



- CREATE THE STRUCTURE
- DEFINE THE CONTENT
- TELL YOUR STORY

- STORY SELLING
- REFERENCE GUIDE TO
- SALES CULTURE

Story Selling

One of our emerging best practices is “communicating through stories.” The following is a quick guide for developing a compelling and engaging story. Keep it hand and use the ideas to help create your own stories.

The Story Selling tips are from Phil Scott (Cabot Enterprises, Ltd.), Paul Smith (Storysmithing) and Robert J. Holmes (THG, LLC).



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Creating the Structure {1}



DETERMINE THE THEME. Theme is the primary concept around which the story is woven. What is it saying to your audience? Who is your audience? What is the situation in which you will tell the story? How will it help you sell?

CREATE THE PLOT. The plot is a way of sequentially organizing actions, events, and thoughts so that they make sense. What are the necessary and secondary events that will make up the plot? What is the appropriate order of these events so that they make sense? What is the relationship between these events and the characters?

OUTLINE THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END. All stories show events happening through time.

The Beginning: This is the “grabber” - something that will get clients to sit up and listen. How do you want to connect with your audience? How do you want them to feel about you? What do you need to do at the beginning of your story to connect with them and show that you care about them as individuals?

WHAT IS THE THEME ?

The Middle: This is the part of the plot where your story “happens.” What is the exciting message you want your audience to hear? How will you

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

convey potential conflicts and tensions, e.g. buy now or gamble that prices will fall? What are the possible gaps between the ideal and current reality, and the options for closing those gaps? What key questions need answers? What is the climax of your story? How will you involve your audience - make them feel that they are “in charge”?

OUTLINE YOUR THOUGHTS

The End: The end gives you a chance to tie together what you’ve said, to summarize, and to leave the other person with a positive experience of you and your story. What do you want your audience to be feeling and thinking at the end? What action do you want them to take away? How can you create a sense of urgency? What commitments do you need them to make so that they will “buy”? How will your story - especially the ending - guarantee you’ll get those commitments?

Developing the Content {2}

While plot is the skeleton of the story, content is the flesh on those bones. There are two important things to think about in terms of the content of any good story: Characters and Setting.

DESCRIBE THE CHARACTERS. Think of characters as the actors in your story - they act and cause others to react. What kinds of characters need to populate your story? What kinds of characters do you think your audience will identify with and will help you connect with your audience? How can your characters help build that connection to a formalized agreement to do a deal?

Their Traits and Background: Where did they come from? What is it about them that makes them important to your story? What makes your characters unique and interesting, i.e. courage, a strong sense of right and wrong, an Irish brogue, etc. Is there anything in their past that makes them particularly interesting or unique now?

Their Emotions: What are your characters feeling during each part of the story?

Their Motives: What do your characters want? How might these desires cause conflict? How can you use this tension to add to the suspense of your story?

DESCRIBE THE SETTING. Everything that happens in a story takes place somewhere and at some time, which helps to create the feeling of the story. What is the feeling you want your audience/client to experience? How can you describe this in terms of time and place?

Pulling it All Together

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BEGIN AT THE END. These are the key points (the payoff or call to action) you want to leave with your client. What is the theme? What do you want your audience to think, feel, and do? Write it in point form.

GO TO THE BEGINNING. This is where you will grab your audience’s attention. How does the action begin? What are the necessary and secondary events of your plot? Who are the characters being introduced at the beginning? What is the setting? How does the beginning of your sales story help you connect with your audience? Write this in narrative form.

FINALLY, THE MIDDLE. This is where the action takes place. In bullet form, write down:

- The necessary and secondary events that logically and sequentially follow from the beginning to the end.
- The characters who engage in the action, or who are moved by the action.
- The tensions and conflicts that need to be identified or created and resolved.
- The options for closing the “gap” between the audience’s desired state and their reality.
- How you will portray the successful closing of these gaps.

THE CLIMAX.

Test the Structure. Does the beginning entice, engage, and set the mood for what’s to come? Does the middle provide all the details - the action and events, the characters and setting? Does it convey the key tensions, dilemmas, problems, and gaps? Offer a climax where tensions are resolved, problems are solved, or answers are provided to some critical questions? Does the ending tie everything together? Is there a sense of completion to your story? Do you think your story can help move the audience toward a decision? Does it enhance the relationship?

WRITE OUT IN NARRATIVE FORM. You now have a rough draft of your story.

Getting Ready to Tell Your Story {4}

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE. Storytelling is a mutual creation between the teller and the audience - there is always a shared purpose. What is their motivation for listening to your story? What’s important to them; what do they value the most? What are their expectations - of your story and of you? What will initially engage and hold their attention? What is their perspective or point of view? What are the common elements between your story and their perspective? What is the pay-off to them at the end of the story?

KNOW YOUR STORY. Good storytellers know their story inside and out. What is the essence - the message you want to convey and the essential ingredients of that message? Are you comfortable with all the details - plot, characters, and setting.

CREATE MEMORABLE IMAGERY. Good storytellers embellish their stories with a variety of rich visual images to describe situations, settings, and characters. How have you used “thick description” to paint a vivid verbal picture and make the story come to life? Have you used metaphors and similes?



Tell Your Story {5}

CHANNEL YOUR ENERGY. Take several slow, deep breaths the moment before you begin to speak. Take a moment to focus your energy.

ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE. Allow them time to get ready. Set the expectations. Use the tone and volume of your voice to accentuate key points. Speak faster to convey a sense of urgency or excitement. Speak slower to portray drama and suspense. Ask rhetorical questions. Use eye contact. Use hand gestures.

HAVE FUN!