50 NATURAL STORY SOURCES TO BUILD *B2B* AUDIENCE TRUST

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

**‘Smoke and mirrors’ marketing was yesterday’s world.
Today brand building is all about genuine trust.**

Like us, working in B2B marketing you’ll understand the power that brand authenticity has today. But actually being authentic is far stronger than just being perceived as authentic.

Audiences see through crafted marketing stories and look for what’s real about the companies they do business with. That’s why it’s vital that you can lay your hands on a wealth of natural stories – the ones that really are founded in reality and that customers trust.

To help you we’ve outlined the 50 natural storytelling sources we’ve used over and over for our clients to great effect. We’re sure you’ll find many of them within your own organisation too.

We hope it triggers a few ideas and some great new PR stories. And if you’d like to discuss our approach to storytelling in more depth we’d love to hear from you!

PEOPLE BASED STORIES

No organisation would work without people, and stories are no exception. Here are lots of ways to bring management, staff and personal attributes to life.

1. **Founders**
   Are the founders still in the business? Tap into their back stories and reveal the truth behind the organisation's purpose.

2. **CEO**
   Start at the top! If you want to set out your future positioning the CEO's vision is critical.

3. **CTO**
   Does your product specialist have an opinion around a new tech or an industry trend?

4. **CFO**
   Tap into CFO knowledge – it's at the heart of the business model and helps demystify complex legislation and trends.

5. **Customer services**
   Get true customer insight. Speak to customer support, sales and account managers to unlock trends and spot what the latest industry challenge is.

6. **Every department**
   Leave no stone unturned! From procurement to HR to shop floor, every business function has potential hidden PR stories.

7. **Qualifications**
   Check your staff's actual qualifications. Letters after a name may give you the edge in building trust in your audiences' eyes.

8. **Accreditations**
   Has your business been accredited for anything unusual or are you one of the first to achieve something?

9. **Personal back stories**
   We've all got one! If you want to PR your business through its people, find the competitive sportsperson, secret scientist or mastermind finalist.

10. **Opinion**
    It may seem obvious, but never underestimate a real opinion as a marketing content or PR coverage opportunity. Listen out for people's views.

11. **Advice**
    Who are the customer advisers in your business? Can you package up content based on how they help customers on support calls?

12. **Skills**
    Get true customer insight. Speak to customer support, sales and account managers to unlock trends and spot what the latest industry challenge is.

13. **Talent**
    How do you find the talent you need? If you have an innovative or unusual approach to recruitment, the media may be interested in hearing about it.

ACTIVITY AND ASSET BASED STORIES

A business' day to day functions and decisions are often taken for granted by those people close to them. But to the outside world they may well be significant in terms of best practice, advice or shared knowledge.

14 **Adversity**
It's easy to focus on positive success, but showing how you deal with challenges will interest the media much more.

15 **Funding**
If you've tapped into business funding of any type share your experiences with others. It's a widely covered business issue.

16 **Failure**
Be human and show how you learned from previous mistakes. This shines a positive light on what may be a negative story.

17 **Buildings**
Coolest office in town? Space age factory? Solar powered plant? Promote your unique premises!

18 **Locations**
Why are you based where you're based? Overseas market expansion? Lower overheads? Map story ideas to your different locations.

19 **History**
Have you been in the market longer than your competitors? Are you a fourth generation family owner? The past can be part of your present too.

20 **Social responsibility**
If the business is big on social value or sustainability consider talking about how you do it.

21 **Digital development**
From corner shop to mobile marketplace. Digital is all around us and a successful transformation is something to shout about.

22 **Business models**
New pricing structures, different markets, alternative delivery methods; are you reacting and reforming how the business operates?

23 **Employee benefits**
People are the number one asset! How do you attract, retain and develop them? This could be a great positive message.

24 **Associations**
Are you helping steer an industry association or teaming with a top university in your field? Communicate together with your partners to demonstrate leadership.

PRODUCT AND SERVICE BASED STORIES

Your product or service is your business' backbone. Don't just 'launch' it in a press release! There are many ways that you can bring what you sell to life for different audiences, using different media and channels.

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Implementation

Anything unique or different in how you on-board customers or implement your solution? If so, tell the world!

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R&D

OK, so you don't want to reveal your next big thing to the world but showcasing early prototypes and experimental concepts can catch the media's and potential customers' eye.

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'How it works'

It's often assumed that people understand how your products or services work but offering simple step by step guides can be really useful.

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Demonstrations

Seeing is believing! If your new product works differently or is incredibly simple and intuitive, let people see this first hand. Or use an animation or video to get the message across.

