

VIDEO 1: WHY DOES YOUR BUSINESS NEED A STORY?

Hi there, I'm Lindsay with HubSpot Academy. Welcome to The Power of Storytelling.

Everyone loves a great story. People want to feel connected to a group, to belong. Stories give you a reason to communicate and relate; stories are stimulating and give you something to believe in; stories make you feel better, smarter, safer, or even loved.

Business storytelling is similar. It's about creating alignment between your business and your prospects and customers.

But telling your brand's story is more than what you write on your website, your blog, or even social media. It's your value and your mission, and how you communicate that consistently to your audience - wherever they are.

Thanks to smartphones and tablets, the average adult spends over 20 hours per week with digital media. Additionally, Google receives over four million search queries per minute.

Four million search queries per minute? Wow! That's a lot of people looking for answers. But, capturing their attention can be difficult. In just one minute...

- 1,388 blog posts are published.
- Facebook users share 2.5 million pieces of content.
- YouTube users upload 72 hours of new video content.
- Twitter users tweet nearly 300,000 times.
- And Instagram users post nearly 220,000 new photos.

All in this one minute.

Content marketers are constantly battling for the attention of their prospects and customers. To help ensure that you're heard, you need to be genuine and tell a story that appeals to your audience.

Your goal is to make a human connection. It's about resonating with people, people that need your help or guidance.

In the world of business, a story helps you create contrast between choices. Stories will help your prospects make sense of decisions they're about to make, whether it's deciding on a needed product or service or making a purchase.

Chances are, you're not the only business that does what you do. To survive in today's crowded informational marketplace, you need to stand out. This is where your business' story comes in.

Stories can make your prospects the main characters, and even change the way they think and feel.

And storytelling is used in all formats of content. It isn't just used in a lengthy ebook. You can use storytelling in blogs, email, videos, case studies, guides. The list goes on and on.

So, what's NOT a story?

A story is not just your history. A story is why you're doing what you're doing, and telling it in a way that appeals to your audience.

It's also not cliché, it's not what everyone else is saying. Sure you may think you provide the best customer service within your industry, but that's not your story. Storytelling is about standing out, not blending in.

Many companies play it safe and use data and ROI to attract customers, which is important. But logic very rarely is appealing and remembered. On the other hand, emotion gets remembered. Emotion gets shared. And it's not by saying we're the best. It's more about appealing to the emotional side of your prospects and customers than the logic of what you do.

Stories are how audiences remember. And to help make your audience remember you need to stand out by telling a story with the right context, and create contrast by being consistent and authentic and being conversational to elicit emotion from a specific audience.

As a content marketer, use stories to better engage and, most importantly, teach your audience.

In the next video, we'll review what's needed to tell a great story for your business.

VIDEO 2: WHAT DO YOU NEED TO TELL A STORY?

Okay, so now that you know **WHY** your business needs a story, what do you need to tell a **GREAT** story?

First, it's all about how you frame the story that you are trying to tell. You need to keep audience and tone in mind, but to really help nail your branding story, you need to understand the golden circle.

Yes, the golden circle. Sounds mysterious right?

Simon Sinek says, "people don't buy what you do, they buy **WHY** you do it." Simon Sinek is an ex-advertising executive and author who is best known for his concept - Golden Circle.

The Golden Circle looks like this and is all about starting with **WHY**.

According to Sinek, most people communicate by starting with the "what" they do aspect and eventually work their way back to talk about "how" and "why" they do what they do.

But companies that are universally identified as unique and successful, think Apple or Google, communicate with an "inside-out" type of thinking. They start with the why and only then do they move on to talk about the how and what portions of what they do.

To keep it simple - **WHY** is Why are you doing what you're doing? **HOW** is How will this help your audience? And **WHAT** is What are you offering?

So, why does the order in which you communicate the story matter? It has to do with the parts of the brain.

When you're talking about what you do, you're speaking to an analytical part of the brain. But when you talk about the why and how, you're communicating with feelings and dealing with human behavior. And remember, storytelling is all about making that connection.

