ANIMATED B2B STORYTELLING:
WHEN THE MOVING IMAGE MAKES THE MOST IMPACT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The medium you choose to convey a B2B marketing story can greatly affect its impact. Animation, motion graphics, video, movie… whatever you name it, content that tells a story via moving images can generate leads, enhance a brand, and deliver information in ways that truly engage B2B audiences. In this paper, we explore the essentials of a good B2B story, why video is becoming more popular as a B2B content asset, the best use cases for video storytelling, and when it makes sense to call in the professionals vs firing up the smartphone camera.

KEY DETAILS

- Every effective B2B story includes action, conflict & resolution, character, and specifics
- Video is the medium of choice for capturing complete audience attention fast
- Video content typically keeps website visitors engaged longer than text does—and ultimately nudges search results in your favour so more people can find you online
- You can atomise your video content into other outlets, such as presentations and blog posts
- The best use cases for video storytelling include educational demos and tutorials, brand stories, thought leadership pieces, and direct response campaigns



INTRODUCTION

If the current focus on storytelling leaves you a bit wary, you're not alone. On the surface, storytelling sounds grand: Surely emotion, vivid details, and a personal point of view give you more grab factor than bulleted lists and abstract USPs.

But what makes storytelling an effective B2B marketing vehicle and not just entertainment? How do you judge which storytelling media to use? What unique marketing advantages can video give you?

WHAT MAKES A GOOD B2B STORY IN ANY MEDIUM

Brand narrative or product demo, video or print-ready pdf, we've found there are four essential elements of an effective B2B story:

ACTION

This is your express train to engagement. Think in scenes more than sentences. Don't just tell people what you offer; show them how it works. You say you're passionate about service? Project the full emotional power of your commitment instantly with images, color, and sound. Got a unique vision for success? Illustrate the journey and the outcomes to inspire your audience to join you.

CONFLICT & RESOLUTION

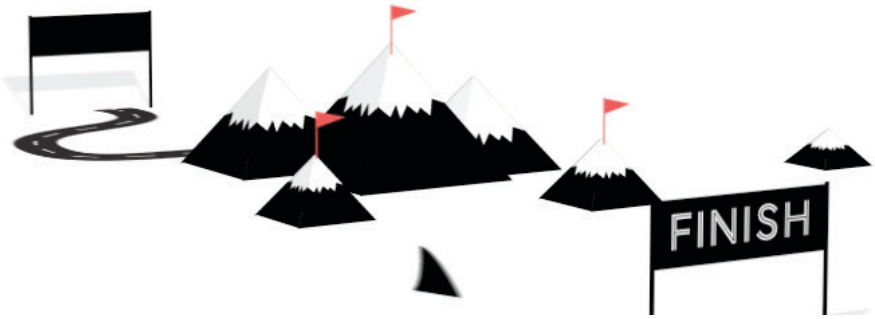
Without a problem to solve or an issue to debate, there's no story. Simply announcing your company's latest success is not a story. Showing how you got there, revealing the challenges along the way, highlighting the customer needs that prompted you to develop your solution – those are powerful storytelling elements that encourage your audience to relate to your offering.

CHARACTER

A good B2B character is one that your audience can identify with in terms of their role, expertise or situation. Whether your character is a real company spokesperson, a fictional illustrated figure, or even just a voice, they can immediately engage audiences at a personal (and often emotional) level. Special tip for videos: You'll want to balance any static "talking head" characters with animated or live action scenes to punch up your service, product, or main points.

SPECIFICS

Statistics, quotes, examples, illustrations…these sorts of specifics make any message more memorable. Contrast: "We make the best widgets" with "Our customers enjoyed a 50% increase in productivity using our Wicked Widget." And if you can get your customers to say it for you, all the better.



WHY ANIMATE YOUR B2B STORIES?

In a recent survey by the Content Marketing Institute[1], 41% of the B2B marketing respondents claimed their greatest content marketing challenge is 'producing the kind of content that engages prospects and customers'. And 27% more of those surveyed in 2012 planned to include video in their content marketing strategies than those surveyed the year before. Video is on the rise as a content asset of choice because:

IT'S A COMPLETE ENGAGEMENT VEHICLE

Action, colour, voices, faces, music… with video, you have a full suite of tools for enhancing your B2B stories with emotion, humour, and a sensory experience.

IT DRIVES HOME YOUR STORY IN SECONDS

How much of a written story can you digest in 30 seconds? Moving images can plant the full meaning and effect of your B2B story in the mind of your audience much faster than pages of paragraphs. (Talking of which, if you're short on time, stop reading this and press play instead.)

IT HELPS MORE PEOPLE FIND YOU VIA SEARCH

Video content typically keeps website visitors engaged longer than text does. Google's algorithm factors in a longer click through rate, and returns video on the first page of results from its universal search feature. No doubt these are a couple of the reasons why 'an in-depth study by Forrester in 2010[2] found that a page with a video on it is 53 times more likely to achieve a page one result on Google.'[3]

Also, you can upload your videos to YouTube, Vimeo, and other video sharing sites, giving your audience more places to find and engage with your offering.

