

HOW TO OPTIMIZE BRAND STORYTELLING IN THE DIGITAL AGE



How to Optimize Brand Storytelling in the Digital Age

Presented at the [Agility PR Solutions Webinar Series](#) by Brand Storyteller, Shannon Peel of MarketAPeel.

This workbook will provide you with the key take aways and ask you questions to dive deeper into your story. If you have any questions or feedback, please email shannon@shannonpeel.com.

Want to learn how to tell your brand story?

[MarketAPeel.com](#) has more information on [brand storytelling](#) and programs for those who want to define their stories and build out their digital footprints.

On the site you will also find, the [UnPeeled Blog](#) with articles about brand storytelling, podcasting, brand stories, and articles to help you create an appealing life, career, and business.

The [APeeling Digital Magazine](#), a multimedia experience to help you find solutions and create an appealing life, career, and business.

[BrandAPeel Podcast](#), with episodes on brand storytelling and all the various channels that support it. Plus, interviews with business owners and leaders sharing their brand stories.

To view presentation - [Agility PR Solutions](#)

Want publicity for yourself or your client?

[Apply to be a BrandAPeel guest](#), send [in a guest blog post](#), fill in the [questionnaire for a Q&A style interview](#) on UnPeeled.

Are you looking for a speaker for an event?

I speak about how brands can stand out in a sea of sameness by telling their brand stories. This includes a number of different topics in the brand storytelling sphere. I also talk on some personal topics for events looking for a more personal touch. If you want to know more, please email Shannon at shannon@shannonpeel.com to request a speakers kit.

Looking for a writer? - contact Shannon.





**Show
Don't Tell
a Story**

A good storyteller doesn't tell a story.

In three different studies - (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; McKee, 2003; Wells, 1988). – researchers discovered that when people are lectured at they tend to get tired, shut down, and want to go to sleep. Basically, tune out. Whereas, when told a story, the audience is moved to action. They may not move in the moment, but their minds are engaged, ideas start coming at them left and right, and they are motivated to do something, even if it is to lean in and hear what I'm saying right now and put buy that refreshing beverage on your grocery list.


Not all stories are created equal.

Many storytellers take the tell part of storytelling literally and tell the audience a story and their story quickly reverts to a lecture disguised as a story. There are a number of reasons why this happens:

1. Haven't learned how to craft an engaging story
2. Don't trust the audience to put 1 and 1 together to get 2
3. Thinks the audience needs a bunch of details and back story
4. Wants everyone to know how smart they think they are.

In today's highly divisive world, everywhere you look people are lecturing each other trying to get them onto their side and it isn't working, its only creating more anger and division. Think about protests and how people are not willing to listen, they only want to scream their facts, figures, and slogans. How will that bring solutions to our many problems?

Come up with some ideas about why people online lecture instead of listening, guiding, or telling a story?

A black and white photograph of a crowd of people with their hands raised, suggesting a concert or a public event. The image is slightly blurred, focusing on the hands in the foreground. Overlaid on the image is white text in a bold, sans-serif font.

**Know your
audience
like a
novelist
knows their
hero**

When it comes to knowing your audience to determine the story you will tell and how you will tell it, there is a difference between personal brand storytelling and business brand storytelling and it's structural.

If you are telling a personal brand story, the right audience will find you because they relate to your story. You don't need to know your audience, you need to know your stories and tell them so others can find them and follow you.

If you are telling a business brand story, you need to know the audience, find them and tell their story to them.

When it comes to attracting the right people to your brand, your business, your life, your story you have to understand who you want in the audience. What is important to them. Why do they get up in the morning and do what they do. Tell stories they can relate to and they will feel connected.

Choose the indices (details) for the story to enable the right people to relate by interpreting the meaning of the story using their own experiences. Indices are the details people can relate to.

Think about your business brand story or a client's business brand story.

List out all the details of your target audience, as many as you can think of. Think beyond the box and add activities, events they may have experienced, moments in their lives. What is important to them? Everything you can think of about the ideal person to have in your audience.