When you're planning a story, take time to think through the way you're choosing to tell it. To really connect with your prospects and customers, express

the why of your story. Tap into the emotional side of things and begin to educate or build awareness from there.

The Golden Circle can help you create your mission statement and set the tone for all of your content.

Now that you understand ordering of a story, it's also important to discuss the elements that make up that story.

Regardless of the story you're trying to tell and how you're trying to tell it, storytelling has three essential elements - characters, conflict, and resolution. But how do these three parts relate to storytelling and content marketing?

Let's start first with characters.

With any good story, there will be characters. Every story revolves around at least one character. You need to introduce the people involved. With content marketing, the people that are involved are your readers. Your audience. Storytelling can't happen without valuing and understanding your audience. You should always be listening and respond to your audience's wants and needs.

If potential customers can get the answers to their questions AND see themselves as characters in your story, they'll be more likely to use your product or service and experience the happy ending you offer.

Take a second. Think about a piece of content (maybe a blog post) that you found helpful and really resonated with you.

Are you thinking about it?

Okay.

Why is this piece of content so memorable?

There may be a few reasons why, but some of the most memorable pieces of content (or stories) stick in an audience's mind because of the characters involved.

For the content that you were thinking of, were you the character in the story? Did it resonate with you because you felt like it answered a question? Helped solve a problem?

The character is the connection between you, the storyteller, and your audience.

To make sure you're focusing on the right characters, start with your buyer persona. This semi-fictional representation of your ideal buyer can help guide you to understanding the goals and challenges that your character will face.

Is your buyer persona a full-time parent? Well, you might know that time is not on their side and they would describe themselves as busy. You should keep that in mind for your storytelling.

Or is your buyer persona a business owner who is looking for a better way to communicate between her team members? She'll likely see herself as the character if a team is used within your stories.

Or maybe you're an educational organization looking to attract students who want to take online courses. They might want to read about success stories of students that are just like them.

No matter who your buyer persona is, the art of storytelling is making sure you empathize and relate to your audience.

While keeping your buyer persona in mind, you should also determine the point of view that your story will have. Will it be first-person, second-person, or third-person? And there's no right or wrong option. It will depend on your buyer persona, the story you're trying to tell, and the format of that story.

For first-person point of view, this is when the character is yourself. When you use "I saw this" or "I learned that". Using this type of language in storytelling is more confessional. It can help you establish a personal connection with the reader. You can use this to build authority. Try using first-person when there is a known person, an author, behind the content. This could work for a blog post, video, or even an ebook if the author is noted.

As for second-person, the character in this point of view is your audience. "You will see" or "you will learn". When using "you" language, you need to really understand your buyer personas. Make it personal for them by knowing their pain points. Their goals. Tell the story in a way that shows empathy.

Lastly, can't forget about third-person. This is the "he said" and "she said" type of language. Think back to that buyer persona example for an educational organization. That buyer persona could potentially benefit from a story done in the third-person. Case studies about your customers are a good example of using third-person. Stories for this point of view can be both fictional or nonfictional.

Again, there's no right or wrong when it comes to point of view. Keep your buyer personas top of mind and think through what will work best for them.

You may have noticed that all HubSpot Academy videos use second-person or "you" point of view. That's on purpose. Since this is YOUR training and this content contains key takeaways you should learn and act upon, it's important that these videos speak directly to the intended audience - and that's YOU!

Most importantly, when it comes to point of view, decide on one and keep it consistent. Consistency is key when it comes to content and storytelling.

Once you have an idea of who the character will be for your story, it's important to understand the conflict.

The conflict is the lesson in how the character transforms through challenge. An emphasis on lesson. Remember, when it comes to content marketing and storytelling the power is in what you are teaching.

Conflict helps build developmental and emotional dynamics. It helps make a connection between two entities, and human-to-human connections are the foundation for a successful business.

