

The Business of  
**Stories**

# Five Great Brand Stories

Why they work so well and how  
*you* can craft stories that create  
connection and brand loyalty.

## Workbook...

**So, you hear how important and powerful storytelling in business is, but do you really understand what makes a good story or how your story can get you more ideal clients and create brand loyalty?**

In this workbook I will take you through five brand stories that work really well, explain why they work and help you to think about how you could do the same with your stories.

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### **Page 3: Innocent Drinks**

Their story is often one of the first that springs to mind when people talk about great brand stories. Find out why and what 'classic ingredients' you could include in your story.

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### **Page 6: Gandys of London**

Started by two orphaned brothers selling flip flops from their bedroom in Brixton, with nothing more than a Facebook page. But everything about their inspirational brand is wrapped in story. Explore how you can sprinkle your story throughout your brand.

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### **Page 9: Leaner Stronger You**

Jenny Nim is a health coach, on a mission to turn the diet & fitness industry on its head. Her story is powerful because it demonstrates how in-tune she is with her customers. Consider how you can demonstrate empathy in your story.

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### **Page 12: Coca-Cola**

Their stories & campaigns are always on-brand. They are very clear about what they stand for and so are their customers. Check your stories are consistently aligned with your brand values.

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### **Page 15: Cameron James Legal**

They have a product/service that people *need* but don't necessarily *want*. Find out how to engage customers, even when your offering is a 'bitter pill'.



## Innocent Drinks

# The story...

Adam Balon, Richard Reed & Jon Wright were students at Cambridge University together in the early '90s, where they ran a business organising club nights.

By February 1998 they were 26 years old, living together and working in London, but they regularly discussed starting another business together.

By their own admission they were living on far too much pizza and beer and decided they really wanted to focus on making healthy eating easier. They enjoyed fresh fruit smoothies, but getting to a juice bar wasn't always convenient and they wondered if there was a market for off-the-shelf fresh fruit drinks.

After some experimenting they came up with an orange, banana and pineapple

recipe. Although they got great feedback from friends, they knew they needed to do some market research so, in the summer of that year, they bought £500 of fruit and set up a stall at the Jazz on the Green music festival in London.

Next to the stall, they placed two large empty bins - one marked YES and one marked NO - and they asked customers to tell them whether or not they should give up their day jobs to start a smoothie business, by putting their empty bottles in the appropriate bin.

The crowd voted overwhelmingly for them to go for it and so, the following week, they all quit their jobs and Innocent Drinks was born.

# Why it works...

## Classic ingredients

Most Hollywood blockbuster films have a combination of classic ingredients.

Whether it's Luke Skywalker fighting the Imperial Forces in Star Wars or Simba challenging Scar to take back the homeland in The Lion King, we are all moved by stories of Heroes stepping up and winning the day – it's a winning formula.

The Innocent Drinks story has some of those classic ingredients:

*3 'Heroes' saw a problem and set off in search of a solution. They had a plan, went on a quest, found allies and got support. They took clear action and went on to win the day!*

## What the story tells us about them

Their story is also very inspiring and tells us a lot about them. They were clearly resourceful, tenacious, entrepreneurial, committed, putting well paid jobs on the line to follow something they were passionate about.

As the full story of Innocent Drinks unfolds, their social conscience also becomes clear. The Innocent brand has always been clear on its purpose and they continue to work towards sustainability using plant-based plastics, reducing miles and "greening the face of bottling in Europe".

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# How you can do the same...

## What classic ingredients does your story have:

- What problem or challenge were you facing?
- What was holding you back?
- Who influenced, inspired or guided you?
- What quest did you go on?
- What action did you take?
- What was at stake?
- What was the outcome/result you experienced?

## What does your story say about you?

Your story should give people a feel for what you are about, what's important to you and what you stand for.

Think about what your story says about you. Do people get a sense of your unique combination of passion, skills, characteristics and capabilities?

Think about your unique qualities and how you do your 'thing'. Is it your strength, resilience, commitment, resourcefulness, leadership or attention to detail?

Then think about the stories that demonstrate those qualities.

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Simon Sinek



## Gandys of London

# The story...

Rob and Paul Forkan, their two younger siblings and their parents, had been travelling around the world for four years, when the Tsunami hit Sri Lanka on Boxing Day 2004 and their parents were tragically killed.

The Sri Lankan people helped the children get back home and when, in 2012, Rob & Paul decided they wanted to build a children's home in Sri Lanka in their parent's memory, they started a flip flop business in their bedroom in Brixton, with nothing more than a Facebook page.

They have since expanded to clothing and accessories with a travel theme and recently opened their first flagship store in London.

But everything about their brand is wrapped in story. The 'A' in their logo has a wave and represents overcoming Adversity and the Kingfisher symbolises their Dad's favourite beer. Their shirts have maps in the lining and the words "Two brothers building homes for fellow orphans" are written on their flip flops.

When they built their first children's home they painted it white & blue, because as a family they had always supported QPR.

Their values are in their brand: "Designed in London, Inspired by Travel, Fuelled by Giving Back". They are all about empowering others, giving back and making a difference.