Knowing the audience is important because the more focused the audience, the more common threads you can identify, the more details you can add to enhance the story and you can draw the individuals deeper into the story. Add potential events and moments because memory is episodic—meaning stories that include inciting incidents, experiences, outcomes, and nuances of person- and-brand relationships can easily be brought to the surface to engage them in the story. (see Fournier, 1998; Schank, 1990).

Retrieving, reliving, or repeating of stories results in what Aristotle (see Hiltunen, 2002) refers to as “proper pleasure”—a catharsis— (in Butcher 1961) a slow unfolding of tragedy and catastrophe that then leads to the moment of realization and release—the “hamateia”—or experience of catharsis

When you are writing a personal brand story you write in the first person and bring the audience on stage with you to watch your point of view and experience your story as you do.

When writing a business brand story you need to write in the second person and guide the audiences using indicies (details) you know about them to move them from interest to action. So they will buy what you sell.

Think about the problem your business or your client’s business solves.

Imagine your audience experiencing the problem, which indicies can you pull out to tell the story?

A diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown in a theater setting. They are all smiling, cheering, and clapping their hands, creating a lively and positive atmosphere. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the audience members in the foreground.

Brand Storytelling

**The storyteller
guides the hero
who is also the
audience
through their
own experiences
and points of
view with the
brand's story.**



**Algorithms
and Data
cause brands
to go after
the same
audience
using the
same details**

The digital world has changed the way we consume content and the sheer amount of content being dumped onto our screens today is making it harder to get noticed. Press Release feeds are like endless inboxes of headlines, many of which fail to deliver on the promise of the clickbait.

We use data to find the best headline, keywords, and a host of other details to get the attention of more people and in the end, every story, every website, every piece of content looks the same.

Today we are able to see what people engage with and what people don't, so we create more of what works and less of what doesn't. Logically, this makes sense, however what is happening is all the content looks the same and nothing is standing out and content stops working. Brands are using the same templates and barely changing details like colours. They use the same copywriting techniques to create content Google will drive traffic to and in the process, content is modular. The result is lack luster content no one cares about.

List all the ways your brand is like your competitors. Google a few of your competitors and list out how their sites look the same as yours or go to social and list out how their content looks like yours. Think of things like font, layout, colour, images, the tone, the voice, the feel, anything you can see that is similar to what you have done on your website or with your social media.



**What
makes the
Brand
Unique?**

**Tell that
story**

In the book Blink, Malcolm Gladwell shares a story about a war game where the blue team used data and metrics to devise their plan and according to the data, they should have won hands down – but they didn't. The red team won because they did the unexpected by not relying on technology in their guerrilla warfare tactics. The data couldn't foresee a creative strategy outside of the inputted criteria so the blue team, who was the larger lost. The data can only analyse past behaviour, it can't predict if behaviour changes.

How often do you get frustrated because what worked in the past, doesn't work anymore?

Figure out what makes the brand unique and define a story about those unique features using their unique branding. What indicies are unique to them and identify which types of audiences share those indicies.

This isn't easy.

Convincing a client to narrow the audience down can be difficult. We all know niching is the answer, but we all struggle to trust that a narrower audience will turn into enough customers. Social media has conditioned us that bigger numbers are better – but they aren't and all one needs to do is analyze the data to discover that the whole thing is smoke and mirrors.

Think about the websites you were looking at in the previous exercise. How were they different than you? List out all the things that make you, your business, or your client's business unique.

Are You Leaving Audiences Stranded



Brand Stories get fractured all the time, especially on social media. I hate to tell you this but – people don't see a post they like and then go searching all over social media to figure out what it is you do or what you sell.

