

Seven Ways to Effectively Tell the Story of Your Business

by Ira M. Gostin, MBA, APR

Corporate storytelling is one of the most effective yet underutilized tools for a business to use in marketing themselves. Notice I didn't say "small business" or corporation. It's applicable to any size business.

If storytelling is the most efficient and cost-effective marketing tool out there, why isn't it used more? Good question for which I don't have a good answer. But it does take a little planning, and it does take some work. Here are X ways to begin telling the story of your business today:

1. **Make a Plan.** Conduct a planning session with your partners or senior team. Plan on spending a couple hours and really dig into the story of your company. If you don't have a value proposition, this process will give you one. In our agency, we call this the Vision Quest and it is something we conduct with our clients. Lots of brainstorming, sticky notes and introspection will get you a vocabulary, or bullet list, of words that describe your company.
2. **Define It.** Defining the heart and soul of your company is imperative to this process. Create a vision statement and value proposition, these are the definitions of your brand. As a reminder, your "brand" is your promise to your customers, not the physical logo.
3. **Craft the Story.** Now it's time to turn all these adjectives and descriptors into a story. I like doing it on a whiteboard and I literally draw big parallel lines and start writing along the lines: Founded in and by, answer the why. What is the problem being solved. Unique? Innovative? Have fun with this because it is the background of your story. This isn't an elevator pitch, or a sound bite. It is the story of your business. It should be no longer than a couple brief paragraphs.

A group of us that worked for the industry leader in the lighting business got together one night in 2010. We knew that our big megacompany just didn't deliver the solutions and customer service that we thought it should. So we decided to do something about it and founded Acme Lighting. The five of us maxed out our credit cards, brought in a couple of investors and we made this dream a reality. Our number one priority was: deliver innovative lighting solutions while providing stellar customer service. There's only three of us left but we crossed \$1 million in sales last year, and we are still growing and innovating! This is Acme Lighting!

Just a silly example but you can see how all of the elements come into play.

4. **Practice Makes Perfect.** It seems artificial, but you have to practice telling the story. What's in our head doesn't always come out the right way. Rehearse it,

practice, video tape it and critique until all the pauses and “ums” and “uhs” are gone from your story. Keep it sincere because this is YOUR story and you want it to take hold.

5. **Create a Marketing Review.** Now that your story is polished and practiced, it's time to push it out there. You will have different versions, usually three: one, a first-person that a founder or CEO or executive delivers. Two, one that a staff member can deliver and three, a written version that you know use in your marketing materials. This is in your “company” voice, so is usually third-person unless you want to get really creative and spend time giving your company a real voice!
6. **Match the Creative.** Ensure that you have the right graphics and photos to move forward. Does your pitch deck need updating? New founder photos? Do you need to get digital versions of those old photos hanging on the walls or maybe create an infographic to support the story? Make it vibrant!
7. **We're Just Getting Started!** Now the hard part. Just get out and tell the story. If you are a local business, find community groups that align with your values and marketing targets. If you are a public company, find new conferences to speak directly to investors that might be interested in your company. Everywhere in between, find that place to tell your story. Share your expertise and experiences to not only help others but introduce your business.



Ira Gostin is an investor relations, marketing and communications strategist who helps companies of all sizes move the needle and realize sustainable growth. In 2018, Ira was named the Most Influential Marketing Executive of the Year for Nevada by Acquisition International magazine and he has won numerous awards for his strategies and results. Ira is a speaker, writer, coach, start-up mentor and

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