



STORY POWER MARKETING

**Proven Methods to
Create Client-Attracting,
Profit-Generating Content—
Without Getting Stuck**

TOM RUWITCH

ADVANCE PRAISE
FOR TOM RUWITCH AND
STORY POWER MARKETING

“Tom Ruwitch is a magician . . . but not with magic powers or potions. He is a magician of storytelling. And in his book *Story Power Marketing*, the magic begins on page one with a compelling story (of course!), which creates a valuable and actionable through line until the end.

“He’s always taught his methodology by ‘showing’ (i.e., he lays out everything, hidden in plain sight, in everything he writes, for all to reengineer and use). But now with this book, he has peeled the curtain further into how he does it.

“I try to emulate Tom’s style and incorporate his advice in my own writing. I’ve come a long way just by paying close attention to everything he writes. Now, equipped with this book, I (and you!) have the owner’s manual on how to do it.

“There’s no longer an excuse to not unleash the power of Story Power Marketing in all of us.”

—**Brian Kurtz**, Titans Marketing; author of *Overdeliver: Build a Business for a Lifetime Playing the Long Game in Direct Response Marketing* and *The Advertising Solution*

“When it comes to storytelling, content creation, and marketing strategy, Tom Ruwitch is one of the best in the business! Not only does he really know his stuff, but he practices what he preaches.”

—**Todd Cherches**, CEO and coach at BigBlueGumball; author of *Visual Leadership*

“Three decades of marketing mastery in one masterpiece! Thirty years ago I was just starting my consulting/coaching business. The ‘world wide web’ was a huge, mysterious wonderland, and email marketing was NOT a thing. I tried to learn from the early giants in the field, but it seemed complicated and confusing at best. Then about fifteen years ago, I met Tom Ruwitch and learned to weave together the psychology and strategy of storytelling and the tactics, techniques, and tools of messaging and online marketing into something that was simple, fun, and effective. This book is all his years of inspiration, innovation, and trial and testing captured in an easy-to-read and easy-to-implement structure for becoming the master of your own story-powered marketing.”

—**Dixie Gillaspie**, coach, author, firestarter
DixieGillaspie.com

“Forget the fancy tech tools and marketing gimmicks, and reach for *Story Power Marketing*, instead. It’s packed with great stories, resources, and frameworks to draw inspiration from and grow your business exponentially. It’s the best guide—and tool kit—I know of for maximizing the power of story in your marketing and sales copy. If you’re not attracting enough of the right clients . . . are struggling to stand out from the crowd . . . or want to connect more deeply with your prospects and build trust and authority, *Story Power Marketing* can help you do all of that and more.”

—**Kim Krause Schwalm**, author of *Client Badassery Secrets* and founder of GetDangerouslyGood.com

“*Story Power Marketing* is a transformative guide that demystifies the art of storytelling in marketing. With a blend of personal anecdotes, actionable insights, and a touch of humor, Ruwitch provides a road map for creating engaging, client-attracting content that generates real profits. This book is a must-read for anyone looking to elevate their marketing game and connect with their audience on a deeper level.”

—**Vance Morris**, customer experience strategist; author of *Systematic Magic* and *Tales from the Customer Experience Crypt*

“I love this book! It is packed with information you can immediately use to make more money. Tom left no stones unturned and shows you specifically how to make your marketing more engaging. There is no fluff or filler. Just one hard-hitting strategy after another.”

—**Dave Dee**, “King of One-to-Many Sales”
DaveDee.com

“Using the Story Power frameworks taught by Tom has resulted in prospects engaging with my emails and reaching out to hire me. In fact, now I have more private clients than I can handle, and I’m filling my group coaching program.”

—**Lynn Whitbeck**, “The Queen of Sales” founder and CEO of Petite2Queen

STORY
POWER
MARKETING

The logo consists of three lines of text. The first line is 'STORY' in a bold, light blue, sans-serif font. The second line is 'POWER' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. The third line is 'MARKETING' in a thin, dark blue, sans-serif font. A stylized lightning bolt graphic, colored in a gradient from light blue to dark blue, originates from the right side of the 'Y' in 'STORY' and extends downwards and to the right, passing behind the 'E' in 'POWER' and ending near the 'G' in 'MARKETING'.

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TOM RUWITCH

I wake every morning grateful because Melissa Early Ruwitch married me and has stuck with me for thirty years and counting. As I continue this wacky journey from cradle to grave, I gaze at many stars to guide and inspire me. Melissa shines brightest and best.

I couldn't create all I do without her.



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INTRODUCTION

THE POWER TO TRANSFORM



When I was a young boy, my mom and dad gave me a turntable and a pair of headphones. Those 'phones were heavy as a barbell, with earpieces the size of grapefruits. I looked like a clown when I wore them, but I didn't care. They transported me to a place where no one was watching or judging.

When things weren't going my way in high school, I would put Todd Rundgren on the turntable, listen to "Just One Victory," and transform from down-and-out to up and at 'em.

When my on-again, off-again college girlfriend dissed me one too many times, I would spin Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" and transform from sad and lonely to self-assured.

When I was twenty-four, and my dad returned from the doctor to tell me he had stage 4 colon cancer, proclaiming, “It’s all right to cry,” I put on Bob Marley’s “Three Little Birds.” I transformed—at least for a little while—from devastated to hopeful, telling myself that every little thing was indeed going to be all right.

***The soundtrack of my life.
Music’s transformative power.***

Thirty years after Dad delivered the news, I stumbled across an advertisement on YouTube for Apple’s new AirPods. Apple titled the video “Bounce.” It starts with a frowning man, shoulders slumped, sitting on his bed, bouncing a ball against the apartment wall. Apple delivers the story in black and white. A dreary scene. The frowning man drags himself off the bed, puts on his shoes and coat, stares at the mirror, puts his thumb and index finger on the corners of his mouth, and forces a smile. He’s not ready to face the day.

But then he pops in his AirPods. The music begins, and he transforms. No longer dragging his sullen self through the day, he has a spring in his step. He literally bounces off the sidewalk.

The video has complex technical effects, but the story is simple. Sad Man transformed into Happy Man. Foot-Dragging Man transformed into Bouncing Man. All made possible by Apple’s AirPods.

The first time I saw “Bounce,” I loved it. I could relate to the story. I had felt this before—the transformative power of music. The ad helped me feel it again.

At the time, I didn’t think, *This reminds me of all those moments in my bedroom, with my turntable and headphones.* At least, I didn’t think about it consciously. I just knew I felt connected to the guy in the ad. Emotionally connected.

That’s what the best stories do. They ignite our emotions. They connect. They make us feel. We see ourselves in powerful stories. Stories give us clarity. They help us make sense of the world. Most importantly, stories inspire us to imagine a future we desire. That’s why stories matter for marketers. Stories sell.

When you weave stories into your marketing and sales, you build powerful connections with prospects and clients who relate to your content and, more importantly, relate to you. You touch their emotions. You connect. You build relationships. You help them see a future they desire. You inspire them to act.

I’ve written this book to show you how to generate story-powered, client-attracting content—consistently and confidently.

This is a book about *story power*. It’s about how you can harness that power to deliver ideas with creativity, clarity, and confidence, and about how you can inspire others to envision and achieve a future they desire.

If you aim to attract more prospects and inspire them to buy, read on. If you want to write informative, entertaining, business-building emails, social posts, and other content, read on. If you want to create content without writer's block, read on. If you want followers who crave your content and act when you encourage them, read on.

This book will show you how to craft powerful stories so your followers will know, like, and trust you. So they will respect you. So they will hire you.

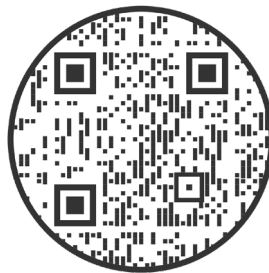
But this is not just another book about marketing and sales. Nor is it written solely for marketers. This book will make you a better leader. This book will make you a better coach, consultant, or professional service provider. This book will make you a better coworker, friend, and family member.

Why? Because this book—and the frameworks, skills, and habits you learn here—will enable you to build stronger, longer-lasting human connections. It will help you empathize. It will help you ask the right questions and deliver answers clearly, concisely, and creatively.

This book will not only help you inspire and transform others but also inspire and guide you to transform yourself.

How do I know? Because I've experienced the transformation. My mission is to help you experience the same.

So take a deep breath. Ask yourself, "What do I want to achieve by book's end?" Then, let's get to it. Story Power is at your disposal.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for videos and playlists with songs mentioned in this chapter and Apple's "Bounce" video.

CHAPTER 1

HOW I HARNESSSED STORY POWER



I have an old pair of brown shoes I nearly tossed in the trash. I didn't dump them, though. I kept them. They still sit today on a dusty shelf in my bedroom closet. Their soft leather is faded and scuffed. Their soles have holes.

If you saw them, you might tell me those shoes have seen better days. Actually, they've seen worse days. Much worse. That's why I keep them. They remind me of the bad old days—and how I escaped.

Way back when, I used to wear those shoes every workday. I put countless miles on them. I marched around town. I knocked on every door on every floor. I cold-called until my throat was raw. I pushed and prodded to make sales.

I used to think sales was a numbers game—all about hustle and more hustle. Wear down your shoes. Knock on

more doors. Cold-call again and again. That was my sales and marketing “strategy.”

I made some sales in those shoes, but I paid the price with raw knuckles, a sore throat, and ruined soles. I was a weary soul, trapped in a pitiful cycle. I was as worn as my shoes. I was frustrated. And I wasn't having fun.

For every prospect who welcomed me and eventually said, “I'll buy,” I met countless others who tuned out, turned off, and moved on.

My only answer was to dust myself off and hustle more. For a while I viewed those shoes as a badge of honor, like a participation trophy or prize for “Most Persistent.” Today I see it differently. I view the shoes not as a symbol of pride but as an example of foolishness, like a scar from some ill-advised boyhood adventure.

Hustling in those shoes was inefficient, difficult, unpredictable, and tiring. Marketing and sales felt more frustrating than fun. I spent more time than I wished pitching products and services. All I wanted to do was serve clients.

Sound familiar?

I know many businesspeople, coaches, consultants, and other experts who feel the same. They aim to serve more and better clients, but they lose their way and spend too much time in the marketing and sales maze. They may not knock on every door on every floor or burn holes in their soles, but they still feel discouraged and lost.

I see experts who spend countless hours on social media. They dish out piles of content, hoping to attract and

engage prospects. They throw emails, social posts, and videos against the wall and hope something sticks. And when it doesn't work, they throw some more, or they give up.

These experts have so much to offer their clients. They know their stuff. But their content falls flat. Prospects yawn and turn elsewhere. The experts think, *Now what?*

When the occasional prospect tunes in and buys, the expert wonders, *How did that happen?* When things work, they wonder, *What made the difference?* When things don't work, they wonder, *What went wrong?*

Marketing feels like a guessing game, a gamble, something beyond their control. If they roll the dice enough, if they hustle, if they send and post more and more and more and more and more content, if they pitch and prod enough, they may ring some sales.

But they'll pay the price. That's how I felt, until I discovered story power.

My Storytelling Transformation

I was sitting in my office at MarketVolt, the email marketing software company I founded in 2001. I was wearing those beat-up brown shoes and making phone calls when our vice president of sales, Pat, bounded in.

He was coming from a meeting where he had pitched our software to a prospect named Jane. She was the marketing manager for a printing company, and she created and delivered emails for multiple sales reps. After Pat showed her the software, Jane gave Pat a bear hug. She hated

creating and sending emails, she said. It was inefficient and time-consuming. It was boring. It was a hassle. It made her head hurt.

When Pat revealed how she could automate the processes, Jane knew everything would change. This would transform her work processes and transform her life. Take her from time wasted to time saved. From headache and hassle to relief and satisfaction. From dread to excitement and anticipation. From difficult to easy.

***We don't sell products and services.
We sell the story.***

After Pat told me about Jane and the hug, I saw sales differently. Jane didn't buy our software; she bought the *transformation* our software enabled. She couldn't transform without our software. But our software was not the story.

I used to treat the software as the star of my marketing story. But after the Jane experience, my focus shifted. I put the spotlight on our prospects and clients. Their stories. Their transformations. I empathized. I focused on how they felt before they chose us. I envisioned how they would feel after they purchased our products and services. And I told stories to demonstrate how we could enable the transformation.

Sometimes these were stories about clients like Jane. Sometimes they were stories about other characters who seemed familiar and relevant to my prospects.

Instead of tuning out, prospects leaned in. They asked questions. They said, "Tell me more." They were fired up.

They liked and trusted me more. My stories captivated them. And my stories inspired them to take the next step and, ultimately, to buy. That's what powerful stories do.

***Stories captivate prospects
and inspire them to buy.***

Storytelling transformed me and how I grew my business. Stories enabled me to sell lots of email marketing software until I sold MarketVolt nineteen years after I founded it.

As I leaned into storytelling, marketing became more fun and more fulfilling. (Yes, I said “fun.”) You can assemble client-attracting stories, too, and you can enjoy the journey.

I no longer dished out the same old “blah, blah, blah” content, guessing what would stick and what wouldn't. I didn't suffer from writer's block anymore. I quit scratching my head, wondering, *What do I do now?*

I had greater clarity and confidence. I created valuable content—informative *and* entertaining. I captivated prospects and established sales-generating relationships with them. It felt easier. I no longer felt like I was dashing madly around the marketing maze. This was fun.

From Software Seller to Storyteller

As I sold more software, I discovered my real passion and purpose: to teach and guide others to do as I had done—create informative, entertaining, story-powered content to attract prospects and inspire them to buy.

Looking back on my career, it all makes sense. After college, I taught high school history and English for two years. I spent a decade as an award-winning newspaper reporter and editor. The best teachers and reporters craft stories. They empathize with their subjects and dig deep to gather the pieces. They deliver critical information and teach without boring their audience. They paint entertaining pictures. They stir emotions.