# Why it works...

## **Inspiring others to take action**

Of course, theirs is a powerful and tragic story but if you read Rob's book *The Tsunami Kids*, you will see that the Forkans are an incredibly positive, inspirational, adventurous and resourceful family.

They are not standing 'in' their story, they are standing 'on' it. Their story is there to support and empower others. It is about strength, commitment, fun, travel, taking action, helping others and being bold.

Their core values jump out of their story and leave you feeling inspired to take action.

## **Story is the golden thread**

Their story is sprinkled over everything they do. It is the golden thread that runs through their brand.

In fact, everything about their inspirational brand is wrapped in story – even down to the colours of their favourite football team.

As Lucy McCarraher, Managing Editor at Rethink Press, says "Your story should be like a thread running through the tapestry of your brand – a sparkle that catches your audience's eye and imagination".

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# How you can do the same...

## **How does your story help and inspire others?**

Whatever level of success you have now achieved, whatever mountain you have conquered, it is the story of what it took to get there that people will connect with.

- What obstacles have you overcome?
- What fears have you faced?
- What has got you through the tough times?
- What lessons have you learnt along the way?

Sharing your journey, your ups and downs, your highs and lows, makes your story more real and relatable. People will relate your story to theirs and be left feeling that they too could conquer their own mountain.

## **What is the golden thread running through your story?**

How could your story be sprinkled across your messaging and marketing?

Don't be afraid of letting your personality shine through your brand.

As well as your own story, look at your products, services, processes, team, suppliers, market and industry to provide a wealth of stories that can bring your business to life.

If a pair of flip flops can tell a story of strength, commitment, fun, travel, helping others and being bold, what is possible for you and your brand?

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Seth Godin





## Leaner Stronger You

# The story...

Jenny Nim is a Health & Fitness coach who wants to “turn the diet and fitness industry on its head”. Her mission is about bringing clarity & common sense to the often complicated and confusing world of healthy eating and exercise. She says, “I want to right the wrongs in this industry, make things simple and help as many people as I can”.

Jenny has been where her clients are now. She loves food and describes herself as a ‘natural over eater’, so she knows how hard it is to try and lose weight by relying on a willpower of steel. She understands how confusing and frustrating dieting can be. She too has been stuck in that All-or-Nothing Diet Trap that leaves you feeling totally demoralised and, at times, so obsessed

with the scales that you avoid eating out and stop enjoying life.

Jenny spent years feeling like a failure and had some real lows on her journey to finding what worked for her. Her first-hand experience of the rollercoaster journey that many of her clients are currently on has strengthened her empathy and meant that she can totally relate to their fears and frustrations, meet them where they are at, guide them towards a much easier, more natural relationship with food and exercise and help them develop a strategy that works for them and their lifestyle, long term.

# Why it works...

## **Showing empathy**

Jenny demonstrates a lot of empathy in her story. She has been where her ideal client is now. She knows how they are feeling. She understands what is frustrating them, making them feel bad or worrying them.

And that is powerful. We all want to know that the people we are working with 'get' us. That they understand how we are feeling. That they know what is holding us back, even better than we do, and that they know how to help us get the outcome that we want.

## **A big mission**

Jenny has a big mission and wants to be instrumental in bringing change to her industry. She is passionate about simplifying the complex, conflicting information out there and feels compelled to do the right thing and help as many people as she can.

People are inspired by and follow those who have a purpose. Those who are on a quest. People want to feel part of something bigger than they could ever be on their own.

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# How you can do the same...

## **How can you show empathy?**

Have you been where your ideal client is now? If so, take yourself back there. How did you feel? What did you want? What was frustrating you, worrying you or keeping you awake at night?

If not, you need to get good at listening to your clients and understanding the story going on in their head. How is having this problem making them feel? And what do they really want?

Stepping into your customer's shoes and understanding their story will allow you to show empathy and meet them where they are at.

## **What quest are you on?**

- What is the difference you want to make?
- What is the wrong you want to make right?
- What frustrates you about your industry?
- What change do you want to see?
- How do you want to challenge the norm?
- What is your big mission?

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Nick Morgan



## Coca-Cola

# The story...

Coca-Cola's campaigns all centre around one clear message: Drinking Coca-Cola will make you happy!

As far back as 1971, when their *I'd Like To Buy The World A Coke* ad was sung to the tune of *We'd Like to Teach The World To Sing*, their messaging has always been about... happiness.

Other popular campaigns have included *Share a Coke*, *Taste The Feeling* and *First Time*.

Their messaging is emotive, it is all about creating a feeling, and that story has been clear and consistent for many years.

When you think of Coca-Cola you think of sunshine, friends, fun, summer days, laughing, sharing, feeling happy.

Their message is strong, consistent and always on-brand.

It's the story they never stop telling.

# Why it works...

## Clear brand message

The campaign names might change, but their story is always clear: Drink Coca-Cola and you will be happy, cool and have a great time with your friends!

Their campaigns are all linked to *feeling good*.

