Getting your story straight
Creating and inspiring innovation on the strength of a simple story

David Riemer, Haas EIR
Best Practices 10.28.13
Stories and Storytelling
You can’t *tell* a good story...

If you don’t *have* a good story to tell
What makes a great story? (Start with a BIG problem)
Behind every great product is a great story

**YOU DON’T GET TO 500 MILLION FRIENDS WITHOUT MAKING A FEW ENEMIES**
Story vs. Storytelling

The Story

IDEA

The narrative: the problem and solution

Customer

Insights

Names

Narrative devices

Telling the story

(Getting to Go)

Focus

Visuals

Showtime
Why Stories Matter
The power of story

Jack Dorsey
Twitter, Square

Peter Guber
Sony Films, Mandalay Entertainment
Why do stories work?

Until recently we've only been able to speculate about story's persuasive effects. But over the last several decades psychology has begun a serious study of how story affects the human mind. Results repeatedly show that our attitudes, fears, hopes, and values are strongly influenced by story. In fact, fiction seems to be more effective at changing beliefs than writing that is specifically designed to persuade through argument and evidence.

What is going on here? Why are we putty in a storyteller's hands? The psychologists Melanie Green and Tim Brock argue that entering fictional worlds "radically alters the way information is processed." Green and Brock's studies show that the more absorbed readers are in a story, the more the story changes them.

And, in this, there is an important lesson about the molding power of story. When we read dry, factual arguments, we read with our dukes up. We are critical and skeptical. But when we are absorbed in a story we drop our intellectual guard. We are moved emotionally and this seems to leave us defenseless.
The brain science behind it

Activating the insula (emotional region)

When we hear a story, we want to relate it to one of our personal experiences.

Synching the listener’s brain

Telling a story activates the same parts of the teller’s and listener’s brain.
Exercise: let’s all tell a story

What inspired you to work on the thing that inspired you to come tonight?
Story structure
## Story structure

- **Characters**
- **Motivation**
- **Plot**
- **Symbols**

- **Customers**
- **Insights**
- **Problem/solution**
- **Logos/icons**
Basic story elements for a product (or idea)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Innovation story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protagonist</td>
<td>Customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Customer insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Problem definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot imperative</td>
<td>Value proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot narrative</td>
<td>Product delivery (reasons to believe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone, Voice</td>
<td>Attributes and personality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who is the main character in your story?

*(identify your customer)*
Pick a First target customer First
Later, find and serve your 2\textsuperscript{nd} target customer.
New take on target can lead to new ideas

Economy Skycouch™

*Three seats or a couch? The choice is yours.*

Whether you’re a couple who’d like a bit of extra room, a parent with a young child or a parent with two restless kids, you’ll find our innovative Economy Skycouch™ is the ideal solution.

The Economy Skycouch™ is available on our 777-300 long-haul services, flying daily between Auckland, Los Angeles and London.
What is the character’s motivation?

(dig for insights)
Go deep to understand the character in your story

Zimplistic, Intel-Berkeley Technology Entrepreneur Challenge, 2009 finalist
Can you have an insight about a business?

Sococo Team Space allows your team to feel connected and be more productive.

Watch the video to see how it works.

Get a Demo
What is the main conflict in the story? *(define the problem)*
Define the problem

Zimplistic

pain

Roti (chapati or phulka) is the staple diet of 800 million Indians who eat 2.4 billion rotis every day.

Roti making is such a skillful, tedious and time consuming task that people are resorting to unhealthy means such as frozen rotis, bread, or they are eating more rice.

There is NO COMPLETELY AUTOMATIC KITCHEN APPLIANCE like a Rice cooker to make rotis with just a click of a button in the market today!
So you can solve it

Zimplistic

pain killer

Revolutionary kitchen appliance
Compact as a mini microwave oven
Enables anyone to make rotis!

'Rotimatic prints readymade cooked rotis, literally!'
Google romances the problem
What does the character aspire to?

(Articulate the value proposition)
Focus on the benefit (not the technology)

About Twitter

Why do so many people seem to like Twitter?

Simplicity has played an important role in Twitter’s success. People are eager to connect with other people and Twitter makes that simple. Twitter asks one question, “What are you doing?” Answers must be under 140 characters in length and can be sent via mobile texting, instant message, or the web.

Twitter’s core technology is a device agnostic message routing system with rudimentary social networking features. By accepting messages from sms, web, mobile web, instant message, or from third party API projects, Twitter makes it easy for folks to stay connected.

A global community of friends and strangers answering one simple question: What are you doing? Answer on your phone, IM, or right here on the web!
Simply state the benefit

Better hygiene without careful washing

Cascade Tissues
Andrew Sheridan, Nathalie Comeau
Google Wave: the case of the missing value prop
What's the plot?

(How does the innovation work?)
Make the “promise” tangible

- Instant check out
- Call for support and pick up immediately
- Free overnight delivery (largely)
- 365 day money back guarantee
Simplify your proof-points

1. Grip to activate light
2. Twist right for forward
3. Twist left for reverse

Gyrosopic Technology
- Senses your motion for control with variable speed and forward/reverse

LED Light
- Integrated LED light illuminates the project area

LITHIUM ALWAYS READY
- Holds a charge up to 18 months

- Long Life
- Compact
- Lightweight
- No Memory Effect
Do you have your MVP (minimum viable product)?
Where is your story set?