I left the newspaper industry to become an entrepreneur. I harnessed my journalism skills—digging deep, empathizing, informing, and entertaining—to become a top-notch, story-powered marketer. Meanwhile, I saw so many people—my own clients and others—who were disheartened with marketing like I used to be. I saw too many leaders who struggled to write emails, social posts, and other client-attracting content.

I see them still today. They're disillusioned with all the shiny tools and tactics—and the so-called marketing experts who overpromise and underdeliver. They wish they could improve their odds of marketing success, but they don't know how. They crave predictability, simplicity, and clarity. They wish marketing could be fun, enjoyable, and *productive*.

So I began to show them how.

Start with Stories

I encouraged anyone who would listen to power up their stories before they focused on fancy tools and tactics. Create

and deliver better, story-powered content, and prospects will tune in, turn on, and buy.

Some embraced storytelling. Some didn't. Some of our clients left MarketVolt and invested in fancier, more powerful email marketing tools. They thought a software upgrade would make the difference.

Every day we hear about another shiny new tool claiming to be a “game changer” or promising to take your marketing “to the next level.” The Zillion-Dollar Funnel System, the Surefire Social Media Machine, or the Magnificent Marketing Automation Motor. Tempting tools for businesspeople who want a marketing fix.

I get it. For nineteen years I ran a software company and sold email marketing software. And today I run a marketing automation company called Implementum. We provide an all-in-one platform to manage and market your business with time-saving email, social media, and site-building tools.

Enterprises like MarketVolt and Implementum can save you time and money. They help you execute marketing campaigns quickly and efficiently. But the fanciest, fastest, most efficient marketing machine won't work if you use it to dish out the same old boring “blah, blah, blah” content. If you create and deliver feeble content, you will generate feeble results. I've seen it happen time after time after time.

So before you upgrade your marketing technology, upgrade your stories. Before you set up powerful marketing funnels, power up your stories. Before you pitch products and services, polish your stories.

This book will help you do it.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for a photo of those dusty, old shoes and more information about Implementum's all-in-one business management platform.

CHAPTER 2

STORY POWER PRINCIPLES



I told you stories about my shoes, my business, and my journey—from frustrated and exhausted hustler to confident and powerful story-seller.

Why would you care? Because something in my journey touched you. In some way, my story reflects yours. You can relate. Sure, I’m a character in the stories. But the stories could have featured me, a foot-dragging guy in a big city, or anyone else. The stories matter most to you because they reflect your feelings.

After I told you about the holes in my soles, my endless hustle, and how “marketing and sales felt more frustrating than fun,” I asked, “Sound familiar?” That’s a critical question. It might be *the* most critical question.

My story is your story.

My stories tell you about inefficient hustling. Sound familiar? My stories describe how marketing felt unpredictable and tiring. Sound familiar? In my stories, marketing felt more frustrating than fulfilling. I wished it could be more predictable, productive, and fun. Sound familiar? I could have asked, “*Feel familiar?*” For you, marketing may feel unpredictable, frustrating, and unfulfilling. You may wish it could be more predictable, productive, and fun.

So yes, my story of holes in the soles and being a weary soul may have sounded familiar. And if it did sound familiar, you may have thought, *He knows how I feel*. So you read on.

If the stories you tell sound and feel familiar to your audience, they will read on too. They will tune in and turn on. They will feel respected by you. They will respect you. When you know how they feel and you show it, you build rapport. And you grow your business because more prospects hire you.

A few years ago I bumped into a frustrated storyteller/marketer in an online forum. He wrote, “The problem I had was choosing a really interesting topic for storytelling. Because nobody cares about your everyday life except you and your team. I wrote sincerely, and in the end got so few hits.”

Yet another aspiring storyteller who tries to mine his life for “interesting topics” and comes up with pebbles instead of gold.

“Nobody cares about your everyday life,” he claims. True in his case, but not always so. Nobody cares about *his*

everyday life because he doesn't give them a reason to care. His life doesn't sound familiar to his readers.

Many "experts" say storytelling begins and ends with your "origin story." But too many aspiring *story-sellers* dish out "me-me-me" origin stories. They tell the "interesting" tale of the garage where they invented some widget. They tell, in excruciating detail, how they clawed their way out of some ditch. They tell-tell-tell all about themselves. But they don't make it sound familiar.

When you start with "look-at-me" stories, audiences tune out and move on. Everyone yawns because they don't see themselves in those stories. If your story sounds familiar to prospects, they turn on and tune in. That leads us to Story Power Principle No. 1: Keep the focus on prospects' emotional journeys.

Apple does this in the "Bounce" story. On the surface, it's about a twenty-something man living in a giant city. Why should we care about that guy? Because that guy's story reflects ours. The story reflects all of us who want bounce in our step. It reflects all of us who value music's transformative power. That's why "Bounce" attracted me—the guy who had the grapefruit-sized headphones.

Sure, we may not live in a dreary, big-city apartment like the guy in the ad, but we are familiar with the story. We've dragged ourselves from bed. We've had to force a smile. We've left home dragging our feet. We've wished to transform from down-and-out to up and at'em.

“Bounce” works because we want the same transformation the guy in the ad experienced. From sad to happy. From foot-dragging to spring in our step. From deflated to flying.

“Bounce” doesn’t mention AirPods’ features. (Apple ads rarely mention features.) That’s surface stuff that doesn’t drive sales. Marketers emphasize the distinction between features and benefits: Don’t tout features; focus on benefits. That’s good advice. But great stories like Apple’s “Bounce” go beyond benefits and tout emotional transformations.

Here’s a quick story I once sent to my online family to demonstrate what I mean:

I was walking my dog, Moose, around the block the other day and came upon a neighbor who was manicuring his lawn.

This wasn’t your standard roll-the-mower-over-the-grass job. This was high-intensity fuss-over-the-fescue.

He was on his knees with a hand clipper, working the edges, getting everything right. Not just good enough. But perfect.

After he perfected the edge, he stepped back, put his hands on his hips, and studied his work, like a fine artist admiring his masterpiece.

He was peacock proud, strutting his stuff.

When I returned with Moose 45 minutes later, he was still out there, fussing.

The fescue looked the same to me as it did 45 minutes earlier. But for my neighbor, this wasn’t just about

how the lawn looked. This was about being seen as the Lawn Master. And the curtain had not yet dropped on his performance.

That reminded me of something advertising pioneer John Caples said: “The most frequent reason for unsuccessful advertising is advertisers who are so full of their own accomplishments (the world’s best seed!) that they forget to tell us why we should buy (the world’s best lawn!).”¹

Caples reminds us to focus on the benefit (the world’s best lawn), not the feature (the world’s best seed).

No doubt . . . you’ll attract prospects and drive sales if you promise the world’s best lawn, rather than the world’s best seed.

But you can attract MORE prospects and drive MORE sales if you take it further—if you describe how the benefit will transform the customer.

If you buy our seeds . . . you’ll no longer be embarrassed and ashamed of that dusty weed patch in front of your house (that story would get MY attention) . . .

. . . You’ll be the envy of the neighborhood . . .

. . . You’ll be the one whose neighbors say, “Your lawn looks great . . .”

. . . Your house will transform from a grimy shack to a stately manor . . .

¹ John Caples, *Tested Advertising Methods* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974).

... You'll be peacock proud ...
... You'll be the Lawn Master.

You see it, right? The difference between selling “the world’s best lawn” (benefit) and becoming peacock proud because you’re the envy of the neighborhood (emotional transformation).

Powerful stories evoke emotional transformations. Your prospects and clients crave emotional transformation. That’s why powerful, well-crafted stories drive sales.

To create powerful stories, you must understand the emotional transformations your prospects crave. Apple digs deep to understand how its prospects and customers feel. Then Apple assembles stories to reflect those feelings. When we meet a character in a story who feels something familiar, we relate. We lean in. We’re drawn in.

You must dig deep, like Apple, to discover your prospects’ feelings. More on that in chapter 4, where I’ll introduce the 3E framework for story discovery. But first, a tale to reveal Story Power Principle No. 2:

The Day I Died of Boredom

I remember this like it was yesterday. I was minding my own business, scrolling through a news feed, when I came across an article about storytelling. Published in a popular business magazine, the article “blah, blah, blah-ed” for over a thousand words. The article said pundits encourage businesses to adopt storytelling “to drive key organizational

initiatives.”² Fair enough. But, holy moly, that article was *booring*. I read the first sentence and began to tune out. I read the next sentence, and my eyelids grew heavy. After the third sentence, my head began to bob. Then I got to this part that said: “storytelling is ‘learning to adapt story structures for business communications to persuade your audience to take action. And as part of the endeavor, one may or may not use stories (personal or fictional) to derive the intended outcome.’” That did it. I was *out*.

My wife, Melissa, heard my forehead crash against my keyboard. She rushed into my office, screamed in horror, and called 911. “Help!” she cried. “I think a boring article murdered my husband.”

All right, I’m exaggerating here. I’m alive and well. I’m not some (ahem) *ghostwriter*, composing this book from the grave. But I did read the article. And it bored me to death—figuratively.

Your audience dies of boredom, too, when you dish out information-only, “here’s-what-I-know-that-you-should-know” content.

If you’re an “expert,” pay attention, because this especially applies to you. Coaches, consultants, professional service providers, and other experts package their knowledge for sale to serve clients. That’s a good thing. I do that too.

2 Mahesh Bellie, “Is Business Storytelling All About Telling Stories?” Forbes Communications Council, December 5, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescommunicationscouncil/2022/12/05/is-business-storytelling-all-about-telling-stories/>.

But experts go wrong when they fill their emails, social posts, videos, and other content with information-only content. No personality. No stories. No entertainment. (No good.)

Sure, they may dish out some useful information: “Here’s the difference between a Roth IRA and a traditional IRA” or “Here are five tips to delegate well,” or “Here’s how storytelling can be an integral, and powerful, component of a content marketing strategy.” But useful information like this is not enough. Even if you think you possess some special insight that none of your competitors have, information-only content will not captivate your audience and inspire them to act. That’s especially true when an artificial intelligence-powered robot can dish out information-only content with one click of a button.

Which leads us to Story Power Principle No. 2: Keep it human and personal. Your content must entertain. Your content must have personality. It must have characters. It must have character. It must be human.

That article that nearly killed me? It contained none of the good stuff. It contained only the facts. It might as well have been written by a robot. In fact, it may have been written by a robot.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has arrived. Throughout this book, I’ll reveal ways AI helps me generate story ideas, analyze research, and (occasionally) draft or clean up copy. But for now, I’ll say only this: If you want to stand out from the crowd and create profit-generating content, you must

know how to create unique, personal, human stories in *your* voice. AI can help, but don't employ it as your ghostwriter. Simple as that.

Speaking of simple, here's a story to reveal Story Power Principle No. 3:

Once upon a time, I bought a book called *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* by Robert McKee.³ McKee teaches screenwriting in and around Hollywood. *Story* is his how-to manual. Lots of marketers swear by this book, so I bought a copy.

I like the book, but I don't recommend it. Too complex. I prefer simple. McKee reveals "the elements of story" and "the principles of story design." By the time you plod to the 467th and final page, you know "story is about archetypes." Plus, you know all about setting and genre and character and meaning and scene design and crisis and climax and resolution and art design and exposition and the principle of antagonism and the fade out and (wait a moment while I catch my breath) lots and lots and lots of other rules and tactics.

Great stuff if you want to impress people at dinner parties by talking about "ark-UH-types" or if you want a big-shot Hollywood producer to pick up your screenplay. But if you want to create client-attracting emails, social posts, web pages, videos, and other content, you don't need a screenwriting textbook—or some boiled-down version of it.

³ Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: ReganBooks, 1997).

All that complicated mumbo jumbo gets in the way. Just ask my client Shawn, a financial planner who hired me to help him power up his content. He said he liked my approach because I “keep it simple.”

He told me he had spent lots of money and time on other consultants and courses. They made his head spin. “I want to write better emails and blog posts,” he said. “I don’t want to keep track of whether I’ve put all the story elements in the right places. I’m fed up with systems that are too complex and require a master’s degree to implement.”

I feel Shawn’s pain. I see too many marketing “experts” present storytelling for business as if they’re teaching McKee’s Screenwriting 101 course. They liken business stories to *Star Wars*, *The Godfather*, or *Casablanca*. They encourage you to load business stories with all the elements of a good screenplay—like backstories and heroes and villains and conflicts and resolutions and so on and so forth.

Good luck.

There’s one guy who wants you to master “Twelve Storytelling Brand Archetypes.” Another offers a “Simple Ten-Step System” for business storytelling. Call me simple, but a “simple ten-step system” seems like six or seven steps too many. Which leads me to Story Power Principle No. 3: Keep it simple.

When I sit down to write an email or blog post, I don’t want to worry about Aristotle’s plot formula, the five steps in Freytag’s Pyramid, or the twelve stages of the hero’s journey.

Trust me, you don't need to know a thing about "ark-UH-types" to captivate prospects and inspire them to buy.

Don't get me wrong. I believe in storytelling. And I believe you'll create captivating, client-attracting content and have more fun if you harness storytelling's power. But I also think—check that, I *know*—storytelling for business does not have to be so darn complicated.

My mission: Simplify storytelling so you can grow your business and enjoy the ride, without confusion and complication, and without mastering pyramids or ten-plus steps/stages.

I want storytelling to be “so easy, a caveman could do it.”

* * *

Pop quiz: What company uses that caveman slogan in its advertising?

Unless you've been in (ahem) a *cave*, you know the answer. It's GEICO, whose ads feature one or more cave-men living in the modern age. The gag: They're well dressed, well spoken, and almost hip. And they're spittin' mad when they see or hear GEICO's tagline: “So easy, a caveman could do it.”