They understand their target market and they have a very clear and strong brand message.

Storytelling has always been at the heart of their marketing and the story they tell is that of a happy customer.

## Consistency

Coca-Cola's marketing is always on point. They *consistently* tell the same story in all their marketing and advertising.

They focus on showing the customer what their life could look like if they drink Coca-Cola.

They paint the picture of how they can help their customer achieve the life they want.

They are consistently on-brand.

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# How you can do the same...

## What is your one key brand message?

Your stories need to be intrinsically linked to your brand values and your key message.

Clarity and consistency is CRITICAL. Confusion is the number one brand killer.

Your story needs to be perfectly aligned with your target audience's perception of your brand, and their expectations for it, otherwise they will go elsewhere – and look for someone whose message is clear, consistent and compelling.

What do you want to be known for?

What is the core belief that underpins everything you stand for?

What is the *One Thing* that your brand stands for?

## Be consistent

Make sure all your stories, content, messaging and marketing are consistent.

Look out for any disconnect between your stories and your brand.

Once you have identified what you want to be known for, your core belief and the one thing your brand stands for, have that theme consistently running through everything you put out, offline and online.

Get known for your message and what you stand for and make sure all your content tells *that* story.

# Your notes...

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“ People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them FEEL. ”

Mary Angelou





## Cameron James Legal

# The story...

Ben & Emma Marsh specialise in estate planning and give regular talks about the importance of having a will. Boring right? But their talk isn't boring. Far from it. It is always very interactive and surprisingly fun.

How come? Because they use tons of stories.

Ben starts all his talks by reading a fictitious letter from someone who has died without making a will:

To The Taxman : "I hereby leave you ALL the tax that I could have avoided if I had done the necessary planning"

To The Probate Professional : "I hereby give you the authority to charge my estate whatever is necessary to sort out the mess I have left behind. I realise this could make you one of the beneficiaries of my estate"

And to anyone else I wanted to leave something to : "I leave you nothing"

They also tell stories of famous people who have died without making a will, including Prince whose estate is estimated to be worth about £200m – but half of which could be lost in tax. And Jimi Hendrix, who died in 1970, but elements of his estate are still being disputed in the courts to this day!

# Why it works...

## **Using story to make a 'dull' or sensitive subject more engaging**

Estate planning is not a subject people necessarily want to engage with.

No-one WANTS to think about their mortality or have the hassle, effort and cost of making a will.

But they do NEED one. And Ben & Emma leave you in no doubt why.

Story is a great way of making an important point more relevant, relatable and easier to digest.

People don't always want to be told what they 'should' do, but a powerful story is a great way of getting your message across in a way that people are much more likely to engage with.

## **Demonstrating the cost of not taking action**

Your story can also communicate the cost of NOT getting the problem resolved.

And in this case the cost, literally, could be years of legal wrangling for your loved ones left to sort it out and a large proportion of your estate.

This is not about playing on people's fears, it's about showing them what you can help them avoid and why it's so important.

People have to be highly motivated to take action, and a highly relevant and compelling story is a powerful way of showing people why it needs to move up their list of priorities.

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# How you can do the same...

## **How can you use story to make your topic more engaging?**

If your product or service is something people NEED but don't necessarily WANT, think about how you could use story to get your message across.

Give examples of how your product or service has improved people's lives.

Use stories to approach a sensitive or dull subject in a lighter, more relatable way.

## **What is the cost of not taking action?**

Think about the cost to your client of not taking action?

What will happen if they don't do something to resolve the problem they have?

It may be that the cost of doing nothing is that nothing will change!

Use examples, analogies or case studies to show what you can help your client's avoid.



# Your notes...

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“ The most powerful person in the world is the STORYTELLER. The storyteller sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation that is to come. ”

## Steve Jobs

# And finally... ■ ■ ■

## **Start telling your stories**

Start small.

Rather than feeling overwhelmed with everything I have covered in this workbook, pick one thing and work on that first.

Then start telling your stories – both offline and online.

Notice the bits of your story that people really engage with.

Notice what questions people ask, what they want to know more about and what gets them excited about what you are doing.

You could always start with your family, friends and peers. Tell them your story and ask for honest feedback.

How did it make them feel?

What did it tell them about you?

Did it leave them wanting to know more?

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## **Keep your stories fresh**

Remember story is not a static thing. It is a living breathing thing.

Keep your stories current. Make sure they show how your business is moving forwards, developing and progressing.

Businesses don't stand still, so your stories shouldn't either.

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## **Don't lose customers to better storytellers**

In a world where it is getting harder and harder to stand out from the crowd, and more and more consumers are making choices based on a brand's mission and vision, it is critical that you are telling a powerful brand story that connects and resonates with your target market.

If you would like me to help you make sure that you are speaking to the right people, with the right message and a great story, contact me on **[susan@thebusinessofstories.com](mailto:susan@thebusinessofstories.com)**

# So, there you have it. My top tips.

I hope I have inspired you to get started  
and I would love to know how you get on.

If you haven't done so already, please connect with me on:

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# Happy storytelling!

*Susan x*