*(Provide context and color)*
Find a unique place for your story

National

Local

Yahoo! Sports

ESPN

Boston.com
Find a unique place for your story

Fans voice

National

Pundit’s voice

Local

Yahoo! Sports

ESPN

Bleacher Report

ESPN Boston
Reposition (on the fly) if necessary

"Originally, we weren't exactly sure how to market the Touch. Was it an iPhone without the phone? Was it a pocket computer? What happened was, what customers told us was, they started to see it as a game machine. We started to market it that way, and it just took off." (Steve Jobs, 09/09/09)
Story challenges
Typical story questions…

- Do we have a technology looking for a problem to solve?
- Do we have a customer insight, but no clear problem definition?
- Are we debating between first target customers?
- Do we have a clear problem definition, but the inability to provide a viable solution?
- Do we have a great story, but someone else got their first?
How to tell a great story
The enemy of a good idea - **NOISE**

- Pre-Conceived Notions
- Everyone else’s idea
- Agendas
- Distractions
- Risk Aversion
Be brief: distill down to the essence of your story

“I would have written you a short letter, but I didn’t have the time.”

Pascal (or Twain)
Jobsian storytelling

- A headline
- A villain
- A simple slide
- A demo
- A holy smokes moment
The art of story telling
# Ideas that Stick

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simplicity</th>
<th>Concreteness</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpectededness</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Give your idea a good name
Tell them your story

Surbhi Sarna
CEO and Founder of nVision Medical
UC Berkeley Alum
Draper University Alum & Change

Sarna’s firm is building two devices, one for gynecologists to detect, in office, the leading cause of infertility, and the other to detect ovarian cancer at an earlier stage. Her passion grew out of an ovarian cancer scare she had at age 13, but before meeting Draper she never mentioned her health history in pitch meetings, thinking she should be "all business."

"Draper U and Tim specifically" encouraged her to share her personal story with potential investors. "He said they need to know why, even when the ship is sinking, you will stay on it. It has completely changed the way I pitch. Now I start with the story," she says.
Give your presentation structure

Many ways to frame a story

- Character
  - Focused
- Problem-Solution
- Use Case
Co-founders Jennifer Hyman (Jenn) and Jennifer Fleiss (Jenny) met as sectionmates at Harvard Business School, where over frequent girls nights, they became fast friends. During a trip home to New York City, Jenn watched her sister Becky struggle with a ‘closet full of clothes but nothing to wear’ moment. Becky had an upcoming wedding and wanted something gorgeous—Hervé Léger maybe, or Proenza—but her modest salary meant that everything high-end was out of reach. What if, Jenn thought, the Beckys of this world could have access to their **dream closet** – a new dress for every occasion? And what if designers were able to get their pieces into the hands of young, fashionable women and build an addiction for designer fashion?
Betsey loved to cook.
But it hurt.
So Sam Asked...
Why do ordinary kitchen tools have to hurt your hands?
Why can’t there be wonderfully comfortable tools that are easy to use?
This story is about fear

This is Kent...
Kent commuted to work by bike
Kent felt vulnerable riding his bike home at night
Kent wondered why bike lighting was so terrible
Use a use case: A trip without man-purses!

About SeV

SCOTTEVEST: The Trip of My Life

About ten years ago, I created SCOTTEVEST®/SeV to solve a very common problem: I needed a way to carry and organize all my gadgets and gear without a "man-purse." Now with inspiration from our loyal customers, I find myself RE-inventing SCOTTEVEST as the world's best travel clothing company. It turns out that it's not really much of a stretch; our customers have been wearing SeV for travel from the very beginning.

Our re-invention started when we asked our customers to submit photos of themselves wearing our products for the new catalog. I was amazed by the thousands of photos we received, showing you wearing our clothes all over the world.

Your emails told us you traveled with everything you needed on you at all times, safely and securely stowed in SeV’s multitude of hidden pockets. Even with your pockets locked, you looked fabulous.

You also told us that SeV made your travels easier by simplifying airport check-in/security, saving extra baggage fees, and having an easy and secure way to organize and carry all of your necessities. Women reported that they left their purses at home, and guys no longer needed a fuzzy pack or the infamous man-purse.
Put on a great show
Set the stage
Use key visuals or do a demo
A picture of the problem is worth a thousand words.
Rehearse! (with an egg timer!)
Show your passion
Hint: to share passion, get personal

Don't divorce, Wevorce.

Ending a marriage doesn't have to be war. It doesn't have to cost months of courtroom drama. Or destroy relationships with your kids.

There is another way. A better way.
THE WEVORCE WAY »
Slay the naysayers (hire a cynic!)

BEWARE
OF YOUR CRITICS.

MEDIocre MINDS
ARE THE GREATEST
enemy of innovation.

Robert Sofia
Co-Founder, Platinum Advisor Strategies
When you have a great story... anyone can tell it.

davidariemer@yahoo.com