On the surface, these ads are quirky episodes about cavemen. But, like any good business stories, these are less about the characters (the cavemen) and more about you, me, or anyone else who has struggled when buying insurance.

Buying insurance is confusing. It's difficult to complete the transaction. It's exasperating. You call customer support,

and you're made to feel like an idiot. It doesn't feel easy—except at GEICO.

GEICO claims its website turns frustration to relief and satisfaction. It turns the insurance-buying process from hard to easy. So easy, well, *you know*.

The caveman bit? A funny anecdote to deliver the promise (transform from hard to easy or confused to clear). It presents a lesson (GEICO enables the transformation) in an entertaining way. The caveman gag adds characters and *character* to the ad. It transforms a boring message about insurance into a memorable, info-taining story.

Does the story include ten steps or twelve stages or five elements? Not even close. Which classic story archetypes does it reflect? Beats me. Would Robert McKee call this a story? No way. But there's plenty of story power in this ad.

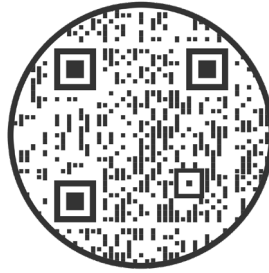
It focuses on prospects' emotional journeys. Before, you're frustrated with complicated policies and pricing. After, you're relieved about how caveman-easy it is (Story Power Principle No. 1). It's a human and personal story (Story Power Principle No. 2). And it's simple (Story Power Principle No. 3).

Apple's "Bounce" checks the boxes too. So does my story about dying of boredom. Your stories can too.

And here's the good news: You don't have to be a creative unicorn to generate client-attracting stories. You don't need to master complex systems. You need to employ a simple, four-piece framework. The framework will work

over and over again to transform your content from bore-them-to-death to delight-and-inspire-them.

I'll reveal the framework in the next chapter.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for a photo of my crazy-doodle, Moose, and a video of one of GEICO's "Caveman" ads.

CHAPTER 3

THE **P.L.A.N.** FOR POWERFUL STORIES



A small business owner once asked me if I could help cure her writer's block. She wanted to create client-attracting stories. But every time she sat at her computer to write an email, blog, or social post, she would freeze. She would stare at the blinking cursor and think, *Now what?* She was discouraged, confused, and stuck.

I told her about Eugene Schwartz—a prolific and successful copywriter in the second half of the twentieth century. He wrote hundreds of profit-generating ads. He earned millions for his clients and himself. He wrote a book called *Breakthrough Advertising*,⁴ which many consider their copywriting Bible.

⁴ Eugene Schwartz, *Breakthrough Advertising* (Westport, CT: Boardroom Books, 1966).

And—get this—he never suffered from writer’s block. Never ever.

How did he do it? During a seminar for copywriters at Rodale Press in 1994, Schwartz said, “If anyone tells you ‘you write copy,’ sneer at them. Copy is not written. Copy is assembled.” I agree. Copy is not written. Copy is assembled. That was true in Schwartz’s day when he assembled copy for print ads, and it’s true today as we assemble copy for emails, social posts, videos, and other twenty-first-century channels.

For many people, content creation seems like a magic art—beyond mere mortals. Albert Brooks made a movie about such people called *The Muse*. Brooks plays a screenwriter named Steven Phillips who has lost his “edge.” Everyone says he’s past his prime. So Steven gets a muse. Not a figurative muse, but a *literal* muse—as in a real-life Greek goddess, a daughter of Zeus.

Her name is Sarah Little (Sharon Stone). She has worked her inspirational magic all over Hollywood. Martin Scorsese relies on her. Rob Reiner says he couldn’t have made *The American President* without her. Steven’s friend Jack Warrick (Jeff Bridges) sells one blockbuster screenplay after another—thanks to Sarah, he says.

Jack never gets stuck like Steven. So Steven asks how he does it, and Jack reveals his secret inspiration. “If you’re lucky enough to be with her, you’ll write better than you ever have in your life,” Jack insists.⁵

⁵ *The Muse*, directed by Albert Brooks (Beverly Hills, CA: October Films, 1999).

So Steven connects with the muse, and he pens a brilliant screenplay that the studio loves.

But there's a twist: Sarah Little isn't a real-life Greek goddess. She's a con artist who escaped from a psychiatric hospital in Ohio. Steven penned his great screenplay without magic. That muse? She was merely a beautiful blond placebo.

I know a lot of businesspeople who remind me of Steven. They imagine they don't have the creative flair to write great copy and tell powerful stories. They think they need a muse. That's a myth—as far-fetched as Zeus and his nine daughters.

To be a great marketer, you must master proven methods, not magic. You don't need to be an *artiste*. You don't need some creative gift woven into your DNA. You need to follow the steps. Deliver the goods. No hocus-pocus. No Greek goddesses. No problem.

We mere mortals can create magic. But we don't conjure it out of nowhere. We prepare. The Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca reportedly said, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."⁶ Same goes for content creation. When we prepare, we can create great content. And it feels like magic.

That's how Eugene Schwartz did it. That's how I do it. That's how you can do it. I'll show you how.

⁶ Seneca, quoted in *Letters from a Stoic*, trans. Robin Campbell (London: Penguin Books, 1969).

I've designed a simple, four-piece framework to help you gather and assemble powerful stories. Four pieces. That's all. It's called the Story **P.L.A.N.**:

- A **P**romise
- A **L**esson
- An **A**ncedote
- A **N**ext step

When you have a **P.L.A.N.**, you will assemble story-powered, client-attracting copy—without writer's block. When you master this framework, stories will reveal themselves to you in magical ways. Not because you're a creative unicorn. Not because of hocus-pocus. Not because of a daughter of Zeus. Stories appear magically when you know what you're looking for. You'll know because you'll have a **P.L.A.N.**

Most content creators sit empty-handed—just the blank computer screen and them. They wait and fidget, hoping for the creative well to flow. They try to conjure storytelling magic. They pray to unblock writer's block, and they feel stuck. No wonder they wish for a magic muse.

If only they had a **P.L.A.N.**

When you have a **P.L.A.N.**, you won't get stuck. Schwartz said, "You are working with a series of building blocks. You are putting the building blocks together, and then you are putting them in certain structures."

The process and structures have evolved since Schwartz's day. He assembled stories in print ads. We assemble stories in structures he didn't use: emails, social posts, web pages, YouTube videos, and other content—online and offline.

Different structures, but the same principles—just as I outlined in the last chapter:

1. **Keep the focus on prospects' emotional journeys.** Research and plan first to understand your market and what makes your people tick. Empathize with your prospects and clients. Know the journeys you **Promise**. Know how your **Lessons**, products, and services enable the journeys.
2. **Keep it human and personal.** Find entertaining **Anecdotes** to deliver your promises and lessons. Weave humans and their emotions into your content. Don't lecture. Don't dish out the same old boring information.
3. **Keep it simple.** Simple principles. Simple frameworks. Anyone can learn and implement them. You don't have to be a storytelling unicorn.

With a **Promise**, a **Lesson**, and an **Anecdote**, your stories will engage prospects and inspire them to think, *What's next?* That's your invitation to share the **Next** step—a call to action.

The next step is not necessarily “buy now.” You may ask your audience to download a giveaway, register for an event,

or reply with feedback. Different stages in the marketing process call for different next steps. The key is to include some kind of next step, some call to action to drive your audience forward.

When you apply the **P.L.A.N.** framework, you'll assemble emails, social posts, videos, and more with confidence and ease. You won't sit in front of a blank notepad or computer screen thinking, *Where do I begin?* or *Um, now what?*

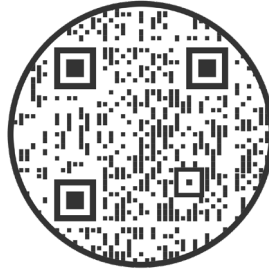
Readers, listeners, and viewers will love your content because your stories will speak to and reflect them. You envisioned their journey. Your story is *their* story. So they want more.

Your Story **P.L.A.N.** gives you everything you need to assemble captivating, client-attracting copy—just as Schwartz's research gave him everything he needed to assemble ads without writer's block.

In the chapters that follow, I will reveal how to assemble a Story **P.L.A.N.** When you reach the end of this book, you'll know how to

- Discover the promise and the lesson.
- Weave in anecdotes to turn your promises and lessons from boring, information-only lectures to captivating stories.
- Present next steps to inspire your audience to act.

And because you know all that, you will be a storytelling master who profits more while working less.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for a free online training where I dive deep into the Story **P.L.A.N.** framework and how it can help you create client-attracting content without getting stuck.

CHAPTER 4

PROMISE AND LESSON DISCOVERY WITH THE 3Es



I love the scenes in the movie *Groundhog Day* when Ned Ryerson (Stephen Tobolowsky) pitches insurance to Phil Connors (Bill Murray).

“Have you ever heard of single premium life? Because I think that really could be the ticket for you,”⁷ Ned says. Ned repeats the pitch day after day after day after day.

With each repeating *Groundhog Day*, Phil arrives with a new response for Ned. On one of those days, before Ned opens his mouth, Phil rears back and slugs him in the jaw. I remember seeing the movie in a theater. The crowd laughed and cheered. No one likes a pitchy pest.

⁷ *Groundhog Day*, directed by Harold Ramis (Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1993).

How does Ned know single premium life “could be the ticket” for Phil? Of course, he doesn’t know. He pitches single premium life to anyone who fogs a mirror. Ned reminds me of countless other salespeople who pitch and prod and promise—without knowing what makes their prospects tick.

Any old “Ned” can promise they have “the ticket” for you. But when you promise something prospects don’t want or need, they’ll tune out and move on. Or, worse yet, they’ll sock you in the jaw.

If you want to build rapport with a prospect, earn their respect, and inspire them to hire you, you must empathize. You must discover what your prospects experience and feel. What holds them back? What keeps them up at night? What do they fear? What’s got them stuck?

To deliver a meaningful promise, you must also envision. Where do they want to go? What does the mountain-top look like? What do they wish for and dream of?

When you empathize and envision, you promise a journey from before to after. You promise transformations. Prospects tune in and turn on. They think, *I want this*. And they ask, “How can I make this journey happen?”

Now they believe you when you say, “I have the ticket for you.” You’ve presented the journey, and they want that ticket. They want you to transport them from before to after. They’re more likely to trust you to help them transform. They’re eager to hear how you enable the transformation. They’re on the edge of their seats, waiting for the lesson.

How can I transform from down-in-the-dumps to up and at 'em? The lesson: AirPods enable the transformation.

How can I transform insurance buying from confusing and difficult to caveman-simple? The lesson: Get GEICO.

Empathize and envision to discover and assemble the **P**romise. Deliver the **L**esson to reveal how you enable the promise.

Empathize. Envision. Enable. Three Es that add up to powerful, client-attracting promises and lessons.

Don't Be Afraid of Fear

Earlier I asked, "What do they fear?" A lot of businesspeople dread the "F" word. Maybe you dread it too.

A client once told me, "I don't want to talk about their fear. That's fear-based marketing—it's manipulative." I can relate. I used to look at it the same way, but I now know two critical points: First, the difference between unethical manipulation and ethical persuasion is intent. (Credit to marketing master Dave Dee, the first person I heard put it this way.)

Do you intend to help your clients? If you intend to rip off your clients, you shouldn't be in business. Put down this book. I'm not for you. When you intend to help your clients, you don't unethically manipulate prospects if you address their fears. You attract and inspire them to hire someone (you) who will help and serve them. You persuade prospects to act in their best interest.

Second, if you want to attract prospects and inspire them to act, you must meet them where they are. In many cases—perhaps in most cases—prospective clients deal with problems, frustrations, and fears. Sometimes huge, paralyzing fears.

Lots of marketers emphasize fear, but they don't empathize. They agitate prospects rather than honor them.

I've met a lot of those marketers. They're the ones who treat prospects like prey and describe sales success as "crushing it" or "killing it." They treat sales as a conquest. I see it differently, and if you wish to be a successful, story-powered marketer, you should too.

You have to be a helper, not a hunter. You have to be a listener, not a teller. You have to exercise empathy, not leverage. You have to be a partner, not a pursuer. You have to collaborate, not convince. You have to be a kindred spirit, not a killer. You have to lift them up, not take them down.

If you approach sales and marketing this way, you'll sell more, not less. And you won't feel like a Ned. You'll feel like an ethical, empathetic, transformative guide.

Story-powered content begins with empathy and honors prospects. It meets prospects where they are. It says "I see and hear you. I know what you're feeling."

You meet prospects where they are (empathize) so you can envision a solution. You don't have to throw fuel on the fire. You don't have to exaggerate. You don't make prospects wallow in their misery. Empathize with them, and they'll see you for the trustworthy helper you are.

Honor how they're feeling. Envision solutions. Give them hope. Take them by the hand and guide them to a better place. With this approach, your story becomes a gift you give them, not a trick you play on them.

Here's a story to demonstrate the point (and how some people miss it):

A few years ago, my wife, Melissa, and I woke to a loud *thud*. She sprang up and asked, "What was that?" She thought the sound came from inside the house. We live in the city, and crime is a thing, so I don't blame her for worrying.

I got out of bed, checked the alarm panel (nothing amiss), wandered the halls (all clear), checked the doors and windows (all locked), and returned to bed. "Sleep well," I said. And we did.

A few months later I read an article by an "expert" who preached about the "evils of fear-based marketing."⁸ One of his examples: "In the home security industry, the message is that a home without a security system puts the lives of the family at risk."

That's bad marketing, the "expert" claimed: "While fear-based marketing may lead to short-term results, it may not be useful for creating long-lasting relationships with clients and building your brand. A different approach is to

8 "Your Marketing Should Inspire, Not Scare. Here Are 3 Ways to Do It." 2017. Inc.com. October 28, 2017. Accessed August 26, 2024. <https://www.inc.com/kevin-kerridge/your-marketing-should-inspire-not-scare-here-are-3-ways-to-do-it.html>.

draw your audience in by being authentic and offering real value.”

