is opposing the hero getting what she wants?
3. What will the hero's life look like if she does (or does not) get what she wants?

We tell our clients the same thing my filmmaker friends told me when I was writing screenplays: anything that doesn't serve the plot has to go. They should be able to answer these questions within five seconds of looking at our website or marketing material:

1. What do you offer?
2. How will it make my life better?
3. What do I need to do to buy it?

Clarity produces results

1. A Character

Principle #1 ~ The customer is the hero not your brand.

2. Has a Problem

Principle #2 ~ Companies tend to see solutions to external problems, but customers buy solutions to internal problems. By talking about the problems our customers face, we deepen their interest in everything we offer.

3. And Meets a Guide

Principle #3 ~ Customers aren't looking for another hero, they're looking for a guide.

It's no accident that guides show up in almost every movie. Nearly every human being is looking for a guide (or guides) to help them win the day.

4. Who gives them a plan

Principle # 4 ~ Customers trust a guide who has a plan.

5. And Calls Them to Action

Principle # 5 ~ Customers do not take action unless they are challenged to take action.

A call to action involves communicating a clear and direct step our customer can take to overcome their challenge and return to a peaceful life. Without clear calls to action, people will not engage our brand.

6. That Helps Them Avoid Failure

Principle # 6 ~ Every human being is trying to avoid a tragic ending

If there is nothing at stake in a story, there is no story. Simply put, we must show people the cost of not doing business with us. Good stories captivate an audience: they define what's at stake.

7. And Ends in a Success

Principle # 7~ Never assume people understand how your brand can change their lives. Tell them.

Everybody wants to be taken somewhere. If we don't tell people where we're taking them, they'll not engage

Every Story Needs a Villain

1. The villain should be a root source.
2. The villain should be relatable.
3. The villain should be singular.
4. The villain should be real.

What is the chief source of conflict that your products and services defeat?

What Frustrations do our products resolve?

Framing our products as a resolution to both external and internal problems increases the perceived value (and I would argue, actual value) of those products.

What challenges are you helping your customers overcome?

Always position your customer as the hero and your brand as the guide. Always. If you don't, you will die.

Remember the mantra "If you confuse, you lose"? Not having a plan is a guaranteed way to confuse your customers.

Again, the key to the success of any plan is to alleviate confusion for our customers. Studies show when you bombard customers with information, buying decreases.

Customers do not take action unless they are challenged to take action.

There should be one obvious button to press on your website, and it should be the direct call to action.

Remember, people are drawn to clarity and away from confusion.

Every human being is trying to avoid a tragic ending.

Remember, people want to be taken somewhere.” Leaders captivate the imaginations of their audiences.

- What problem are you resolving in your customer’s life?
- What does that resolution look like?
- Have you told your customers where you want to take them?
- Who does our customer want to become?
- What kind of person do they want to be?
- What is their aspirational identity?
- When others talk about you, what do you want them to say?

How we answer that last question reveals who it is we’d like to be.

Spend some time thinking about who you want your customers to become. How can you improve the way they see themselves?

Your website

There is no telling how many customers websites are losing because they are making their customers work so hard to understand why anybody would need their service.

Above the fold, make sure the images and text you use meet one of the following criteria:

- They promise an aspirational identity.
- They promise to solve a problem.
- They state exactly what they do.
- Obvious Calls to Action
- Images of Success

Everybody wants to experience a better life in some way or another, and while it may seem simple, images of people smiling or looking satisfied speak to us. They represent an emotional destination we’d like to head toward.

The rule is this: the fewer words you use, the more likely it is that people will read them.

The Narrative Void is a vacant space that occurs inside the organization when there’s no story to keep everyone aligned. One out of every five employees nationwide were truly excited about the work they were doing.¹

People are bombarded with more than three thousand marketing messages every twenty-four hours. We’ve gone from three TV networks and one local newspaper to more than two hundred channels, millions of news blogs, podcasts, Internet radio, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and LinkedIn.

Companies who calibrate their activities around a common story don’t just state their mission; they’re on a mission. They didn’t just dream about a better story, their culture tells one. Without a unifying narrative at the center, there was nothing to inspire the new hire beyond the status quo. But behind it all is a leadership team that understands the power of story, has created a StoryBrand BrandScript, and has learned to implement that narrative in every facet of the organization.

In many cases, the problem is they’d grown large enough, and in so many directions, they’d lost their plot.

The number one job of an executive is to remind the stakeholders what the mission is, over and over.

A true mission isn't a statement; it's a way of living and being.

Increasing compensation is one way you might add value to employees, but that's just the beginning. You can also raise value by:

- Improving the employee experience:
- Advancement opportunities,
- Recognition,
- Meaningful work,
- Camaraderie, and flexibility.

All those things add value too.

Is your organization on a mission?

Does every stakeholder you interact with understand the story of your customer and what role the organization plays in that story?

Do they understand their personal role in this important narrative?

What are the five (almost free) things you can do to grow your business? Here they are:

1. Create a One-liner.
2. Create a lead generator and collect E-mail addresses.
3. Create an automated E-mail drip campaign.
4. Collect and tell stories of transformation.
5. Create a system that generates referrals.

Imagine memorizing a single statement you could repeat after anybody asks what you do. And imagine that statement being relevant to the needs of potential customers. Imagine this statement being so powerful it causes people to ask for your business card.

Creating a one-liner and repeating it over and over is a great way to spread the word about what you do. A one-liner is simply a clear, repeatable statement that allows potential customers to find themselves in the story a company is telling.

1. Memorize your one-liner and repeat it over and over.
2. Have your team memorize the one-liner.
3. Include it on your website.
4. Repeat your one-liner in every piece of marketing collateral possible.