

# YOUR BRAND IS NOT THE HERO

HOW STORY WILL  
REVOLUTIONIZE  
YOUR MARKETING

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# INTRODUCTION

StoryBrand got started years ago when I was looking for a way to simplify my marketing. Because I'm a writer, I'd been studying story for years and knew it was the most powerful tool to compel a human brain. I wanted to tell a better story with my company but needed a simple process to pull it off. So I created the 7-part framework that is now the foundation of StoryBrand. And the results were fantastic.

When I filtered my own marketing messages through the StoryBrand framework, we experienced rapid growth. The company tripled in revenue in 18 months and doubled again in the following 12 months.

Since then, we've turned the process into a two-day workshop and have taken hundreds of brands through it. Billion-dollar brands, small businesses, politicians trying to unite masses of people around a major project, non-profits and even universities have gone through the process. Each of them have achieved varying degrees of terrific success and we've had multiple clients tell us they've quadrupled their revenue after attending StoryBrand.

The key to the StoryBrand framework is that it helps you create clarity. People are drawn to clarity and away from confusion, so if your marketing messages are confusing, you're likely losing customers.

The StoryBrand framework will help.

This PDF, will serve as an introduction to the framework. Although this PDF is short, the actual process takes two days, this is a great start. If you want to go through the entire process, [register](#) for a StoryBrand Marketing Workshop today.

We've helped a lot of companies and I know we can help you too.

Hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

Donald Miller  
CEO, StoryBrand

# HOW STORY WORKS

Every business owner wants to tell a great story with their brand. They want it to be a brand people admire and respect. They sense the story that gets told about them is the key, and they're right. Great brands create a kind of buzz the way an exciting story does.

To get there, though, let's take off our business hats and think about how story really works.

The first thing to understand is that stories use formulas to compel the brain. Storytellers have been using these formulas for centuries. They're proven and they work.

From now on, think of story the way you think about music. The difference between noise and music is just that music is noise submitted to certain principles. Story is similar. Story is just the telling of events in a certain order so they are intriguing, compelling and make people want to listen.

There are a thousand different formulas for stories, but the StoryBrand structure is a conglomerate of some of the most popular stories and has been used in movies ranging from *Star Wars* to *Tommy Boy*.

In short, these are the 7 things that seem to happen in most billion-dollar movies.

Later, we'll take a look at how these 7 plot points can be used as a filter for your messaging. You'll be amazed at how each of these plot points help you clarify your messaging to customers. When there is clarity, customers are compelled and pay attention.

### The 7 basic elements of story:





## A Character

The main character of the story is also called the hero. Some stories have many characters, but for the purposes of growing your business, we're going to focus on the simplest structure—a story with only one main character. At the beginning of the story, we're introduced to a character that wants something. Because we know the character wants something, whether it's to disarm a bomb or get the girl, a story question is posited and the audience is curious about the answer to that question. Will the hero get what they want?



## With a Problem

No story works unless the character encounters a problem. Something has to stand between the hero and what he or she wants, or we have no story. But a simple problem won't do. The problem has to have three layers. First, there's the external problem, such as a bomb that needs to be disarmed. But that external problem has to manifest an internal problem. Does the hero have what it takes to disarm the bomb? Is he feeling insecure? Can he pull this off? And lastly, there should be a philosophical problem in play, something like good vs evil. It's these three layers of problems that give the story depth and meaning.



## Meets a Guide

In stories, characters do not solve their own problems. If they could solve their own problems, they'd likely have never gotten into trouble in the first place. What normally happens, then, is the character meets somebody who has been there and done that. We call this character the guide. The guide helps the character win the day by giving them a plan. A good guide has two basic qualities: they empathize with the character's fears and insecurities; and they have the authority and experience to help them win the day.



## Who Gives Them a Plan

When the hero meets the guide, they are confused. The job of the guide, then, is to break through the hero's confusion and give them confidence their life can be better. They do this by giving the hero a plan. The plan can be as simple as a paradigm shift—you used to think this way, but I want you to think another way—or as complex as a multi-level strategy that will help the hero win a complicated battle. More about plans later.



## And Calls Them to Action

A call to action is the point in the story where the hero is challenged to act on the plan. In story, the call to action is a point of crisis. The character must choose whether to stay in their comfort zone or embrace the plan given to them by the guide. The key here, though, is that the hero will never act on the plan unless they are challenged to. They must be “called to action.”



## That Results in Success

A story is given drama only when there's something at stake. Will the bomb get disarmed or will people suffer? Will the guy get the girl or will he lose in love? When what's at stake is made clear, we're much more engaged in the story.



## Or Failure

Good screenwriters and novelists help us imagine dire consequences in order to build suspense. If we don't know what failure might befall the hero, audiences zone out and lose interest.