I see it differently, and so should you.

If your prospects are anxious, you can speak to their anxiety with honesty and respect. You empathize. Then show how your products or services move them from anxious to calm.

If your prospects are in pain, speak to the pain. Then show how you can move them from pain to relief. If your prospects feel stuck, speak to the feeling. Honor the feeling. Then show how you can move them from stuck to forward motion. If your prospects are losing sleep and restless, wondering whether their house is secure, speak to their restlessness. Then show them how your home security system can help them sleep well.

Marketers often talk about “authenticity.” When you understand how a prospect or client feels and meet them where they are, that’s authenticity. When you promise to help them overcome a problem or fear and you keep the promise, that’s authenticity.

Offer real value. Understand your prospects. Meet them where they are. Empathize and envision so you can share meaningful promises and lessons. Don’t let anyone tell you that’s “evil” or manipulative.

Your audience will value your authenticity. They’ll appreciate how you *get* them. They’ll respect you. They’ll think, *It’s like you know exactly how I’m feeling.*

Envision the Promise Fulfilled

When we empathize with prospects and clients, sometimes they can see the transformation they desire. Sometimes they can't. We help them envision the transformation. We help them envision how they'll feel when they transform.

Empathize and *envision* work hand in hand. If you focus on prospects' problems without revealing a solution, you wallow with them. If you twist the knife hard enough—as some marketers encourage—prospects may jump and buy. But they're jumping to escape, not to achieve. You want clients eager to achieve. They generate better results, and they stick with you longer.

If you envision a solution without first empathizing, you impose your vision rather than serve theirs. And if you pester and prod without empathizing or envisioning, you're another Ned Ryerson. He knows nothing about Phil. He has no idea what Phil feels or needs. No empathy there. Ned doesn't help Phil envision anything, other than a hefty life insurance premium. Ned hasn't discovered a powerful promise. He has memorized a pitch. And no one's buying.

We all hate pitchy pests. We can't stand it when someone tells us they have "the ticket" before they bother to learn a thing about us or our desires. You don't have to be like Ned Ryerson. When you empathize, envision, and enable, you won't be the clueless Ned who says, "I have just the ticket for you." You will describe a meaningful journey for your prospects.

Because you empathized and envisioned, because you described a journey they wish to take, they will lean in and ask, “How . . . ?”

How do I transform my day from a gloomy, foot-dragging slog to a joyful, spring-in-the-step celebration?

How do I transform my insurance purchase from a confusing, aggravating mess to a simple, satisfying breeze?

How do I transform my marketing process from something I dread to something I enjoy and take pride in?

These questions transform the sales process for you. When prospects tune in, turn on, and ask, “How do we make this happen?” they’re hungry for the lesson. They want to learn how your tips, products, and services enable the journey.

When a prospect asks, “How . . . ?” they’re already sold on the journey. Now they’re inviting you to reveal the story’s next chapter. You no longer knock on every door to pitch products and services. You no longer prod prospects to lower their resistance. You no longer push prospects toward the transaction. You attract them. They invite you in.

Dan Kennedy said great marketing transforms you from an “unwelcome pest” to an “invited guest.” When you market and sell with powerful stories, you become the invited guest. You earn the invitation—because your prospect respects you and sees you as the one who gets them.

Authors, coaches, consultants, and other business leaders hire me to help them become the invited guest. They hate feeling like unwelcome pests, and so do I. We don’t

want to force prospects to buy. Inspire them to act in their best interest. Don't hunt them and bag them as prey.

When “warrior” marketers pitch, prod, and beat back resistance, they exert power to win the battle. With Story Power, you frame marketing and sales differently. You share your power with them. You empathize and envision so you can promise a meaningful journey. And then, at their invitation, you deliver the lesson about how you will enable the journey to fulfill the promise.

That's story power at work.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for a video clip from *Groundhog Day* with Ned Ryerson and more from Dan Kennedy regarding how to be “an invited guest.”

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO KNOW PROSPECTS' FEELINGS



When I ran an email marketing software company, one of my clients invited me to a session with their advertising agency. They were going to define “prospect personas.” We gathered in a fancy conference room with floor-to-ceiling whiteboards. The agency’s account rep handed everyone a “Prospect Persona Questionnaire.”

The group spent the next hour pulling from their heads everything they believed about their prospects. That was it. Two hours to document *everything* about their prospects.

Two days later the account rep distributed the “final draft” Prospect Persona, and they launched a marketing campaign based on it. Three months later they pulled the plug because the campaign flopped.

Why did it fail? Because they got the message wrong. They didn't fully discover where their prospects were and where they wanted to be.

It's a common mistake.

We know a lot about our prospects and clients. When we try to empathize and envision, we hear our prospects' and customers' voices in our head. We pull from our head their feelings—their pains and frustrations, their hopes and dreams.

We fill prospect persona worksheets with the voices we hear, and we think we've completed the job. We haven't. The glass is half full, half empty. Half complete, half incomplete. Half right, half wrong. Some indisputable facts. But also some assumptions and guesses.

When we pull from our head what we think our prospects and clients feel, we sometimes mistakenly confuse our feelings with theirs. Marketers often design products, services, and marketing messages that solve their own problems—not their prospects' or clients'. Another common mistake.

Same goes for AI. Ask ChatGPT or another AI robot to tell you what your prospects feel and think. It will fill the glass—half incomplete, half wrong. It will reflect the feelings of someone other than your prospects and clients.

If you want to stand out as the one who *gets* your prospects, you have to go beyond what you pull from the top of your head or what the AI robot tells you. Great marketers

go further. Eugene Schwartz went further. I go further, and you can too. The further you go, the more you will profit.

Good news: It's easier than ever to go further and conduct better *promise discovery*. When you do it, you will gather more and better building blocks. You will produce more and better content with fewer struggles. And you will generate better results.

Three Pillars of Promise Discovery

Pillar One: Your Head

Yes. Start with your head, like my client and her agency did with the Prospect Persona worksheet. That's fine. Close your eyes and think about your prospects and customers. Think of how they feel. Record what you think on the worksheet or whiteboard.

Empathize and envision. Think about how you can enable the journey from before to after. You're off to a good start. But remember: The glass is half empty and half wrong. You can't stop there. Keep going beyond what you pull from your head.

Pillar Two: Voices of Your Clients and Prospects

You have thank-you notes, email exchanges, surveys, testimonials, Zoom meeting recordings, online reviews, and countless other nuggets—straight from the mouths of your prospects and clients.

They tell you where they are (their frustrations, fears, problems). And they tell you where they want to go (their dreams, desires, hopes). They describe the transformations they seek. They thank you for the transformations you enable.

This is marketing gold. Digging into your prospects' and clients' words always reveals things you didn't pull from your head—precise things.

The AI robot consumes from a massive pile of content and pastes together words based on what is common. You don't want common. You want precision. You want accuracy. You want your clients and prospects to know you know them.

Only you have those thank-you notes, email exchanges, surveys, testimonials, Zoom meeting recordings, online reviews, and other nuggets. So only you know precisely what your prospects and clients want.

If you want to stand out, you have to be precise.

So go get them and use them! Develop habits and systems to converse and record prospects' and clients' perspectives. Adopt systems to collect, sort, and analyze the things your prospects and clients say. A good place to start is to review client testimonials, if you have them.

Pillar Three: Voices of the Market

What are people in your target market saying? I'm talking about people outside your client/prospect solar system. They

have not talked with you, but they discuss their problems, fears, dreams, and aspirations somewhere.

There's an old marketing adage, widely attributed to Robert Collier: "Always enter the conversation already taking place in the customer's head." I first heard this long before I began to use the internet for market research.

Today our customers and prospects share *online* the conversation taking place in their minds. Maybe they shared their story in a social media community. Maybe they reviewed your competitor's book or commented on a blog post. There are countless places potential leads talk. Find them. Discover what they're saying. AI can help (more on that in chapter 10).

As with pillar two (voices of your clients and prospects), develop habits and systems to collect, sort, and analyze voices in the market. The more systematic you become, the more building blocks you'll gather to assemble powerful, client-attracting stories.

How I Use Story Discovery to Grow Story Power Marketing

In chapter 2, I told you about my client Shawn who likes my storytelling framework because I keep it simple. I appreciated the compliment, but I didn't realize, at first, how important it was.

After our Zoom call, I transcribed the recording and read through our conversation. And then I saw it. "I don't

want to keep track of whether I've put all the story elements in the right places. I'm fed up with systems that are too complex and require a master's degree to implement," he said.

Boom! The comment exploded in my brain. Keep it simple. I do that naturally. Some tell me it's my superpower—making the complex simple. Still, I didn't emphasize simplicity when I initially marketed my business. I took simplicity for granted. Sure, I talked about how I help business leaders navigate the marketing maze. I talked about how marketing can feel confusing and frustrating. But I didn't talk about *simplicity* versus *complexity* until my client complained about systems that "require a master's degree to implement."

Then, almost as if on cue, a prospect said something similar, reinforcing the promise I discovered by listening to my client.

This is promise discovery pillar two—the voice of clients and prospects.

Clients and prospects share their frustrations, fears, and problems. They share their dreams, desires, and hopes. In their own words. You must listen to them, not talk at them.

Because I listened attentively to Shawn, recorded what I heard, and analyzed the recording, I discovered a critical part of the story. If my story discovery began and ended with pillar one (the voice in my head), my story would not have been complete. Instead, I tapped pillar two (prospect

and client voices) to discover they crave simplicity and can't stand complexity.

I confirmed this when I went beyond my prospect and client solar system and tapped pillar three. I visited online forums where my prospects discuss their challenges and desires. I read testimonials on my competitors' websites. I searched high and low for places where my target market hung out. I listened to what they were saying.

I asked a trusted employee, Alycia, to find the most popular storytelling books on Amazon and scan reviews. I asked her to look for reviews where readers express emotion or reveal the transformations they seek. Here are two—among many reviews—she found.

- “Had been struggling to adopt the hero’s journey, but that’s way too complicated when what is expected is short and the message needs to get through easy and effortless . . .”
- “I understand storytelling is important, but (the author) went too deep.”

More marketing gold. Go back to chapter 2 where I say, “When I sit down to write an email or blog post, I don’t want to worry about . . . the twelve stages of the hero’s journey.”

Where did that come from? I didn’t conjure it from some magical, creative well. I discovered it. First, by tapping

pillar two, I heard my clients say, “I don’t want to keep track” of all those complex elements. Then by tapping pillar three, I discovered what the broader market was saying: The hero’s journey is “way too complicated.”

Would my marketing have been okay without pillars two and three? Maybe. But it would have been far less precise and effective.

You want to stand out, don’t you? You want prospects to notice how much you get them. You want to be seen as authentic and valuable. You want to be hired.

That happens when you understand your prospects better than your competitors do. When you dig deeper—tapping pillars one, two, and three—you understand better. This empowers you to market with greater confidence and comfort and generate better results.

Marketing doesn’t have to be a dark maze and a guessing game. I don’t guess. I discover. And then I share stories assembled with the building blocks I discovered. I discovered my client was fed up with complex systems. I discovered people who want storytelling to be “easy and effortless.” And those discoveries became building blocks in the stories I tell.

My stories don’t tell prospects how *I* think storytelling should work. My content doesn’t spit out AI-generated stories drawn from broad brush strokes and assumptions. My stories reflect how my prospects and clients think. My stories put the focus on prospects’ and clients’ emotional journeys, based on what they say and how they say it—not

on what I or some AI “large language model” assumes. And so my stories stand out. Yours can too.

Promise Discovery Should Be a Habit, Not an Event

I work constantly on promise discovery. I rethink what I know about my prospects—empathizing and envisioning—to hone my promises (pillar one). I review and analyze the things my prospects and clients say (pillar two). And I listen to voices in the market and analyze what I hear (pillar three).

The promises don’t change dramatically as the weeks, months, and years pass. But they change.

Ask Jeff Walker. He’s the guy who created and runs Product Launch Formula. He redefined how businesses market new products or services online. When Jeff launches, I listen.

In a 2023 video,⁹ he described his preparation for a workshop launch. This would be a free workshop. But as Jeff says in the video, “Just because it’s free doesn’t mean people are going to show up, right?”

So Jeff and his team worked hard to “get the maximum number of people to sign up.” That started with two questions: What’s the promise? Who am I selling to?

Jeff has been doing this for nearly twenty years. So you would think he can answer these questions without breaking a sweat. But Jeff and his team rediscover the stories every time, because, as he says, “You have to get those things

⁹ Jeff Walker, “Two Questions I Ask Before Every Launch,” YouTube video, 6:27, posted by Jeff Walker, March 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCFrhVvike8>, accessed August 11, 2024.

right. Because if you don't get those things right—really drilling down into what their hopes, dreams, frustrations, fears, desires are and then figuring out how you can fulfill those—then you're nowhere.”

Some of you may be thinking, *Sure, but doesn't Jeff already know his prospects? Doesn't he already know their hopes, dreams, frustrations, fears, and desires? Can't he dust off that "prospect persona" he created last year and use that for this campaign?*

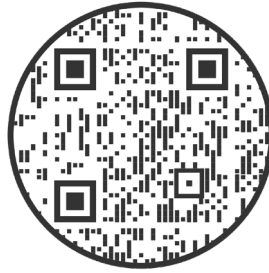
Of course he could—if he wanted to land fewer clients. Jeff admits the basic prospect profile hasn't changed since 2005 when Product Launch Formula first appeared. He sells to people who “either want to grow their business, or want to have an online business, or want to grow the online business that they already have.”

But Jeff knows the surface profile is not enough. He drills down every time because he knows “The mood of my prospects is very different than it was a year ago, or five years ago, or ten years ago, or twenty years ago.”