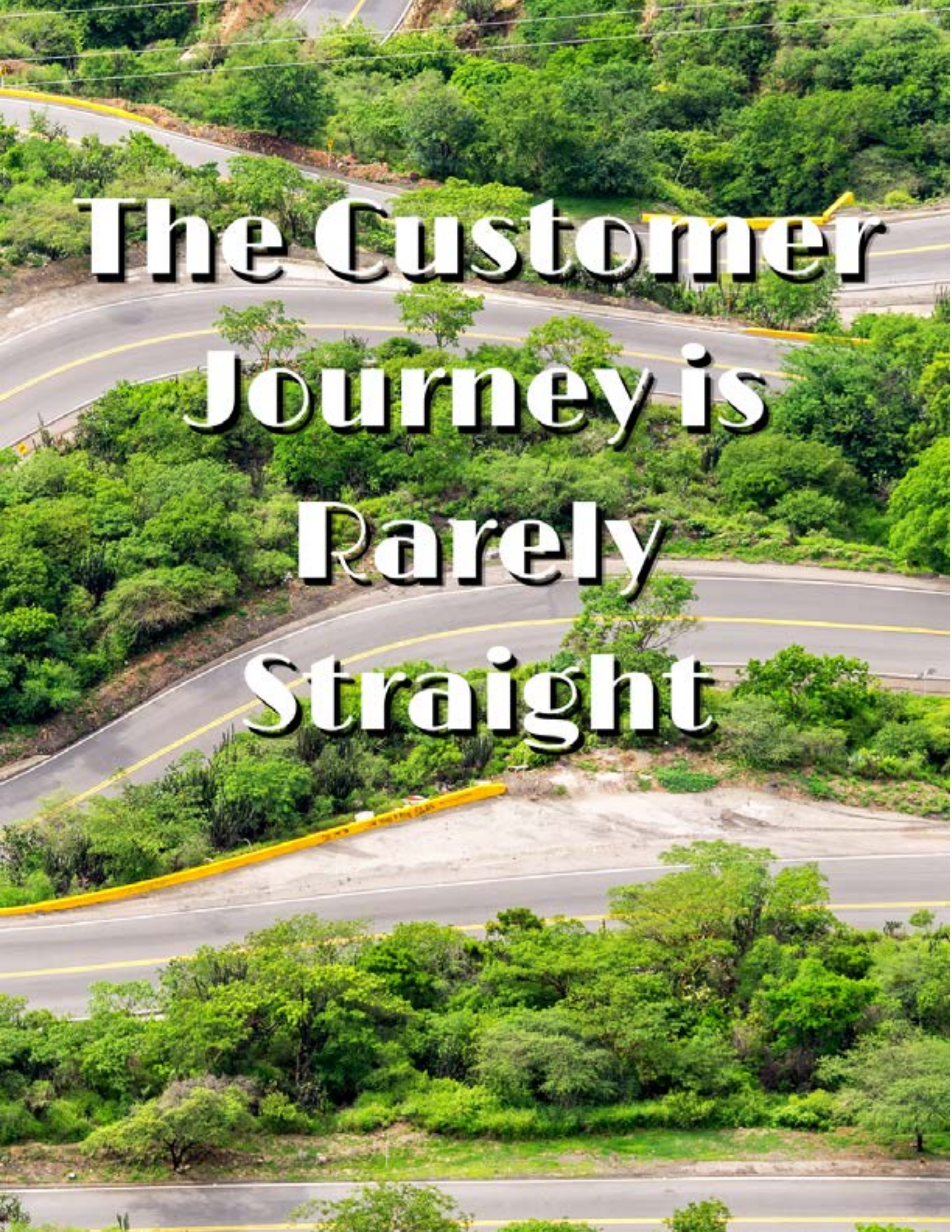
If you want to be successful on social, stop wasting time posting posts that have nothing to do with your brand and take the time to engage with people whom you want in your audience by commenting on their posts.

Your clients have two stories to tell, your personal brand story and your business brand story. Have them create a strategy for each type of brand story to communicate what they want to be known for personally and professionally.

Start by determining which keywords you want to be known for and search for those keywords on social media to find posts to comment on. Others who are interested in content about that keyword will see you.

Make a list of keywords you want to be known for:

You've done a fantastic job crafting stories about the brand stories and your audience wants to take the next step, but there is a Grand Canyon between where they are and where they want to be. You need to map out the customer journey to ensure there are no gaps. Draw out where you post content and how someone will get from that content to converting by buying or signing up with you. How many steps are between awareness and action?



