

Step Three

Module Three

Mini Lesson Guide

the
marketing
Democracy™

Welcome!



We communicate and remember what's most important to us through storytelling. It's part of our human experience. And marketing communication isn't any different. The best marketing communication tells a great story. In this module, we are going to share the secrets of storytelling. It all boils down to five key ingredients. You will learn how to identify these ingredients in other brand stories that you know and love. And, once you get the hang of it, you can then work on turning your big idea into a great brand story.

- Judy

Module Overview

In this module, we are going to focus on four key ideas:

- In [Lesson One](#), you will learn the five key ingredients of great brand storytelling.
- In [Lesson Two](#), you will learn how to cast your customers in the starring role and how playing the supporting role can make you the hero of their story.
- In [Lesson Three](#), you will learn how culture creates all kinds of themes that you can draw upon as you build your story.
- In [Lesson Four](#), you will learn that the moral of the story serves as a perfect opportunity to reinforce your brand promise.

To help you identify and plan for all five ingredients of a great brand story, you can purchase a "Storytelling Framework." This downloadable PDF is fully functional if you open it in Adobe Acrobat Reader. Be sure to click on the "listen" icon in the lower right-hand corner to learn more about this helpful tool. And, for additional inspiration, you can watch the real-world example video to see this lesson in practice.

Congratulations on taking this important step in your journey to developing world-class marketing for your business.







Lesson One

The Five Key Ingredients of Brand Storytelling

Why This Matters

You've done all this work to land on a big idea. But how do you communicate that big idea in the marketplace? We communicate what is most important and memorable in our lives through storytelling. And marketing communication isn't any different. Today's world-class marketers use storytelling techniques to communicate their big ideas across time and channel. And now you can, too. This lesson will show you how brand stories can unify an array of marketing activities with its plotlines and chapters. You will learn the five key ingredients of any great brand story to ensure that you have the best possible opportunity to successfully craft your own.

5 Key Takeaways

-  We communicate and remember important ideas and themes through storytelling. Today's most successful marketers use storytelling to communicate their brand promise in the marketplace.
-  Brand stories have five key ingredients. Once you learn to recognize them you can understand the drivers of the most successful brand stories in the marketplace.
-  Brand stories last far longer than advertising campaigns. A single story can accommodate several chapters and plot twists over time.
-  Storytelling can do the heavy lifting along all the steps of the brand ladder. Brand stories aren't reserved for just the top level of the ladder.
-  Like any great story, brand stories need to touch the head and/or the heart of the audience in order to be memorable and impactful.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to Lesson Two, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

Think of marketing communication that touched your head and your heart. Marketing that you remember. Chances are, it was a story. Do you agree?

Can you anticipate the five key ingredients of a great brand story? The TMD Storytelling Framework will fill you in, and help you to plan for all five ingredients.

Are you concerned that stories may be too "soft-sell" in their approach? Think about marketing stories that you remember and love. Do you know who they were for? Do you know the products and services they promote? We rest our case!






Lesson Two

Casting the Lead Actors and Playing a Supporting Role

Why This Matters

Brand stories can accommodate an entire cast of characters. But who is the star, and who should play the supporting role? All too often, business owners want to star in their own brand story. We're here to set the record straight. Focusing on the business owner touting their greatness is a bad idea. We've seen it all too often, and it doesn't work. This lesson is going to help you to find your place in your brand story. There's plenty of room for character development without you having to steal the show. You can still be a hero while playing a supporting role.

Key Takeaways

-  You are not the star of the story. Your customers should have the lead role. Take a back seat and put your ego aside. There's plenty of opportunity to shine without taking over the story.
-  You can still be the hero of the story when you play a supporting role. Heroes/Heroines are highly memorable. When they enter the story, they resolve tension and provide solutions for the lead characters.
-  If you choose to bring a competitor into the story, be careful not to lose focus on the lead character--the customer. The story should not turn into a battle of wills between you and your competitors.
-  The stories do not need to be two dimensional interactions between you and your customers. You can add other characters from the customers' lives to the story to add importance and meaning to the story.
-  You can take a wide lens approach and cast other characters from culture to create broad resonance. This doesn't mean that you will lose the personal nature of the narrative. Each individual can relate to their experiences in culture.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to Lesson Three, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

Can you think of marketing communication where the business owner is the star of the story? As a consumer, what do you think about this approach? Can you think of any instances where the business owner should take precedence over his/her customers?

Who is the star of your current marketing communications? You? Your products and services? Or, your customers? If you did not answer "customers" you have work to do!

Think of marketing communication that is heavily focused on competitive claims. Do you see any role for the customer in this approach? Or, is the customer lost?

Lesson Three

Borrowing From Culture

Why This Matters

Sometimes it's hard to think beyond our business and the category that we operate in. When in reality, our customers lead busy lives that are shaped by many forces that have nothing to do with us. What's happening broadly in culture is a fantastic backdrop for any brand story. This lesson will help you to use cultural themes to add relevance and resonance to your brand story. Importantly, culture works both ways: it can help you or it can call you out. This lesson will also identify the important cultural signals that you cannot ignore without appearing out of touch and potentially tone deaf.

Key Takeaways

- 📍 Your marketing stories are impacted by what is happening more broadly in culture. Sometimes culture will work in your favor (cultural tailwinds) and sometimes culture will work against you (cultural headwinds).
- 📍 You can borrow cultural themes to provide a relevant setting for your story. This can heighten interest, especially if the theme has a lot of talk value.
- 📍 Culture trends have different timelines. Some are short-lived (fads), while others are long-lasting (evergreen). Mainstream trends fall in between.
- 📍 Cultural rituals can create a fantastic backdrop if your products and services can become part of the ritual.
- 📍 Culture is diverse and your stories must respect cultural diversity, equity and inclusion.



Ask Yourself

Before moving on to Lesson Four, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of this lesson?

Does your marketing communication embrace the principles of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion? What do you do well, and what needs to improve?

What's happening in culture right now that can help you? Conversely, what's happening in culture right now that can hurt you?

Are you more comfortable leveraging Fads (short-term) or more long-term cultural trends? Which approach fits your marketing communication cycle?

Lesson Four

Reinforcing Your Promise

Why This Matters

Why is storytelling so effective for marketing communications? It's simple. Every great story has a moral: a key message or lesson learned. The moral of the story is a natural means for expressing and reinforcing your brand promise in marketing communication. It ties everything together into this simple conclusion. This lesson will provide you with various alternatives to communicate your brand promise either implicitly or explicitly in your brand story. There is no one size fits all approach to embedding your brand promise into the narrative. What's important is that your audience walks away with a clear understanding of your brand's promise.

Key Takeaways

- Your brand promise serves as the moral of your brand story. It's a great way to reinforce who you are/what you stand for.
- Your brand promise can be integrated into any of the five key ingredients of the brand story. It doesn't have to be just an end line in your story.
- Every chapter of the story presents a fresh opportunity to reinforce your brand promise. It will help to remind customers who know you, and it will help to introduce you to new customers who may be hearing your story for the first time.
- You don't need to state the obvious unless you choose to use your brand promise directly in your communication. The moral will shine through without you having to directly state it.
- If your story does not reinforce your brand promise, check it. Something is off that should be addressed.



Ask Yourself



Before moving on to the action plan, take the time to reflect on this lesson.

Do you understand the five key takeaways that were presented at the beginning of the lesson?

Does every piece of your marketing communication support and reinforce your brand promise?

Do you formally state your brand promise in your marketing communication? Or, is your brand promise implied?

Does your brand promise remain consistent across all the various chapters of your marketing communication? Are your customers getting a clear and consistent message?