Precisely understand your prospects' ever-changing moods, and you win. You can't fill out a promise discovery worksheet, put it on a shelf, and then reference it month after month, year after year.

You have to drill down and get it right each time, as Jeff Walker does, or else your stories won't work. Your promises will miss the mark. Your prospects will tune out and move on.

When you drill down, you have a huge competitive edge over all those who don't know how to discover prospects' stories or are too lazy to try.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for the Jeff Walker video mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

ANECDOTE DISCOVERY



Here's the tale of how I turned that anecdote about Ned Ryerson into a powerful business story:

One day, as I relaxed in the living room and channel-surfed my flatscreen, I came across the movie *Groundhog Day*. And, well, because it's *Groundhog Day*, I tuned in and watched.

I watched as Ned accosted Phil for the first time, and Phil stepped into an icy puddle. I watched as Phil remembered to step over the puddle. I watched as Phil hit Ned. As I watched, I wasn't thinking about my business. Emails and social posts were the furthest things from my mind—until the scene when Phil slugs Ned. Then it clicked: *This would make a great email*, I thought.

How did I know? Why did the scene click? Because I know the lessons and promises I wish to share with my prospects and clients. Here are the applicable ones:

The promise: Transform how you feel when you market and sell—from pitchy pest to invited guest. Enjoy marketing more and get better results.

The lesson: Empathize and envision—know what makes your prospects tick—before you tell them you have the ticket for them. Offer your products and services only if you know they will enable a positive transformation for clients.

The promise and lesson were filed away in my mind, like bricks in a builder’s warehouse, ready when needed to assemble a story.

I’ve written many stories—with different anecdotes—to deliver the same promises and lessons. When I saw Phil slug Ned, I knew I had another anecdote to assemble this story.

Ned was the pitchy pest. Phil treated him like the unwelcome guest. That’s what happens when you say, “I have the ticket for you” to everyone you meet.

All of a sudden, I was no longer just watching a movie. I grabbed my iPad and jotted the note in my “Story Ideas” file: “Ned Ryerson. Cautionary tale. Promise: Transform from pest to guest. Lesson: Empathize. Listen. Don’t say, ‘I have the ticket.’”

A few days later, I wrote the email.

The process felt like magic. In a way, it was. I made something—a business story—out of seemingly nothing. But the magic “happened” because I prepared to let it find me. Without promise discovery and lesson discovery, the Ned Ryerson anecdote would have blown past me. I wouldn’t have noticed the story. It wouldn’t have clicked.

Without jotting some notes on my iPad, the idea may have come and gone. Great content creators don’t just discover and gather the building blocks for their stories, they noodle, doodle, and jot to store and explore their discoveries. I have a story to bring home this idea:

I once heard my friend Dan Rubright, a great jazz guitarist and composer, describe how he created a song. He appeared on the *Songs Out Loud* podcast and dissected his tune “Prepare for Departure.”¹⁰ For Dan, most songs begin when he picks up a guitar and starts to noodle. He plays around and improvises without getting hung up on where it belongs, where it fits.

“It all comes from just that noodling on your own. [Start with] those little things. And little things add to little things, and then ultimately, it’s this piece that you know you just want to give it away like a gift,” Dan says.

Dan’s noodling reminds me of journaling. I write in my journal daily. Noodling with words, jotting down ideas. Sometimes I tap an idea that quickly finds a home in an

¹⁰ “Dan Rubright—Prepare for Departure,” *Songs Out Loud* podcast, RSS.com, June 15, 2021, <https://rss.com/podcasts/sol/219243/>.

article, email, blog post, video, or some other piece of coherent content. Sometimes not.

Dan records noodling sessions on his phone. He often listens to the recordings and thinks, *I don't have any place to put this . . . at least not now*. Here's how Dan describes it in the podcast: "You know, sometimes you have to say no to something that's really cool . . . because it's just not right in the particular context you're in."

Give yourself permission to create without immediate purpose. Don't say "no." Say "not right now." Those creations often bear fruit later.

That's why Dan keeps the recordings—just as I keep my word noodles in my journal. Dan and I revisit the noodles and often discover meaning and context we didn't see at first. Those noodles often find a home.

During the podcast episode, Dan listens to a clip he recorded while composing "Prepare for Departure." The noodle didn't fit in the song. But as he discusses it with the podcast host, Aaron Doerr, Dan says, "I'm glad we are looking back on this tune because [that noodle is] really good. I think I'll work on that soon." That lonely, homeless noodle may grow into something more.

You may be thinking, *Noodling is not a structured process*. But Dan's noodling sessions don't happen accidentally. Dan has a process that includes noodling. Dan applies systems and uses tools to record and revisit those noodles. There's a ton of habit and structure in what Dan does.

If not for Dan's systems and processes, "Prepare for Departure" may never have taken off. And the homeless noodle, which could blossom into a song, may never have been recorded.

Same goes for me and storytelling. So many of my best stories grew from seeds I planted in my journal or recorded to my phone. My journal is a tool. So, too, is my phone on which I record voice memos, random thoughts, and story ideas when they come to me.

Choose to noodle. Choose to doodle. Choose to jot down your thoughts. It may seem aimless and random at first, but if you establish a creation habit, you will record ideas that deserve a home. And over time you will create something powerful that will captivate and inspire others. When it happens, it may feel like magic. But really, it happens because you allowed preparation to meet opportunity.

I'm prepared to create "magic" because I dig deep to discover the promises and lessons relevant to my audience. I noodle, doodle, and jot. I store building blocks away in my mental warehouse. And when I run into the right anecdote, I recognize its place in my **P.L.A.N.**, I combine it with the right promise and lesson, and I assemble a powerful business story.

It may seem like I conjure the magic out of nowhere. But that's not the case. It's all about systems, processes, and habits. When I bump into an anecdote, like I did while watching *Groundhog Day*, I call it *the anecdote finding the story*.

There's another way to assemble a powerful business story: *The promise and lesson find the anecdote.*

Here's an example: Several years ago, I worked with an executive coach named Charlotte who serves business owners. Her promise is to help business owners escape the hamster wheel and achieve greater business success while working less. Charlotte delivers lessons to help her clients achieve the promise, including communication skills, time management, and delegation.

Months before she hired me, she wrote a blog post with the headline "Are you delegating or dumping?" It went like this:

"Delegating properly is one of the most important leadership skills. Delegation is typically not a natural skill that we learn growing up; however, it is critical to company growth, and it's a game-changer on many levels. When delegation is done poorly, it is better known as dumping, and it's not ultimately beneficial to the giver or receiver."

The bottom of the blog post included a form readers could fill out to schedule a complimentary consultation with Charlotte. No one filled it out.

I told Charlotte her blog post was a pile of boring, information-only "blah, blah, blah." We agreed she could do better.

I led Charlotte through promise and lesson discovery, and we outlined several journeys her prospects wish to take. From feeling like everything depends on them to trusting their team to get the job done. From feeling overworked to

enjoying more time away from the office. From stressed to relieved. From trapped to free.

We had two pieces of our **P.L.A.N.** We knew the promise, and we knew the lesson (delegate). Now we needed an anecdote to deliver the promise and lesson in a story-powered way so it wouldn't be an information-only yawn-fest.

“Tell me about a client who has transformed from trapped to free or stressed to relieved,” I said. In other words, I asked Charlotte to find an anecdote to demonstrate the promise and lesson.

Charlotte told me about a business owner who had never taken a vacation longer than a three-day weekend in more than twenty years. He was stressed and stuck, until he worked with Charlotte. She taught the owner to delegate so he could finally let go and escape. He took a weeklong vacation. And when he returned, everything was fine—better than ever. Morale was great. His team was fired up.

We can turn that into a powerful story, I told Charlotte. And then we did just that. The blog post and email contained a photo of a man relaxing in a hammock on a beach. The sun set—orange, yellow, red—on the horizon across the sea. The headline and subject line: How a Stressed Owner Let Go and Got Away. The opening lines read:

I know a business owner who rarely enjoyed time away from his business. If he got away, he was constantly stressed and anxious about how it would turn out. It often didn't turn out well.

Employees would call and email with questions. The owner would think, “They didn’t need to bother me with this! They could have figured out that one!” A huge pile of undone stuff awaited him when he returned. The business seemed to stall without him. Sound familiar?

Darn right, it sounds familiar. Charlotte had turned a boring lecture about delegation into a story her readers could feel. The post continued:

Most business leaders struggle with leaving the job behind—even for just a few days. So much depends on them. So much can go wrong when they leave. So much is left undone for when they return.

When you read this, it’s clear Charlotte empathizes. She says, in effect, I know how stressed you feel. I understand your struggle. Charlotte meets her prospects where they are. Stuck on the hamster wheel. Fearful about what happens if they step away. She envisions a better place. She delivers the promise.

But that [struggle] changed earlier this year for the owner I know. Before the pandemic hit, he went away for a week and truly enjoyed his vacation—without any of the headaches he used to experience.

Promise made: Let go of the stressful workplace. Get away for a vacation.

That’s a story that gets an audience to tune in and turn on. They can relate to this story. The storyteller gets them. *I’m stressed. I would like to get away*, they think. And they wonder, *How can I let go and get away?*

Stories paint pictures. And when they picture something a prospect wants or needs, the prospect thinks, *How can this happen for me?* Time for Charlotte to deliver the lesson and describe how she enables the journey.

“What had changed? Delegation instead of dumping.”

The post reveals how delegation set the owner free, and it shares the same tips that were in the “blah, blah, blah,” information-only post from a few months earlier. This time, though, Charlotte delivers those tips as part of a prospect-focused, human, simple story—starting with a promise based on empathy, and envisioning and closing the loop with a lesson to describe how she enables the journey.

For this post and email, Charlotte and I started with the promise and lesson and found an anecdote to give it story power.

In the case of Ned and Phil, I started with the anecdote (while watching TV) and connected it to a promise and lesson I had stored in my mental warehouse.

Either way works: Start with the promise and lesson, and connect it to an anecdote. Or start with an anecdote, and connect it to a promise and lesson.

Regardless of the pattern, you must combine **P**, **L**, and **A**—promise, lesson, and anecdote—to assemble a powerful story. A promise and lesson without an anecdote is just another boring, information-only lecture. An anecdote without a promise and lesson is just another pointless tale.

Combine promise, lesson, and anecdote, and prospects will tune in, turn on, and want more.

But don't stop there. They want your help. They desire the journey. They're ready for the **N** in your **P.L.A.N.**—the next step. We'll dive deeper into next steps soon. But first, one more thing about the **A** in your **P.L.A.N.**

Where to Hunt for Anecdotes

Sometimes you discover anecdotes. Sometimes they discover you. As you journey through life, anecdotes will appear—just as Ned and Phil appeared for me. Anecdotes happen all around you. Tune your radar to notice the interesting, entertaining, and meaningful ones.

I have those *boom!* moments often—while interacting with friends and family, watching movies or television, surfing the internet, or reading a book. I come across anecdotes I find interesting and entertaining, and they click.

More often, though, I don't wait for anecdotes to bump into me. I hunt for interesting, amusing, entertaining anecdotes. You can find them, too, if you know where to look. Here are some of the places where anecdotes find me or where I find them:

- My own experiences (slices of life)
- Client experiences (like Charlotte’s story about the business owner)
- Books, movies, and television (Ned Ryerson)
- News (especially websites with quirky, weird stories)
- Public discussion forums
- Historical events
- Great marketing examples (see earlier references to Apple’s “Bounce” and GEICO’s “Caveman” stories)
- Bad marketing examples (I search my spam folder or social media message boxes for cautionary tales about the wrong way to do it)
- Other people’s stories (if you hear a great story, you can retell it if you cite the source)
- Artificial intelligence tools

Yes, I said artificial intelligence. In chapter 10, I’ll tell you more about how I use AI as a research assistant. But first, let’s move on to the **N**ext step.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for the podcast episode in which Dan Rubright describes his song and a free online training called “How to Generate a Flood of Client-Attracting Content Ideas.”

CHAPTER 7

BE A PROUD STORY-SELLER



Soon after I met him, I asked B-9(?), my GPT-powered copywriting robot, “How often should I sell in my emails?”

The robot said, “A common approach is to follow the 80/20 rule, where approximately 80 percent of your content provides value and 20 percent is promotional.”

Bad answer, B-9(?).

Don't buy that bull, dear reader.

I suspected the robot would say this. ChatGPT compiles its answers from stuff it “consumes” online. And the internet is full of people who spout this 80/20 nonsense.

One of my clients told me about a storytelling “expert” who preached the same idea: a one-to-four sales-to-story ratio—one sales email for every four “storytelling emails.”

Here's the problem with this advice: It suggests promotional content does not provide value. If you divide your content into “valuable” versus “promotional,” you buy into the myth, and you train your audience to believe it. They'll love your entertaining, “valuable” content. They'll hate and ignore the “promotions.” That's a recipe for business failure.

In chapter 4, I said, “The difference between unethical manipulation and ethical persuasion is intent . . . You intend to help your clients.” Help, as in provide value.

When you promote your products and services, you persuade prospects to recognize the value. You persuade them to act in their best interest. That's not an imposition. That's a gift.

If you treat promotions as *unvaluable*, you devalue your products and services. You withhold your gifts.

Promote with confidence and pride. Stand behind your products and services. You will sell more, and your clients will benefit more. You will not impose upon those who buy. You will help them.

That's why my ratio is one-to-one. Every piece of story-powered content provides value. Every piece sells. Every piece includes a **N**ext step.

It's part of the **P.L.A.N.:** **P**romise. **L**esson. **A**ncedote. **N**ext step.

Sometimes the promotion is more direct than others. I always include a summary of ways you can work with me at

the bottom of my emails. This is called a “super signature.” Here’s an example from one of my 2024 emails:

p.s. Coaches, authors, and consultants hire me to power up their creative content and storytelling to captivate prospects, stand out, and book more business.