**The Customer
Journey is
Rarely
Straight**

The client journey is rarely straight and when I'm mapping out the client journey's digital footprint, I don't use a traditional funnel because I'm building platforms for the whole journey.

However, today we will focus on the top part of a cone shaped linear funnel I use to ensure the right platforms are in the digital footprint. The top of the funnel is where you as pr professionals spend the bulk of your efforts.

List out where people become aware of your brand.

List out where your brand gains credibility

List out where your brand builds authority.

Is there anything missing?



Awareness

Credibility

Authority

Action

Advocacy

**Public
Relations**

When it comes to pitching to bloggers, authority sites, podcasters, etc... You need to understand the content creator's funnel.

Audiences use search engines to find what they are looking for and sites want content that will fit the place they want to be in the client journey. They are focused on SEO results. So how you construct the story pitch needs to take the intent of the search into account.

A content marketing funnel is simply three parts.

Top of Funnel – Awareness

Middle of Funnel – Credibility, Authority, & Decision

Bottom of Funnel –Action, & Advocacy

By understanding the intent behind each stage, you will understand how to construct the story and write the correct headline based on search intent.

There are 4 different types of intent, and you will need to get to know 3 of them.

Informative Search Intent: This one you need to focus on because it will be the intent you use most often.

When Audiences are looking for an answer to a question, information about a topic, or to learn something new, their searches are classified as informative searches. In Content Funnels, this lands in the Top of funnel.

This is the Why does and what is headlines. Search out keywords to find the questions people are asking about and then create stories with similar headlines asking Why and what.

One way to stand out is to write you emails like writer's pitches with the question, three main points your customer will talk on to answer the question, and which audiences will be interested in the story.

Write out some headlines using the keywords you'd like to be known for.

Choose a headline and list out some problems associated with that story. What is the struggle, the frustrations, the obstacles people are facing? And what does your story intend to do about it?

List three sub headlines that will help understand the headline and the problem people are facing. Why is this happening? What happened to cause the problem? When, where, who and how - use the 5Ws to come up with the three points you want to address.

Who would be interested in this story and why?

What is the call to action you will put at the end? What do you want them to do?

Here is an example of a pitch:

Why is brand storytelling the future of Marketing?

Brands are not standing out in the digital world because marketers use the same analytics to create content and forget about the brand's unique identity. Brand Storytelling flips this approach on its head by telling the brand's unique stories using techniques based on how people connect with story

Shannon Peel of MarketAPeel is a brand storyteller who helps brands define their stories and map out their digital footprint to guide audiences from awareness to advocacy. She discusses three points to answer the question, why is brand storytelling the future of marketing?

1. Analytics and Data Analysis has brands going after the same audience using the same copy, images, and process resulting in a lack of brand recognition
2. Humans are wired for story because stories elicit emotions, remind us of moments in our lives, and inspire us to take action resulting in brand interest
3. Brand storytelling creates an opportunity for brands to build community with their audiences resulting in brand advocacy

Business owners, branding, and Marketing professionals will be interested in this story because they are looking for a solution to get noticed in the marketplace.

To interview Shannon for a story, please contact me at ... to discuss.

A pitch like this gives the media platform the story your client wants to tell and you can go back with another story next week – it's not a one off here's my client's media kit for your collection. Email a list of new media new story idea every month. Plus, coming up with story ideas for the media platform is helpful when they are unsure about what to write next, especially if you've done the SEO research and used specific keywords in the pitch. So, you'll be seen as a helpful resource by some.

It's not like in the past when there were a few experts in the marketplace and journalists needed to go out and find them. Today, journalists and content writers are inundated by people who want to be seen as experts and thought leaders.

The next intent is Navigational Search Intent: This is where the WHO comes in as they are looking for a person or company who can help them solve their problem. For the most part this is for local SEO professionals to worry about. However, there are a couple things you can do to help your client with a bit of value add.

