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FOUR reasons your business stories fail (and how to make them better)

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Storytelling is at the top of many a B2B marketer's priorities list right now. And it's easy to see why: focusing on showing rather than telling is much more conducive to staging successful interaction with customers. It's much more in-line with inbound best practice than the disturb and dictate model we all used to follow.

Of course, new opportunities always come with their corresponding challenges; and storytelling is no different. One of the main ones is that it isn't as easy as you might think.

Sure, anyone can tell a story. But telling a good story is far trickier. And telling a story in a business setting likely to convince an unpartisan prospect that they'd benefit from taking their relationship with you to the next level is even more difficult.

Therefore, it's no surprise to see the business world littered with poorly executed attempts at storytelling. In this paper, we've isolated four of the most commonly spotted errors, and highlighted ways in which they can be avoided.

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You're playing the hero

With relatively few exceptions to the rule, most people do not care about your company, its unique history or how long its been leading the field in its specific niche. It stands to reason, really. People aren't interested in your success. They are, however, very interested in their own success, which is where you should come in.

But these facts don't stop some brands investing considerable amounts of time and money creating stories placing themselves right at the centre. You are not the hero of the story. Your customers and prospects are. This is the most important thing to remember when thinking about B2B storytelling. Don't tell your story; tell their story.

Next time you put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard, as the case may be), make sure you're plotting a story that charts your customers' trials, tribulations and successes, rather than those of your own brand. And, above anything else, remember: you're only aiming for best supporting actor in this story.

You are boring

Slightly harsh titling, perhaps, but with all the competition for (shrinking) attention spans online these days, you really need to make sure what you're offering is actually worth consuming.

Of course, there are many ways to do this. Content has to be well written, and images help, but if you're providing prospects with dull experiences it's unlikely they'll be beating a path to you door any time in the future. Therefore, spend a little time making sure your stories are enjoyable experiences.

One way of ensuring this increasingly important box is ticked is to look at how you're presenting your content. Are you expecting people to slog through 2000 unformatted words, or are you actually engaging them? Design, imagery and video can all bring a story to life. And with the rise of storytelling technology platforms, all marketers are now able to create something memorable.

You're afraid of data

Data is the wise B2B storyteller's best friend. It can help you decide what stories your audience might be interested in, it can help you assess the success your previous offerings have met with, it can help you frame original stories, and it provides the foundations for the creation of engaging visualisations (think infographics).

However, these benefits are all too often lost because many content marketers are more concerned with letters than numbers. While data analysis is – perhaps – not part of every marketers' skills arsenal, ignoring data's incredibly important role in content marketing is not something you should be deciding to do lightly.

No one ever achieved anything great by taking the easy way out. So, even if you're not naturally inclined to head for the numbers, force yourself to acknowledge their existence: they may well breathe new life into your marketing perfomance.

You're lazy

The most frustrating reason for failing at B2B storytelling actually has very little to do with the 'story' side of things. It's more about sharing. It's the old 'if we build it, they will come' idea. Except, we all know (don't we?) that in the age of digital marketing no one is ever going to come and check your site just in case you left something there that they might like.

If you're going to go to the hassle of creating and crafting your stories, make sure you give them the best chance of being seen by as many people as possible. You have to take your story to the masses. And there are lots of ways you can do this. Email, social, DM – all the usual suspects are lining up to help you out.

If you're looking more long term – and you should be – it might even be worth mapping out a campaign that allows your story to twist, turn and develop over time.

How to do it right

Regardless of whether you're a seasoned storyteller or if your brand is looking to make its first tentative steps into the world of content creation, it's useful to remember the points highlighted in this paper.

Your mantra should be, customer, customer, customer:

- Make sure you're telling **their story not your own**
- Provide **engaging experiences**
- **Don't ignore the data**
- Make it **easy for people** to find your stories: they won't come looking



About Esri

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Add a new dimension to your content marketing strategy with the new interactive Story Map App from Esri. Our ready to use App comes with a wide range of templates that enable you to combine text, images, videos, interactive maps, web forms and powerful data visualisation tools to create compelling digital stories.

The Story Map App makes it easy for you to share digital stories, empowering brands to engage with new audiences and take the same message to market across web, social and PR.

To find out how modern marketing departments are creating dynamic stories that captivate and convert visit esriuk.com/marketing or call 01296 765500

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as B2B Marketing magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

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