Whenever you’re ready, here are several ways I can help you become a storytelling standout so you’ll land more clients without pitching and prodding:

- 1) Get the Story Power Profit Pack—52 Strategies, Tips, and Tactics to Transform Your Content from Ignored to Adored.
- 2) Watch the free, 7-minute Micro-Training: “The 3 Most Important Storytelling Keys to Captivate Prospects and Inspire Them to Act—Without Pitching and Prodding.”
- 3) Become a Story Power VIP: Master how to discover, assemble, and deliver business-building stories. Twice-monthly live masterclasses. Members-only content. One-on-one feedback and consulting sessions. And more. If you’d like to learn more about our VIP program, just reply to this email and put “Story Power VIP” in the subject line. I’ll contact you with more details.
- 4) Work with me one-on-one: If you’re interested in working directly with me—to discover, assemble, and deliver powerful, business-building stories—simply reply to this email and change the subject

line to “Private Client.” Tell me a little about yourself, your business, and what you’d like to accomplish, and I’ll reply to discuss options.

- 5) Invite me to speak at an event: I can tailor a presentation that meets the specific needs of your organization. Informative. Entertaining. Virtual or live. Potential for continuing education credits when applicable for your group. If interested, reply to this email and change the subject line to “Speaking Engagement.” I’ll circle back to discuss the possibilities.

I often pitch a next step in the email body, not the postscript “super signature.”

Here’s a short-and-sweet email in which I ask readers to reply if they want to take the next step:

“Oily242” wants to throw in the towel. Writer’s block has wrecked him.

He creates a “ton of content” for a start-up—a blog/article each day, five LinkedIn posts per week, one weekly post on X, and a biweekly email newsletter.

And now the well runs dry.

In an online forum, Oily242 said, “I’m drawing blanks. How many new ways can you realistically market the same topic for a company/client?”

My answer:

Lots of ways.

For me, the content well never runs dry. Why? Two reasons:

- 1) I create story-powered content. I have a bottomless well of stories from which I draw.
- 2) I have systems and tools to find the right stories to wrap around any topic I choose.

Last year, I revealed those systems and tools in a training called “How to Generate a Flood of Client-Attracting Content Ideas.”

Would you like a link to the recording?

If so, reply to this email with “Don’t Draw Blanks,” and I’ll send it to you.

Thanks for reading.

Sometimes I put the next step at the beginning of the email. (You don’t have to deliver the P, L, A, and N in the same order every time). Here’s an example:

At next week’s masterclass, I’ll share ways I use AI to help me produce more content with less time and effort. (More on that below.)

We’re going to have a big crowd for the masterclass . . .

*How to Put Personality in Your Content So
You Stand Out, Attract Raving Fans, and Land
More/Better Clients.*

Wednesday, March 6, at 2 p.m. ET, 1 p.m. CT.

Click the button below to claim your seat . . .

Button:

[REGISTER FOR THE MASTERCLASS]

And then I shared a cautionary tale about AI's copywriting shortcomings.

No matter where I put the next step, I always design the emails to be informative and entertaining. I never think, *Today I'm going to write a sales email, and tomorrow I'll write a valuable email.* I always think, *Today I'm going to deliver a valuable email.* Period.

Selling does not reduce the value. Selling contributes to the value. I'll repeat that because it's important—and all of you who get stuck in the sell-versus-value ratio trap need to get this:

***Selling does not reduce the value.
Selling contributes to the value.***

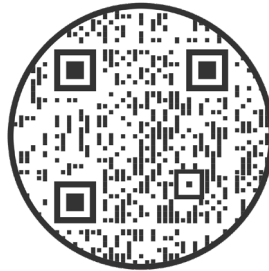
I once read an article about balancing “promotional” versus “value-add” emails.¹¹ It said, “Think of your hard-sell emails as your ‘take’ . . . Calls to action for hard-sell emails include prompting the users to buy now, sign up, subscribe, get a demo, attend events, etc. Content-based emails lean more toward your ‘give’ to your subscriber base.”

11 Power Digital, “How to Balance Promotional vs. Value-Add Email Content,” Power Digital Marketing, March 9, 2021, <https://powerdigitalmarketing.com/blog/how-to-balance-promotional-vs-value-add-email-content/>.

No, no, no. Douse that advice with kerosene. Grab your most powerful blowtorch. Set that nonsense on fire. Burn it from your memory.

You've done nothing wrong when you prompt users to buy now, sign up, subscribe, get a demo, or attend events. You're in business to serve your clients. Your products, resources, demos, and events deliver value. So quit thinking of those prompts as "hard sells," "low value," or a "take."

Present the next step with confidence and pride. That next step is an opportunity for your prospects and clients to get more from you, to achieve the transformation they seek. Embrace this. You'll sell more, and you'll feel better doing it.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for a replay of the free training, "How to Put Personality In Your Content So You Stand Out, Attract Raving Fans, and Land More/ Better Clients."

CHAPTER 8

THE STORYTELLING HALL OF FAME



If I were to open a Storytelling Hall of Fame, the stories in this chapter would be first-ballot inductees. They're storytelling masterpieces. If you want to master something, study the masterpieces. Break them down. Reverse engineer them. Distill their lessons. Apply what you've learned to your work.

Let's start with the most successful sales letter in the world—a letter that generated more than \$2 billion in sales for the *Wall Street Journal*. But before I reveal the masterpiece, here's a backstory to put it in context:

Soon after I began dating Melissa, she met my paternal grandfather, Joe. The first thing Gramp asked her: “So, Melissa, whaddya cook?”

Gramp was from a different world, where men brought home the bacon, and women fried it up in a pan. In Gramp's world, Melissa would be A-OK if she could whip up a tasty bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich.

And me? Gramp wanted me to “make something” of myself. When I was a kid, I would visit Gramp in his home study. There was always a copy of the *Wall Street Journal* on his desk. I paged through it from time to time. I didn't understand the articles, but even as a little kid, I thought Gramp was somebody. And the *Wall Street Journal* on his desk had something to do with it.

Here's what I didn't know then: The *Journal* attracted customers like Gramp with an ad that's been called “the best sales letter of all time.”¹² The letter captivated people like my grandfather who dreamed of becoming somebody or who dreaded being the guy who didn't make it.

Legendary copywriter Martin Conroy wrote the letter. It begins:

On a beautiful late spring afternoon, twenty-five years ago, two young men graduated from the same college. They were very much alike, these two young men. Both had been better than average students, both were personable and both—as young college graduates are—were filled with ambitious dreams for the future.

¹² Toni Koraza, “The Best Sales Letter of All Time,” Medium, published in Better Marketing, June 18, 2020, accessed July 28, 2022, <https://bettermarketing.pub/the-sales-letter-that-generated-over-2-billion-in-revenue-eef1193bf303>.

I read the letter now, and I picture Gramp, young and ambitious, walking the green pastures of the University of Michigan. I didn't know Joe Ruwitch then. But I know the *Journal* had him pegged.

The story continues . . .

Recently, these two young men returned to campus for their 25th reunion. They were still very much alike. Both were happily married. Both had three children. And both, it turned out, had gone to work for the same Midwestern manufacturing company after graduation, and were still there.

But there was a difference. One of the men was manager of a small department of that company. The other was its president.

One man was president. The other, a lowly manager. One man was on the mountaintop. The other, stuck in a trough. One won the race. The other fell behind and couldn't catch up. One brought home the bacon. The other brought home scraps. One succeeded. The other failed.

A classic winner-loser tale—with a lesson.

“What made the difference?” the letter asks.

It isn't a native intelligence or talent or dedication. It isn't that one person wants success and the other doesn't. The difference lies in what each person knows and how he or she makes use of that knowledge.

Translation: If you want to be a winner in business, you have to know more than the losers. How will you know more? The letter answers:

And that is why I am writing to you and to people like you about The Wall Street Journal. For that is the whole purpose of The Journal: to give its readers knowledge—knowledge that they can use in business.

Martin Conroy had a **P.L.A.N.** when he wrote this letter. The **P**romise: Win the race; don't fall behind. Be the president, not a department manager. Reach the mountain-top; don't get stuck in a rut. Be the one everyone admires.

How can you be that man or woman? The letter delivers the **L**esson: Read the *Journal*.

The **A**necdote: The tale of two young men.

The **N**ext step: "Fill out the enclosed order card and mail it in the postage-paid envelope provided."

That letter ran for twenty-five years and generated more than \$2 billion in subscription sales for the *Journal*. Remember the three Story Power Principles? This letter checks the boxes.

Principle No. 1: Keep the focus on prospects' emotional journeys. This story may star "two young men," but their emotional journeys reflect the *Journal's* prospects—my grandfather and millions like him.

Principle No. 2: Keep it human and personal. This letter isn't some lecture about the importance of acquiring

knowledge. It's a story with human characters and human experiences.

Principle No. 3: Keep it simple. Two young men. Both started at the same place with the same advantages. One wins. One loses. Here's why . . .

Could it be more simple?

And what about the 3Es—Empathize, Envision, and Enable? Conroy nails them. The writer knows how his readers feel and how they want to feel. He empathizes and envisions.

Conroy knows and understands my grandfather—the striving, the yearning to rise through the ranks to make something of himself. He knows his readers dread losing and crave winning. Conroy knows the pride a young businessperson feels when they tell classmates at the reunion, “I’m company president.” He knows the shame they feel when they don’t achieve as they had hoped.

Pride. Shame. Status. Powerful emotions driving Conroy’s readers. That’s why he crafts a story about a high school reunion. Conroy understands his prospects measure themselves against how others perceive them.

This reminds me of the story in chapter 2 about my proud-as-a-peacock neighbor, the Lawn Master. Both stories focus on men who want to feel admired and envied. Both stories are about status and standing.

Conroy understands and empathizes with his prospects. His story envisions an outcome they want. And he

reveals how to enable the journey from feeble to powerful, failure to success, and shame to pride.

“Knowledge is power,” the letter proclaims. The *Journal* is “filled with fascinating and significant information that’s useful to you . . . Knowledge. Useful knowledge. And its application. An investment in success.”

So simple. So powerful. But also more than 725 words. That’s a lot of words.

Here’s the good news: Powerful business stories come in all shapes and sizes. You don’t have to write a seven hundred–word letter to captivate your audience.

Here’s a story to prove the point:

On April 15, 2009, Rosetta Stone CEO Tom Adams took his company public on the New York Stock Exchange. This was during the Great Recession, and few were courageous (or foolish?) enough to attempt an initial public offering. But Tom Adams pulled it off. Rosetta Stone’s stock price increased 35 percent that day, and the IPO raised \$112 million.¹³

This was six years after Rosetta Stone hired Adams, a recent business school graduate with zero CEO experience. In 2003, when the family-run company hired Adams, Rosetta Stone earned \$10 million. In 2009, Rosetta Stone earned \$252 million.

The story-powered masterpiece behind Rosetta Stone’s growth contains just one photograph and four lines of copy.

¹³ Phil Wahba, “Rosetta Stone IPO prices above estimate range,” Reuters, April 15, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/rosetta-stone-ipo-prices-above-estimate-range-idUSTRE53E7GP/>.

The photograph shows a farm boy, standing in a field, dressed in jeans and a white T-shirt, work gloves in his right hand, a ragged baseball cap propped atop his head. It's a black-and-white photograph, except for the bright yellow Rosetta Stone box tucked under his right arm.

To the right of the photo: Four lines of copy, just thirty-two words telling a powerful story...

He was a hardworking farm boy.

She was an Italian supermodel.

He knew he would have just one chance to impress her.

Rosetta Stone. The fastest and easiest way to learn Italian.¹⁴

The ad ran for more than four years in major magazines. Smart marketers don't run the same ad year after year—unless the ad generates great results. So what makes this story-powered ad so great?

To answer, let's put ourselves in the farm boy's shoes. Let's empathize and think about what makes him tick. He feels stuck in his small, black-and-white world. He fears rejection and humiliation. He's hesitant. Imagine how embarrassing it will be if he fumbles and bumbles Italian while trying to pick up the supermodel.

14 Rosetta Stone, "Hardworking Farm Boy Advertisement," National Geographic, January 2009, p. 15.

Now, let's envision the journey he desires. The farm boy dreams of escaping to a bigger world. He craves romance and adventure. He wants to feel confident, loved, and admired.

This tiny ad delivers a powerful **P**romise: Transform from stuck, hesitant, and lonely to adventurous, confident, and loved.

It delivers a simple **L**esson: Learn a language to achieve the promise.

The **A**necdote: A simple story about a farm boy.

You may thinking, *Hold on, there, Tom. That's fine if Rosetta Stone targets lonely farm boys, but what about the rest of us?*

Sure, this story may seem to be only about a lonely farm boy—just as Apple's "Bounce" seems like it's about a sullen city-dweller. But, really, it's a story about you and me and any other tourist who seeks adventure in a foreign land.

I can relate to the farm boy. Here's a story to show what I mean:

In April 2022, Melissa, my twins Maddie and Jake, and I traveled to Mexico. Maddie knows a lot of Spanish. Me? Not much. When the menu didn't have English translations and the servers didn't speak English, I felt stuck, stupid, embarrassed. I needed Maddie to help me. When I walked into a clothing shop looking to buy a shirt, I tried to communicate with the clerk using my Google translate app. But no dice. She looked at me like I was clueless—because I was.

So after a few too many embarrassments and humiliations, I retreated into my English-speaking bubble. I didn't

venture to places where Spanish was necessary. I stayed stuck.

Maddie, on the other hand, had a blast speaking Spanish. She chatted with restaurant servers. She ventured into places I didn't dare. She was as confident as Taylor Swift, Serena Williams, and Oprah combined. The locals liked and admired her.

She had a greater adventure than I had. The difference between Maddie and me? She learned the language, which leads us back to the "Farm Boy" ad and how it nailed the Story Power Principles.