Remember, you're dealing with people, not machines—your company is providing answers, relieving stress, creating happiness, and making life easier for the end user. The revenue your company makes comes from a well-thought business plan and customers who believe in you and what you do.

If your story lacks conflict, then you're probably not telling a story. Instead you're telling a pitch, tagline, unique selling point, or a plain statement. This approach won't resonate with your audience, and from a content marketing perspective, it won't get you views, shares, conversions, or customers.

Conflict doesn't mean that you should be overly dramatic. Be genuine. The conflict should drive the overall story and affect how characters react. This is what should inspire your audience to engage.

Make sure the conflict fits your prospect's problems, needs, or stage of the buyer's journey. If it doesn't fit, why would they be interested in reading the story? How will they connect?

As important as it is to understand your buyer personas, it's equally as important to understand their buyer's journey and the conflicts that they face at each stage.

What problems are your buyer personas facing in the awareness stage? Those are the conflicts that should be in your story.

Spend the time outlining the problems, solutions, and products or services for the different buyer's journey stages and you'll have a better idea of the conflicts you can use in your content.

Last element is resolution.

Where there's conflict, your audience will naturally want some sort of resolution. But what happens next? How does the story end? How did the character or characters change?

It doesn't always have to be a happy ending. Every good story has a closing, so the idea of the resolution is to provide context and emotion for the audience to relate and process the story.

The resolution should wrap up the story but should also clearly call your audience to action. It fulfills the purpose behind the story.

For content marketing, a resolution could be next steps or even a call-to-action for more content. Either way, don't leave them hanging.

Character, conflict, and resolution. It's not a complex process, here's an example. Keeping it simple by using the nursery rhyme, I'm a little teapot.

You know: I'm a little teapot short and stout here is my handle, here is my spout. When I get all steamed up I just shout. Tip me over and pour me out.

Now let's break it down.

Who's the character? For this story, it's all about the little teapot. Let's get into the story...

I'm a little teapot short and stout here is my handle, here is my spout. This is not a story. It doesn't strike any emotion that will make you care.

But when you introduce some drama about getting all steamed up, now you have a story making element. What's going on with this teapot? How can you help?

And how you tie everything together is where the resolution comes in, the teapot really just needs to be tipped over and poured out.

That's a story. It doesn't have to be complex. It's actually better to keep it simple so that it resonates with your audience.

Okay, great. You know how it works with a teapot, but how can this tie into content marketing?

Let's take this storytelling framework and apply it to a business.

Let's choose a market that's saturated with competition, like shoes.

TOMS is a slip on shoe company that focuses on spreading social good; with every product you purchase, TOMS will donate a pair of shoes to a child in need. They've made this a part of their brand identity, by creating a slogan that reinforces who they are and what they're about, "The One for One Company".

Now let's break TOMS' story down into three parts.

Everyone needs shoes to protect their feet.

But not everyone has the money to pay for shoes. While traveling in Argentina in 2006, TOMS Founder Blake Mycoskie (the story's character) witnessed the hardships faced by children growing up without shoes.

TOMS is striking an emotional chord with their audience by raising awareness for an issue that they're passionate about.

The best part is how TOMS ties it all together with their resolution, if you buy a pair of their shoes, then they'll donate a pair of shoes to a child in need.

Now that's a powerful story. And while TOMS started off as a shoe retailer, they've created a much bigger, more emotional feel-good story that makes their customers feel like they're changing the world, by simply purchasing a pair of shoes from them. And just how much success has this brought TOMS? Well, they've sold over 60 million pairs of shoes, which means they've also given over 60 million pairs of shoes to children in need.

Beyond the three elements that make up the story, there are also some best practices to follow and keep in mind.

To help make your story great and resonate with your audience you need to: Use content to create emotional appeal, be consistent and authentic, and keep the story clear and concise.

First, using content to create emotional appeal. Your story needs emotional resonance. Emotion is what will give your story power. Make sure to give your story's character some emotion. Think about the emotional response that you're looking to get from the reader. Is it fear, survival, guilt, energized, amusement, maybe even hope?