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Testing

Do you sell something that's easy to access and use? Why not let selected media try it out and see how it works for them?

DATA AND INFORMATION BASED STORIES

Data, data everywhere, but not a drop to drink? Businesses are accruing more information by the minute. Tap into this and you'll find a wealth of stories that really make a difference to your marketing campaigns and media coverage.

30 **Customer surveys**
Businesses regularly check on customer opinion but miss the opportunity to ask additional PR questions or use the findings for storytelling.

31 **Databases**
If you accrue data as part of your service, harness it. There's a likely goldmine of angles in there.

32 **User groups**
Data's not just numbers. Tap into qualitative feedback and ideas shared at user groups and customer events.

33 **Debate**
A heated debate or roundtable discussion creates information unique to your company. A great way to become a thought leader and own a topic.

34 **Official statistics**
Don't just rely on your own data – there's a wealth of statistics constantly being pumped into the world that you can build stories around.

35 **Calculations**
If you can't get accurate ROI or savings data from your customers, then devise a simple calculation of benefits derived from your product or service. This is a great way to bring the story to life.

36 **PR research**
One of the PR industry's staple story generators, research should always have a clear purpose, deliver something useful and generate a wealth of story opportunities!

37 **Social media polls**
Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook all offer the opportunity to reach out to followers and garner opinions. A great way to quickly give a story more depth or context.

‘BIGGER PICTURE’ BASED STORIES

So far we’ve focused within the four walls of your business but what’s out there in the wider world? Considering your organisation’s position within the market landscape, burning issues or new trends opens up other possibilities.

38 **Legislation**
Changing laws affect businesses all the time. What’s facing your customers and how can you advise them or dispel the myths?

39 **Regulation**
Just like legislation, new rules will change the goalposts in your market. Show your understanding and what you’re doing to address these.

40 **Political decisions**
We might not personally like some political outcomes but using them as a backdrop for issues-based storytelling is extremely useful.

41 **Social phenomena**
An ageing population, the digital divide, workplace inequalities. Think how any number of social or consumer issues link back to what your business does.

42 **Future predictions**
The media always want opinions on what’s going to be the next big thing for your industry as the New Year approaches. Get your ideas in there in plenty of time.

43 **Sharing the stage**
Bring different story telling partners together to deliver a broader or more substantiated story – see what your customer, academic, expert, partners and even competitors can add.

44 **Consumer trends**
You may sell to businesses but do they sell to consumers? If so, show how your product indirectly helps ‘the person in the street’.

45 **Competitive response**
What are your competitors promoting or talking about? Do you have an alternative view in response?

46 **Events and seminars**
Presentations at events can hold great information which can be videoed or written up and shared as content for the press, social media or your website.

CUSTOMER BASED STORIES

A customer testimony has long been viewed as one of the best ways to promote the benefits you provide but collaborating with customers on stories can go much further than this. Just consider the value add you could also give a customer that wants positive PR, by running a joint campaign with them.

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Case studies

An age old PR tactic and still among the best. Remember to think digital – would a video get the message across more than written word?

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Customer opinion

Customers don't just have to talk about working with you. Maybe they'd be willing to share their views alongside yours, too.

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Profiles

The media is always looking to profile industry leaders. If you work with them why not help them to elevate their position? You win by association.

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It's all about them

Sometimes you just can't shoehorn your brand into a customer PR opportunity, but why not help them to get some free PR for the sake of a good relationship?

WHERE NEXT?

Here are five easy tips for you to consider to make your natural storytelling process really successful.

1. Hold story foraging workshops: Get together with other marketing and business stakeholders and use these story sources to uncover real stories within your business that you can start to put to use.

2. Challenge your agency's creativity: Maybe it's time to challenge your agency to come up with more creative and authentic story ideas; you could measure this against the source ideas in this guide.

3. Build a content and campaign plan: Don't use all your story resources at once or underestimate their potential. It's important to map stories to your communications strategy and campaign plans to ensure they resonate at the right time across the right channels.

4. Define, align and refine: Ideas are great but they need to be developed into compelling, evidence backed stories in line with your goals and messages and audience interests. Once stories are defined it's vital to align them to audiences and then refine their content for best performance.

5. Create a storytelling environment: New story sources will constantly evolve and change and a continuing discovery programme is key. Can you create a storytelling culture through internal communication and incentives so that people know you are hungry for more ideas?

NEED MORE HELP?

Are you looking for more help with your B2B storytelling? Visit skoutpr.com where you'll find a wealth of storytelling resources and blogs, or get in touch with us directly, we'd love to talk to you!

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