No. 1: Keep the focus on prospects' emotional journeys.

The "Farm Boy" ad gets Maddie and me. Rosetta Stone knows about the journey from hesitant to confident, stuck to free, rejected to loved, and so forth. Maddie learned the language and felt those transformations. I didn't learn the language, so I didn't feel those transformations. Rosetta Stone understands how Maddie and I feel. They understand how countless world travelers feel. Rosetta Stone empathizes and envisions with and for us.

No. 2: Keep it human and personal.

The Rosetta Stone ad isn't some "blah, blah, blah" lecture about the importance of learning a language. This is a human story. It has characters. It evokes feelings. It entertains.

No. 3: Keep it simple.

Songwriter Harlan Howard once described great country songs as “three chords and the truth.”¹⁵ Simple can be powerful. In fact, simple often means more powerful.

A 725-word sales letter can work. (Ask the *Wall Street Journal*.) But three chords and the truth, or four lines and a picture of a lonely farm boy—that works too. Rosetta Stone told a thirty-word story and generated a twenty-five times revenue boost.

The 97-Pound Weaking

When I was a kid, I read comic books. And when I read comic books, I always saw the cartoon ad about the “97-pound weaking.” Here’s the story as told in the ad, “The Insult That Made a Man Out of Mac.”¹⁶

Mac is hanging out at the beach with a bikini-clad brunette. A two hundred-pound bully kicks sand in Mac’s face. Mac tells the bully to quit it, and the bully gets all bully-ish. He says, “I’d smash your face . . . only you’re so skinny you might dry up and blow away.” (Ouch.)

The weaking seethes and says, “The big bully! I’ll get even some day.” The brunette replies: “Oh don’t let it bother you, little boy!” (Double ouch.)

Mac is fed up. He cracks open a magazine and reads the ad for a book by Charles Atlas. “Charles Atlas says he

15 Sparkman, Darby, and Darby Sparkman. 2021. “Harlan Howard: The Legendary Songwriter Who Coined ‘Three Chords and the Truth.’” *Wide Open Country*, April 7, 2021. <https://www.wideopencountry.com/harlan-howard/>.

16 “The Insult That Made a Man Out of Mac,” Charles Atlas, LTD, *THE SHADOW* (Comic Book), Vol. 1, No. 2, Dec-Jan 1973-74, Page 1.

can give me a REAL body!” Mac says. “All right! I’ll gamble a stamp and get his FREE book.”

Fast-forward to Mac’s next trip to the beach. He socks the bully in the jaw. The bikini-clad brunette grabs Mac by his very large, perfectly developed arm, and coos, “Oh, Mac! You ARE a real man after all!”

And there you have it. A classic American story about someone who transforms from

boy to man,
weak to strong,
little to big,
unloved to adored,
humiliated to redeemed.

How did the weakling do it? He bought Charles Atlas’s book and discovered how “Dynamic-Tension” can make you a “new man.”

The story sold lots of books and courses. Boxing champions Rocky Marciano and Joe Louis were clients. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jake “Body by Jake” Steinfeld were too. Even England’s King George VI pulled a few pence from the royal piggy bank and purchased the Atlas course.

Not bad for a skinny Italian immigrant who says he was the real-life victim of a sand-kicking bully.

* * *

Young Angelo Siciliano was the real-life 97-pound weakling before he changed his name to Charles Atlas. He tried various methods to transform from weak boy to strong man,

but nothing worked, until—according to his origin story—he watched a lion stretch at the Bronx Zoo. *No barbells or exercise machines for the King of the Jungle*, Angelo thought. The lion “pits one muscle against the other.”¹⁷

Inspired by the lion, Angelo studied bodybuilding—famous strongmen like Eugen Sandow and Bernarr Macfadden. He hung out at Coney Island, watched the strongmen do their feats of strength, and asked them how they did it—what they ate, how they exercised, and any other secrets he could unlock.

He devoured bodybuilding magazines. He implemented what he learned. He tested and tweaked. He adopted what worked and dumped what didn't. And by 1922, thirty-year-old Angelo was a well-known strongman. One magazine publisher called him “America's Most Perfectly Developed Man.”¹⁸

Angelo's friend told him he resembled the statue of the Greek God Atlas, perched on top of a hotel at Coney Island. (Lightbulb moment.) Angelo changed his name to Charles Atlas.

Months later he began selling his fitness program as a twelve-week correspondence course. At first, sales lagged. But things picked up when Atlas's advertising agency turned

17 Jonathan Black, “Charles Atlas: Muscle Man. How the Original 97-pound Weakling Transformed Himself and Brought Physical Fitness to the Masses,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 2009, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/charles-atlas-muscle-man-34626921/>.

18 Black, Jonathan. 2013. “Charles Atlas: Muscle Man.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 16, 2013. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/charles-atlas-muscle-man-34626921/?c=y>.

over his account to Charles Roman—a twenty-one-year-old marketing rookie just out of college.

Roman was earning thirty-five dollars per week while searching for his big break. Roman understood the story was not about Atlas. It was about all those “weaklings” who felt insecure, inadequate, or inept. Men who wished to impress. Men who wanted to feel envied and respected. Men who wanted to feel like they were in charge.

Roman devised stories to focus on those men’s emotional journeys from inept to in charge (see Story Power Principle No. 1).

Roman invented characters—like the 97-pound weakling, Mac—who were human and relatable (see Story Power Principle No. 2). And Roman crafted simple stories (see Story Power Principle No. 3).

With Roman at his side, Atlas built a bodybuilding empire. In the 1950s, Atlas had nearly one million customers. Comic book ads generated forty thousand new customers every year.¹⁹

Today, more than one hundred years after Charles Atlas launched his first course and more than thirty years since he died, you can still purchase his Dynamic-Tension® course online. Charles Atlas, Ltd. claims more than thirty

¹⁹ Pace, Eric. 1999. “Charles Roman, the Brains Behind the Brawn, Dies at 92,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/20/business/charles-roman-the-brains-behind-the-brawn-dies-at-92.html>.

million Dynamic-Tension customers in its history. They still promote products with “the 97-pound weakling” story.²⁰

Different Formats, Similar Stories

Three Hall of Fame stories with three formats: a long sales letter, a four-line print ad, and a comic strip. So different—yet all the same.

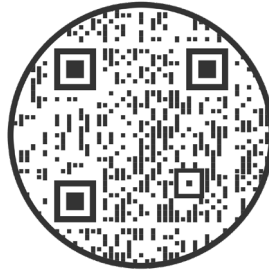
All empathize, envision, and enable. All have a **P.L.A.N.** All are story powered.

You can harness story power to create content in any format you choose. Long sales letters or short ones. Emails. Landing pages. Social media profiles. Short posts or long ones. Videos. Live events. Webinars. Complimentary consultations. Sales presentations.

You name it, and you can apply story power to it. When you do, you’ll transform your content from boring (prospect-repelling) to brilliant (client-attracting).

And who knows? Someday your content may be inducted into the Storytelling Hall of Fame.

20 “It’s Dynamic-Tension®! A Miraculous Method for Total Muscular Development,” About, Charles Atlas, https://www.charlesatlas.com/what_is.html.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for more information about the Hall of Fame ads, including a copy of the “Farm Boy” ad, the “Two Young Men” letter, and the 97-pound weakling comic strip.

CHAPTER 9

WHAT WOULD REGIS DO?



A while back, I was browsing through some of my favorite training disks and came across a Dave Dee seminar. The year was 2007, and Dave delivered unconventional advice to write better emails: Watch Regis Philbin.

To create captivating, client-attracting emails, do as Regis did. Tell good stories. Entertain. Get personal. Share your personality. Regis did it for decades on his morning television shows. Kathie Lee Gifford, Kelly Ripa, and other cohosts came and went. But Regis remained. In 2011, *Guinness Book of World Records* called Regis “the most watched man on television”—16,746 hours on the air over fifty-two years.

When Regis died in July 2020 at age eighty-eight, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article that called him “TV’s

Greatest Host.”²¹ The article’s opening line: “What is a host? A person to welcome you in, to make you comfortable, to show you around and tell you what you need to know. To introduce you to other people you might find interesting.”

Most mornings Regis started his show with slice-of-life stories: The time he left his wallet in a rental car, multiple mishaps with household appliances, “challenging” visits with his mother-in-law, memorable moments with his children and grandchildren. Regis invited us in and shared himself.

Millions watched Regis, not because he was famous or had authority. They tuned in and turned on, not because someone (or some award) told them Regis was credible. Regis captivated audiences because he earned affection. He earned trust. He earned his fame. He established authority, and he demonstrated credibility. He welcomed us in, made us feel comfortable, showed us around, and shared himself.

Of course, Regis was not the only draw. Viewers tuned in to see Tom Cruise or Dolly Parton or some other star interviewed. But Regis kept viewers coming back.

Do you have followers who keep coming back? If not, you may want to ask more often: “What would Regis do?”

You may be thinking, *That’s good and well for a professional entertainer. But I’m a professional businessperson.* I hear you, loud and clear. I know many “professionals” who push back when I encourage them to create informative and entertaining content.

21 Randy Lewis, “Regis Philbin, TV’s Greatest Host, Dies at 88,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 2020.

“No, no, no,” they say. “I’m a professional, not an entertainer.” I hear them and say, “Good luck standing out, being noticed, and getting hired.”

I know. You have credentials. Advanced degrees. Certifications. Media placements. An “Amazon Bestseller.” You know your stuff, and clients pay you plenty for what you know. You’ve earned that, and I congratulate you. Really.

But here’s the hard truth: Most experts are a dime a dozen. At least that’s how prospects see them. If you want to be just another needle in the haystack of sameness, keep being as “professional” as you can be. Don’t put personality in your content. Keep it 100 percent serious. Dish out the same old information. Don’t lower your professional mask. Don’t let people in.

Or . . . sell more and have more fun doing it. Lower your guard and build a following. Attract loyal fans who know, like, and trust you. Create a world where your followers keep coming back—because of *you*.

Regis did that. So can you.

You don’t need a syndicated television show. The web, email, and some other channels work today. The playing field has leveled. You have a camera and computer in your pocket. You have countless ways to distribute content. Anyone can make content and share it with an audience. To stand out, above all those “anyones,” make the content info-taining.

In my business, info-taining content draws them in, and additional info-taining content greets them after they

sign up. I send three automated emails to new subscribers. I load them with personality and personal details.

“Welcome” emails should tell subscribers what to expect next (no surprises). I could have written the typical “blah, blah, blah” thing (“Check your inbox every Monday through Friday morning for my emails”). Instead, I wrote: “On weekday mornings, I roll out of bed, pour a cup of French roast (medium blend), and write an original, fresh-as-a-spring-daisy email. I send those week-daily(ish) emails to you, usually before I drain my first mug.”

I’ve invited readers into my kitchen. They know a bit about my morning routine, including the coffee I drink. Small details. Big impact.

The email continues: “And then I walk around the block with my wife, Melissa, and our crazy-doodle, Moose. (You’ll hear more about them in future emails.)” I include a photo of my wife and dog with the caption “Melissa and Moose when he was a wee lad (before we knew he was crazy).” This is my way to share more personal details with a dash of humor.

“Welcome” emails should also set expectations. If you plan to sell in your emails (and why wouldn’t you?), let new subscribers know. Here’s how I do it:

May I share a secret about those emails? I love giving away content, like my week-daily(ish) emails and occasional free trainings. But (Shhhhhhhhh! This is the secret part): I also sell things. You see, Story Power

Marketing is a business—with valuable products and services for \$ale. I'm earning \$\$\$ so Melissa and I can pay for Apple TV to binge-watch *Ted Lasso* and *Shrinking*. Also, Moose needs his lamb-and-chicken kibble and an occasional raw-hide bone.

Moments after they join my list and read that email, subscribers know that Melissa and I like *Ted Lasso* and *Shrinking* (the best two reasons to get Apple TV+). They know what Moose munches and chews. I've let them in.

I've done the same in this book. By page 3, you knew that I love music, including Todd Rundgren, Bob Dylan, and Bob Marley, that I had a college girlfriend who dissed me one too many times, and that my dad was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer when I was twenty-four.

And now, you know even more. I let you in—right away. And I continued to let you in—chapter after chapter.

Same goes with my emails.

One day after they opt-in, subscribers receive another email, loaded with personality and personal details:

A Brief History of the World . . .

. . . From the Dawn of Time . . .

. . . To the Day You Joined My Email List*

(*) Based on stories I've heard, books I've read, movies I saw, or experiences I experienced.

(Your history-of-the-world sources may vary.)

Day One: Heaven and Earth launched—by almighty being, big bang, or both (sources vary).

Day Six: Adam and Eve settle down in Eden.

Soon After: Eve bites apple. Adam bites, too. Trouble ensues. Paradise lost. An early example of a “cautionary tale” (a kind of story that is great for info-taining emails).

15th Century BC: Prehistoric people paint cave walls—depicting hunting stories—near Lascaux, France. (Early reminder: You don’t have to be a natural-born writer to tell a good story.)

13th Century BC: Moses receives 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai. Proves persuasive power of short lists.

600 BC to 600 AD: Confucius, Siddhartha Gautama (aka The Buddha), Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, Muhammad, and countless other philosophers, poets, and prophets deliver fables, parables, and other story-powered lessons to build followings, promote good deeds, and spread wisdom.

1440s: Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press. Produces multiple Bibles. Mass-media ensues.

Soon after: Naysayers claim word-of-mouth marketing and preaching are dead.

1895: Guglielmo Marconi invents “wireless telegraph” (aka radio). Jingles ensue.

Soon after: Naysayers claim written communication is dead.

1927: Inventor Philo Taylor Farnsworth demonstrates the first television.

Soon after: Naysayers claim radio and movies are dead.

1989: Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web.

Soon after: Naysayers claim television is dead.

1990: I, Tom Ruwitch, begin a decade of work as an award-winning newspaper reporter and editor.

