

# Why storytelling is important for brands

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08/05/2019

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No matter what you're selling, you should be making storytelling an important part of your brand. Stories are an ingrained part of who we are as human beings, something we have been doing for thousands of years. That's why, to harness the full potential of your brand, you need to be tapping into this innate human desire for narrative.

This desire goes beyond learning what skills your team has to offer or what your product does on the "About" page of your website. Brand storytelling is an important part of the way you convey your brand's message to your consumer base on social media, blogs, meetings and presentations. The story of your brand, when told right, encapsulates a feeling – the essence of your brand and company, and gets to the heart of what you do and why. This emotional connection is not only important for connecting with consumers and building a loyal customer base, it's also key to a cohesive and engaged company culture.

Here's why:

## Storytelling helps your audience connect with you

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There are many reasons that humans have been so drawn to telling stories for all of recorded history: to entertain, of course, but also to create trust and build social cohesion. According to research by Paul Zak, founding director of the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies at Claremont, character-driven stories cause the brain to synthesize oxytocin, a neurochemical that creates feelings of empathy, cooperation and trust.

For brands, storytelling works in the exact same way. Stories help peel back the impersonal mask of a company, giving customers an opportunity to relate to you and your mission as human beings. They see the trials and tribulations you've been through, they see your successes, they recognize the emotions involved in making the work you do happen. That's all highly relatable and will help people to connect to your brand – and the people behind it – in ways that stick.

Think about the popularity of podcasts like Guy Raz's "How I Built This" on NPR. Raz interviews innovative CEOs about how they created their companies, their personal backstories and the hurdles they had to overcome to get their company to where it is today. It's one of NPR's most successful podcasts for a reason: people — whether they are entrepreneurs or not — connect with those stories. They love to see the process these company's founders went through to make their dreams a reality. The narrative that comes out through these interviews is something people, no matter who they are, can relate to, because most of us in some way or another are trying to build and create something in our lives — even if it's not Uber or Patagonia!

## Storytelling helps people to retain information

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Think about how hard it was to remember facts from science class, or names and dates in history, compared to how well you STILL remember classic lines from your favourite childhood movies. Why? Stories, of course. The emotional pull of a good story, with all its highs and lows and tense moments, lodges in our brain for years. So if you want prospective customers to remember what your brand does and the ways your product makes people's lives easier, that's what you need to be thinking about.

For instance, at [StickerYou](#), we make die-cut [custom stickers](#), [labels](#) and [decals](#). Though information on what we make is *useful*, it's not *memorable*. What is memorable is the story of how StickerYou came to be. I was on a trip to LA, and visiting Manhattan Beach. I saw stickers everywhere – on doors, on skateboards, on benches. Everywhere I looked, I saw LA's ubiquitous sticker culture. I was so impressed that on returning to Toronto, Canada, it was all I could think about. I researched [custom stickers](#) and found they were incredibly

expensive if ordered in small batches. I decided to change that. This is the beginning of the StickerYou story, and it's much more memorable that the fact that we make die-cut sticky products.

That's also a good reminder that your brand's stories should also have some tension — the challenges you've overcome, the problems you've had to figure out, the path your brand has taken to get you where you are today.

## Storytelling is a learnable skill

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So you don't have a degree in English lit. So you may think your storytelling skills are lousy. That's no reason to get off the hook for incorporating it into your brand's marketing. As we've already established, storytelling is something humans have done for millennia — researchers believe there's even evidence of this dating back to the paintings in the Lascaux caves of France 17,000 years ago. What does that mean for you? That storytelling is an innate part of your nature too, and it's a skill that you too can learn — and improve on.

If you have built a business, you've got stories to tell. Think about the inspiration that led you to create your company, the challenges you faced and the people that helped you along the way. And then think about the people who use your product and what you've heard from them about their experiences. What were the pain points that led them to try your product? Were there people in their lives they were trying to help? Had other things not worked in the past? How did your product help them, how did it factor into their own personal story? Think about the emotions guiding those events and use those to help you retell the stories in ways that people will relate to and find compelling.

Remember, you've already got everything you need to tell compelling stories about your brand. Now go out there and tell them.

### **Andrew Witkin**

As the founder and president of [StickerYou](#), **Andrew Witkin** believes in the enormous power of customization. With over a decade of StickerYou success, he is one of Canada's leading experts in e-commerce, customization, startups, marketing and the tech economy. He is a graduate of Dalhousie University and holds an MBA from the Schulich School of Business, York University. Witkin has previously served as VP North American Licensing for Nelvana/Corus Entertainment and Director of Marketing for MegaBrands/Mattel.