**THE KEY IS CLARITY**

If the 7 elements of story aren't clear, an audience will lose interest. Just remember the StoryBrand mantra: Confuse and you'll lose.

If you confuse your customer, your competition will beat you in the marketplace, even though their product may be inferior.

If every scene in a movie cannot be placed onto the simple StoryBrand chart, the story runs the risk of losing the audience. There are exceptions, of course, but there aren't many. Virtually every movie you watch in the theatre follows this simple, clear structure.

Notice how this simple structure applies to popular movies like *Hunger Games* and *Star Wars*:



Why do so many brilliant screenwriters, producers and directors keep making the same movie over and over again? Simple. Because it's easy to understand. Because the structure works to compel a human brain.

So can this structure work to help a business compel more customers? Absolutely.



# HOW STORY WORKS IN BUSINESS

The major paradigm you'll experience going through the StoryBrand framework is this:

**YOUR BRAND IS NOT THE HERO OF THE STORY. YOUR CUSTOMER IS.**

Many businesses come to us hoping to tell the story of their business. But the fact that your grandfather started the company isn't as interesting as you might think. What people really care about is their own story. When your brand stops playing the hero and starts playing the role of **guide** in your customer's story, you'll see dramatic results.

You've probably seen the commercials for the Allstate Insurance Mayhem campaign—where the fictional and humorous “mayhem” character comes reeking havoc in customer's lives. Let's take a look at how these commercials position the Allstate customer as the hero of the story.



## A Character

Who is the Allstate customer? They are winsome, fun and successful. They want to protect themselves and their families from harm. We could get more in-depth about Allstate's customer, but for simplicity's sake, let's leave it at that. They are heroes in their own story. (Hint: sometimes you can acknowledge something like this without words. Just a photo of a happy, smiling person on your website says a lot).



## With a Problem

Allstate humorously depicts the problem in their customer's life as “mayhem” or the internal chaos customers feel when things go wrong.



## Meets a Guide

While the guide can actually be the overall brand, Allstate chooses a pitchman—someone to represent their brand. And he's great. He not only establishes confidence and calmness, he shows authority when it comes to dealing with mayhem. Remember **empathy** and **authority** are the two keys here.



## Who Gives Them a Plan

Allstate's "Value Plan" gives their customer a plan that breaks through their confusion. Now, buying insurance and protecting themselves from mayhem seems easy. The name of the plan also insinuates it's not expensive and it's worth the price.



## And Calls Them to Action

This is critical. If you don't call your customers to action, they won't act. On Allstate's website, there is an easy-to-find button that says, "Get a Quote". There's one box to fill out with your email address. Most companies have calls to action that are not clear. Allstate's call to action is simple, clear and obvious.



## That Results in Success

The Allstate commercial shows its customers how good life can be when you're not worried. It's a beautifully shot commercial about people enjoying life. This is the "successful ending" customers can experience if they buy Allstate insurance.



## Or Failure

Allstate's "mayhem" character serves as both the problem and the failure. They cover the tragic ending aspect of the campaign by showing their customers what can happen if they don't have insurance. This element of their campaign is also fun and winsome, so as not to come off as fear mongering—a tactic that would certainly backfire on a brand.

During [the StoryBrand Marketing Workshop](#), we show you the BrandScripts for dozens of effective campaigns and let you in on the most progressive, innovative branding taking place around the world. What you'll see, over and over, is that brands who tell a clear story win.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?**

**H**ave you ever wondered why George W. Bush won the election while Mitt Romney lost? It all came down to the story they told. Much is at stake. We talk more about this in our StoryBrand Marketing Workshop. We explore why some great messages never spread and some terrible ones do. But the 7-part framework isn't just for politicians. It's especially true for businesses.

The key, again, is clarity. If a customer doesn't intuitively know your brand is the guide on their heroic journey, they will choose your competition.

Each of the 7 elements in the StoryBrand framework are explored in depth and to the point of extreme clarity in the two-day workshop.

When you attend the workshop, you'll have an advantage over your competition.

Remember, people are drawn to clarity and away from confusion. If your competition is making music and you're making noise, it's going to be difficult to win in the marketplace.

How much would your company benefit from spending two days clarifying your marketing plan?

## StoryBrand will help you and your company tell a clear and compelling story



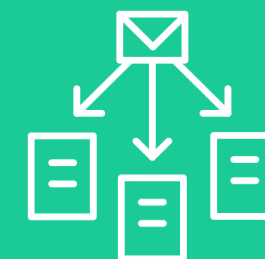
Discover our story-based marketing framework and see results.



Become a compelling communicator at every level of your messaging.



Know exactly what you should say in your web-based marketing.



Unite your entire team around a common message so that the message spreads.

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