When people search using navigational intent, your client's Brand SERP will come up. This is their website, their social media profiles, videos, and high-ranking media. Google your customer's name and see what comes up and what is missing. You want to see as much credibility of third-party stories as you can get in the first page. To help this happen, when a platform interviews them, ask that their name be put into the title of the article or episode. Tell your clients to add links to these stories onto their Google Business Page. They should get their website person to create an in the news page on their website and back link to the stories using their name & brand name as anchor text to let Google know that the story is about them.

Commercial Investigation Search Intent: This is where How and which come in.

Search platforms are answering questions about which brand to go with or how to do the solution to their problem. The audience know they have a problem. They have a good idea about the solution they want and are either looking for the DIY how to or which company to choose. This is where reviews and how to crowdsource articles fit in. When pitching, do the same thing as with the Why and What questions – this time though, you are going to give them the How article ideas.

The last intent is the Transactional Search Intent: This intent belongs in the bottom of the funnel – Your client's website or e-commerce platform fits into these searches, by this time in the customer journey – it is click buy and checkout. If you did your job right, the web design people in this part of the funnel will be happy.

A lighthouse with a red top section and white and red horizontal stripes on the lower section, situated on a dark, rocky cliff. The ocean is turbulent with white-capped waves crashing against the base of the cliff. The sky is dark with a soft, ethereal glow and scattered light particles.

Structure Your Story

Now that you know the point of view, the intent of the audience, you need to structure the story so you can start writing.

When you structure the story use three parts:

Beginning middle and end – As obvious as this sounds, it isn't easy because when you think about it, where do you start? And how do you start?

The first sentence is the most important part of the story, it's so important, novelists will agonize over each word. It is the hello, would you like to come in and experience my blood sweat and tears? If it doesn't hook them, they will move on.

You have probably heard that studies show people have the attention of a gold fish – that's not true. We have become experts in making extremely quick decisions to either swipe left or right. When interested, we do focus for longer than a goldfish, it just has to be something we find highly engaging. That is how important the first sentence is.

How do you start? Put the audience in the middle of the problem. Ask them if they are standing in 3 feet of water in their basement noticing the ruination of their furniture, electronics, and possessions.

Place your audience in the middle of the problem you solve. Think about how they feel, what they see, who they are with, and where they are. Describe it.

Next... empathize

We get calls from people who are right where you are and have seen first hand the devastation you are experiencing.

Write an empathetic response to the problem.

Next Solution

That's why when you call we send a flood expert to your home to help you assess the damage, create a plan, and oversee the restoration. Call right now and we'll send an expert to fix your basement so you can relax.

When ending your story

This is another place where traditional storytelling is different from brand storytelling. The ending of a traditional story ties up all the threads and provides the audience with a resolution that satisfies them. In brand storytelling, you want to leave the audience unsatiated with the promise of satisfaction if they choose your solution to their problem.


As a brand storyteller, I would need to end the story by telling you that you reach for a cold refreshing glass of Lipton Iced Tea to quench your thirst. On a digital platform, I'd finish it off with click the button to have some delivered to your door. And this would send them to the next step in their customer journey.

Traditional stories end. Brand stories have a call to action

We've all seen movies or read books where the hero doesn't change, become self-aware, or in the case of Game of Thrones – stay alive. Well, in Brand Storytelling the objective is to help the audience transition from problem to the promise of a solution and go from unhappy to promise of happiness.

Because unlike traditional storytelling, Brand stories end with a call to action so audiences will choose the next part of their adventure with you as the storyteller.

Write the ending of your brand story. What promise are you making and why would they want it?



If you want to dive deeper into [brand storytelling](#) and building out a digital footprint your audience can navigate through, become a CreateAPeel member. Where each month members are guided through their journey of building out their funnel and crafting their stories.

This is a four months of the MarketAPeel membership level program. CreateAPeel goes deeper and offers more support, coaching, and promotional opportunities.

Discover the [MarketAPeel Brand Storytelling memberships today](#)

THE END



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Thank you