To get buy-in from your audience you need to elicit emotion. What's the difference between your story and someone else's story? What's the mission or purpose of your company? Why should your audience care?

Next, your story needs to be consistent and authentic. It's not just what you say through your website or content, but the entire experience that your company has to offer based on your buyer personas needs.

David Ogilvy, one of the most well-known advertisers of all time, once said, "tell the truth, but make it fascinating." You can make any industry, any product, or any service stand out and that's done with providing an experience.

And lastly, you need keep things clear and concise.

Everyone can benefit from cutting down a lengthy story. Ever had a friend tell you a story that took them 10 minutes to get through but probably could have taken them under a minute? Even long stories benefit when you whittle them down to just the most important parts.

And be specific. You're not trying to speak to everyone. Your story and experience should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Communicating with the correct audience niche, and creating that need is just as important, if not more important, than the story you're telling.

So remember, create emotional appeal, be consistent and authentic, and keep the story clear and concise.

Before creating your story, plan out who the character is, the tone of voice you'll be using, what is the conflict, and what is the resolution.

And great storytelling will start with WHY.

VIDEO 3: WHAT DOES A GOOD STORY LOOK LIKE?

There's a lot of brands that are already doing storytelling and creating great stories. Let's take a look an example.

This is Wistia. Wistia provides professional video hosting with amazing viewer analytics, HD video delivery, and marketing tools to help understand website visitors.

For content, they create a whole bunch of fun and engaging educational videos. They also create other forms of content - blog posts, guides, help articles, and webinars.

Now, think back to the golden circle. Starting with why.

Wistia's purpose is to empower everybody to get more out of video. Of course, their product helps with this, but it only solves a small percentage.

All of their content and storytelling circles back to this purpose.

Let's look at two pieces of content and see how they did with their storytelling.

They created this blog post: [Improve Your Audio: How to Reduce Echo in Your Video](#)

Right from the title you can tell what the conflict is - reducing echo in video. A title isn't always going to be about the conflict. Sometimes it might be the resolution and other times it might summarize what the blog post is all about.

But in this case, it's the conflict.

The blog post even starts out with "Bad sounding audio can ruin even the best of videos." Their buyer persona can instantly relate. They're pulled into the conflict and now asking for more.

Let's dig deeper. Who is the character? From the title it appears like the character will be the audience or the reader. Since it's about improving YOUR audio in YOUR video.

As you'll see, Wistia continues to use this point of view throughout the blog post.

And finally, the blog post provides the resolution. Step-by-step instructions on soundproofing for video.

The story is clear and concise and ties back to their purpose - empowering people to get more out of video.

They use language and a funny tone to stay consistent and authentic with their brand. What's the difference between Wistia telling you this information or finding some video on YouTube?

Wistia does a good job at eliciting emotion and really empathizing with their buyer persona. They make the conflict appear as something that needs to be resolved but isn't impossible to do. They teach while telling the story.

This is a simple piece of content, so how does this work for something that's more long-form? You might find that for some of your content, you'll be telling multiple stories within one.

Take this example: Hiring an in-house video producer. Another piece of content that Wistia created. Like the earlier example, you can tell what the overall conflict is.

But the more you look at the content, the more you'll see that there are several different conflicts that come up because there are several different stories.

Within this piece of content, all three points of views are used. Wistia talks about their own experience with this problem. They use first person to relate to the audience. To let a reader know, "hey. We've been there too!" As mentioned before, using first-person is a way of being confessional.

They use the second-person to describe next steps the reader can take to interviewing a video producer. And even use case studies to help get a third-person point of view.

What's important to note is that within these smaller stories, Wistia is consistent with the point of view.

And like with all of their content, they keep the story clear and concise.

And speaking of in-house video producers. Let's say hi to HubSpot Academy's video producer - Hi Stephen!!!

Wistia does a great job at storytelling, but now it's your turn. Use the golden circle, apply the 3 elements of a story, and always keep the best practices in mind!

Happy Storytelling!