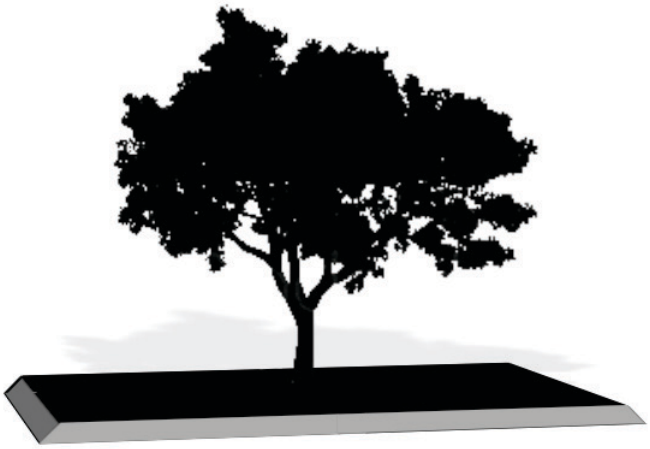
IT INVIGORATES YOUR PRESENTATIONS

Make the most of your video investment and prevent slide fatigue. Use the videos you have to add a quick dash of storytelling action to presentations for sales calls, conferences, new business pitches and internal meetings. Insert the whole video or excerpt the parts most relevant to your presentation.

1 B2B Content Marketing: 2012 Benchmarks, Budgets & Trends
http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/B2B_Content_Marketing_2012.pdf

2 http://www.slideshare.net/tpldrew/steal-this-slide-ecommerce-video-conversion-rates-statistics

3 http://www.onextrapixel.com/2012/03/27/how-video-can-improve-your-social-media-and-seo-status/



BEST USE CASES FOR VIDEO STORYTELLING

Any B2B marketing story can potentially benefit from the added audience engagement video offers. That said, most marketers don't have the resources to make a video to accompany or act as the sole channel for every story they need to tell. In our 12-year experience, the four categories below deliver the highest impact for your video investment.

EDUCATIONAL DEMOS AND TUTORIALS

Video is the ideal medium to lead people step by step through a process, convey complex ideas, or introduce your latest research or technology advances. When you show while you tell, it's easier for your audience to follow along. Plus you can inject a personal touch via a host or other characters who can keep your audience engaged.

EXAMPLE: 'THE FUTURE OF BIOFUEL', SAAB

BRAND STORIES

When you want your target audience to believe in your vision, promise, mission and values, you've got to make them feel the momentum of your own belief. A well-crafted statement is a good start, but sound and motion will instantly connect your audience with your passion and personality. In many cases, considering how to tell your brand story in moving images will even help you discover new, powerful ways to express your brand.

EXAMPLE: TENEMOS CORPORATE

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

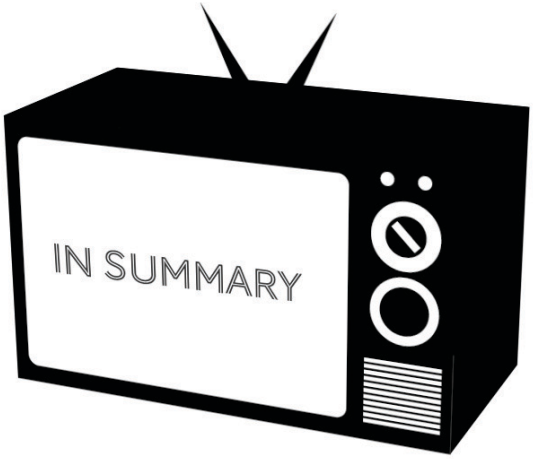
We're going to have to be firm with you about this: Creating a thought leadership video does not mean getting one of your top execs to read excerpts from your latest white paper under the pretence of being 'interviewed'. Existing written content may serve as the basis for a video version, but the most compelling thought leadership videos evolve from a creative process of their own. If you want your statistics and insights to pop, resonate and stick with your audience, say less, show more, and think re-create rather than repurpose.

EXAMPLE: EARNEST VITAL STATISTICS FOR B2B MARKETERS

DIRECT RESPONSE CAMPAIGNS

When you want to boost response rates, you don't have a lot of time to tell a story. You've got to deliver that CTA quick-smart, and you've got seconds, not minutes, to persuade your targets to click, call, send, or submit. Incorporating video or motion graphics into your pitch gives you a speedy, high-impact storytelling edge.

EXAMPLE: PAYPAL FIVE SECOND FILMS



OUTSOURCE OR DIY?

Many marketing pundits will tell you 'Just do it.' Grab your smartphone and start filming. Worry about production quality if (when?) you get comments about it. While it's true that decent video equipment is more accessible than ever, live filming is just one, fairly limited way to animate your B2B stories. Motion graphics, high production value, and professional creative strategy will support your business credibility and differentiate you from your competition.

Put it this way: If you simply want to narrate your latest blog post instead of typing it, by all means, set up your mini-tripod and let the smartphone camera roll. But if you need to tell the big B2B stories – the ones that inspire belief in your brand, spur your targets to action, and get people talking about your business – put them in safe, experienced hands.

Stokenbrand is the digital agency that commits customised resources to every client. We grew up in the B2B world, so we know where you're coming from – and how to get you where you want to go. Animation, motion graphics, and web design are the Stokenbrand specialities, but you can also tap us for branding, SEO, social media, and other areas of marketing support. Get to know us, and get the personalised attention your brand deserves.