Soon after: I hone my skills as a researcher and storyteller. I recognize the power of storytelling to inform, entertain, and persuade.

1991: Quantum Computer rebrands itself as America Online. “You’ve got mail . . .” becomes a thing.

1994: I marry Melissa Early. Happiness ensues.

1997: Twins Madeleine and Jacob Ruwitch are born. Jake first. Maddie three minutes later. Sleep deprivation and more happiness ensue.

2001: I start an email marketing company—before most people had heard of email marketing, much less tried it. The pioneering company MarketVolt introduces groundbreaking automation features that are now standard in many applications.

2003: MySpace launches and fuels a surge in social media. Selfies ensue.

Soon after: Naysayers claim email marketing is dead.

Meanwhile: Email marketing thrives, and I help clients attract leads, engage prospects, and generate sales—using email, plus other online and offline channels.

Also in 2003: SMS (mobile phone text) marketing begins.

Soon after: Naysayers claim email marketing is dead—this time for sure.

2006: Facebook becomes available for the general public. Memes ensue.

Soon after: Naysayers claim email marketing is really dead this time.

Meanwhile: I embrace storytelling as a way to stand out, build meaningful connections, and inspire prospects to act. I begin to develop, test, and hone the strategies and tactics I now teach.

2014: Melissa, Maddie, Jake, and I adopt Moose, the Crazy-Doodle. Crazyness ensues.

Also in 2014: LinkedIn evolves into a social media publishing platform, giving business people yet another channel to dish out content.

Soon after: Naysayers claim email marketing has used up its nine lives and can't possibly survive.

Meanwhile: I see most business people dish out the same old boring “blah, blah, blah” content—by email, on social media, and elsewhere. Prospects tune out and move on. And then the business people feel frustrated and stuck. So I begin to help clients create captivating, story-powered content so prospects tune in, turn on, and buy.

2019: After 52 years of near-misses and heartbreaks, my beloved St. Louis Blues (National Hockey League) win the Stanley Cup championship. I cry happy tears and think this

might be the third happiest day of my life (see 1994 and 1997 above for first and second happiest).

2019: Email marketing is as effective as ever. MarketVolt merges with Benchmark Email. I go home, pop some champagne, and take a long, happy walk around the block with Melissa and Moose.

2020: I establish Story Power Marketing and begin sending week-daily(ish) emails to those who value informative, entertaining, 💡 lightbulb-moment, 🤣 laugh-inducing, ⚡ never-boring stuff.

Present Day: You opt-in to receive my emails, and you make it here—to the bottom of this, the final email in my welcome-to-the-list sequence.

Meanwhile: I'm grateful, and I thank you for reading.

Cheers 🍷

Tom

I could have dished out yet another boring origin story. Conventional wisdom suggests that's the thing to do. But I don't want to be conventional. I want to stand out. So my "story of me" email is anything but conventional.

Do I recommend you write a welcome email just like this one? No. And that's the point. It's uniquely me. My

personality. My tone. My sense of humor. My personality. My personal details. My voice. (More on voice in the next chapter.)

I reveal myself to new subscribers, and I show up with the same voice, personality, and (more) personal details in my emails, social posts, and other content.

My content is like an ongoing television series—a continuing flow of stories with repeated promises, lessons, and themes—plus recurring characters. Melissa. Maddie. Jake. Moose. My GPT-powered copywriting robot, B-9(?). Even my mom.

Note for professionals reluctant to share personal details: I don't reveal any deep, dark secrets I wish to keep locked away. I've discussed with my family what I do and the ground rules I'll follow.

Set your own boundaries. Don't share details that take you too far out of your comfort zone. But test your comfort zone. Don't settle for "I'm a professional, not an entertainer." If you draw the line there, you won't stand out. You won't be hired as much as you wish. Be an info-tainer.

Note for aspiring info-tainers: Yes, make yourself a character in your stories. Share personal details. Reveal your personality. But never forget the Story Power Principles, especially No. 1: Keep the focus on prospects' emotional journeys.

And stick to the **P.L.A.N.**

Here's an example, one of my week-daily emails from 2021:

My dog, Moose, likes to spend most of his time standing still as a statue, staring at the treetops. That's where the squirrels are. In the treetops.

Moose stands in the backyard. Staring and staring and staring. Waiting for one squirrel, just one, to fall from a tree so he can pounce.

I've never seen Moose catch a squirrel. Not once.

Moose would starve while waiting for his supper to fall from the heavens . . .

. . . If not for my wife, Melissa, and me . . .

. . . and our big green bag of IAMS Large Breed Chicken and Whole Wheat Recipe.

Every time Moose finishes his squirrel hunt, he returns to the kitchen where a heaping helping of kibble awaits. Maybe not as tasty as a squirrel. But so much easier to get.

You see, Moose is the descendant of ancient wolves who gradually figured out that it's much easier to become man's best friend than to hunt for critters in the wild.

I read this great article in Smithsonian Magazine recently about how those wolves gradually formed bonds with humans.

Here's the big idea from the article:

"Over thousands of years, evolution selected and sharpened in dogs the traits most likely to succeed in harmony with humans. Wild canids that were affable, nonaggressive, less threatening were able to draw

nearer to human communities. They thrived on scraps, on what we threw away. Those dogs were ever so slightly more successful at survival and reproduction. They had access to better, more reliable food and shelter. They survived better with us than without us. We helped each other hunt and move from place to place in search of resources. Kept each other warm. Eventually it becomes a reciprocity not only of efficiency, but of cooperation, even affection.”²²

There’s a marketing lesson here.

So many businesses market the way Moose hunts.

They hang out online, standing still as a statue. They build a website. They post on social media. They tell the world, “Look at me and my great products and services.” And then they wait . . .

. . . for manna from heaven.

Other businesses have evolved to a higher level.

They forge meaningful connections with prospects.

They establish mutually beneficial relationships.

To do this, they learn what makes prospects tick.

They offer to pitch in, rather than just pitch.

They act, rather than wait and hope.

And when they do that, they get a heaping helping of new sales . . .

. . . and their business thrives with far less effort.

22 MacGregor, Jeff. 2021. “The New Science of Our Ancient Bond With Dogs.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 6, 2021. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/new-science-ancient-bond-with-dogs-180976226/>.

Your business can evolve and thrive, too.

If you'd like to learn what makes prospects tick and forge meaningful connections with them . . .

. . . so you can get a heaping helping of new business . . .

The email ended with a next step—an offer to sign up for an online training.

The story's main character is Moose, but the story's focus is for all who wish for their business to evolve and thrive. That's the promise. Thrive with far less hunting and effort.

The lesson? Don't wait for manna from heaven. Forge meaningful connections with prospects. Establish mutually beneficial relationships. Learn what makes prospects tick. Offer to pitch in, rather than just pitch. Act, rather than wait and hope.

All that stuff about Moose? Just an anecdote I chose to deliver the promise and lesson. Just a way to deliver the info and make it 'taining. Just like Regis would do.

One last thing.

I often hear from subscribers who ask, "How's Moose?" That proves my point. They care about my dog and me. They're tuned in.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for more about Regis Philbin and the entire email welcome sequence referenced in this chapter.

CHAPTER 10

F.A.C.T.S ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



In chapter 5, I showed you how to discover prospects’ feelings. I revealed the three pillars of promise discovery, including Pillar Three: Voices of the Market.

I told you how my assistant scanned book reviews to discover the promises and how those reviews helped me shape my promise to “keep it simple.” Market research like this can be tedious. My assistant copied and pasted hundreds of reviews and read each one. She used a digital highlighter to identify potential promises and lessons. I reviewed the highlights and organized them into promises my prospects desired and lessons they valued.

That was back in the olden days—4 BG—four years before GPT. Today, with the help of ChatGPT or other

artificial intelligence tools, I can do this research in minutes instead of days.

I recently revisited the same books we scanned before. This time I asked GPT to help. I asked the robot to consume the book reviews. Then I taught the robot my **P.L.A.N.** framework. Armed with the reviews and a framework for analyzing, the robot produced a summary that was more complete and accurate than the one my assistant and I generated.

I spent ninety minutes creating and tweaking prompts to teach my robot the **P.L.A.N.** framework and fine-tuning the responses. After that, the robot analyzed hundreds of book reviews and produced an outlined summary in less than two minutes.

This is one reason I love AI. Train your robot to be a research assistant, and you'll transform market research from a tedious slog to a stroll in the park.

Warning: If you want your robot to help you with research, writing, or anything else, you have to keep the **F.A.C.T.S** straight. You need a **F**ramework. You must control **A**ccess and provide **C**ontext. And, no matter what, you have to **T**est.

Framework: I taught my robot the **P.L.A.N.** so it knew what to search for, and it delivered output that fit my needs.

Access: When I asked my robot to analyze reviews from books I selected, I controlled what my robot analyzed. Occasionally, you may choose to give your robot unlimited access to everything it has ever consumed—gold mines and

garbage dumps. That’s OK if you’re prepared to sift the gold from the garbage.

Context: I shared with my robot important information about those I serve and how I serve them. The more your robot knows, the better it operates.

Test: Call me “robot-ist,” but I don’t trust ’em. Robots make mistakes—lots and lots of mistakes. Stupid mistakes. That’s a fact. If you trust everything your robot tells you, without testing, you’ll make mistakes too (mistakes you could have avoided).

Remember in chapter 7 when my GPT-powered robot B-9(?) told me: “A common approach is to follow the 80/20 rule, where approximately 80 percent of your content provides value and 20 percent is promotional.”

Common? Yes. Good advice? No. I call that *lowest common denominator output*. AI robots spit out a lot of that. You won’t dominate your market if you draw from the lowest, most common garbage. You have to keep the **F.A.C.T.S** straight.

When I ask my robot to find places my prospects might reside, I train it (**F**ramework). I control whether it searches everywhere or on datasets I limit (**A**ccess). I share as much background and as many useful facts as I can (**C**ontext). And I always check the results (**T**est) before I take the next step.

I never say, “I would like to reach people who are interested in writing captivating, client-attracting business stories. Tell me, robot, ‘What do people in this market feel and think?’” If I don’t vet and select the source first, the robot

will deliver the lowest common garbage. If you ask AI for the mood of the market or how your prospects are feeling today (without context), the robot may give you yesterday's news or, worse yet, bad information.

Instead, I say, "Here's a pile of reviews from a book whose readers want to write captivating, client-attracting business stories. Please analyze the reviews and tell me what they think." Or I ask the robot to analyze posts in an online forum where I know my market resides. Or I ask it to analyze testimonials received by a competitor who has successfully reached my target market. Or I ask it to analyze the testimonials I've collected from clients. I record most calls with prospects and clients, and I often ask my robot to analyze those.

Again, the robot may help me find these resources. But I won't ask for an analysis until I vet and select.

When I asked the robot to analyze the book reviews, it knew to look for promises and lessons—because I taught him the **P.L.A.N.** framework. If your robot doesn't have a framework, it will analyze however it chooses, drawing from its vast pile of common knowledge. It will generate lowest common denominator analysis—same as the next person's and possibly incorrect. You'll have a pile of building blocks that won't help you assemble client-attracting content.

Speaking of client-attracting content, AI can come up with great story ideas. But (I'll say it again) you have to keep your **F.A.C.T.S** straight.

Here's a story about that:

After I helped Charlotte craft her story about the stressed-out owner who let go and got away, I worked with a business coach named Kim who also taught delegation.

Kim wanted to craft her own unique story about the power of delegation but didn't know where to begin. So we asked ChatGPT for help.

Here's a prompt I used with ChatGPT to generate a great anecdote:

Who am I: I am an executive coach.

I serve: Business owners.

My promise to them: You will transform from stressed to relieved, from stuck in your business to free and getting away.

The lesson I teach to achieve this: How to delegate properly.

I want to write a story-powered email to demonstrate the promise and the lesson. Please share with me 10 anecdotes that demonstrate either 1) The great benefits of doing as I teach (delegating properly) or 2) The great consequences of NOT doing as I teach (not delegating properly).

Share anecdotes from literature, movies, television shows, news stories, or historical events. Do not fabricate stories. Only share anecdotes from actual books, movies, shows, news stories, or historical events. Choose ones that are widely known.

The robot offered these examples of good delegation: General Dwight Eisenhower and the D-Day invasion. Captain Kirk in *Star Trek*. Ray Kroc and McDonald's. The robot offered these examples of delegation failures: Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada*. John Galt in *Atlas Shrugged*. And Napoleon Bonaparte during his invasion of Russia.

Kim said, "I love *The Devil Wears Prada*," and *boom!* she had an idea for an anecdote that could deliver her promise and lesson (delegation).

She began with the promise and lesson; the robot gave her the anecdote. But the results would not have been as good if we had not established the framework (**P.L.A.N.**), context ("I am a business coach. I help business owners"), and controlled access (search movies, literature, television, and history). Of course, Kim and I also tested and fact-checked to make sure the robot accurately summarized the anecdote from *The Devil Wears Prada*.

Prompts like this will spark ideas. Maybe you love *The Devil Wears Prada*, like Kim does, and can easily describe a scene that delivers your promise and lesson regarding delegation. Maybe you're a history buff and agree Eisenhower was a master delegator. Now you have anecdotes at your fingertips to write a powerful story. Your robot can help with this part. But the **F.A.C.T.S** still matter. Voice does too.

Here's an all-too-familiar story about robotic writing:

A while back, I bumped into a bummed out marketer who hollered for help in an online forum. His AI-powered marketing failed to generate sales for his software, which uses AI to write marketing messages. So he asked the humans in the forum for help.

“Replies I got from my cold emailing campaign were very negative. Someone told me that I am like those AI-no-code [platforms] that are popping up everywhere,” he sniffed.

Let’s recap: A human who wants to attract leads and inspire them to buy sends AI-generated content to promote his software that spits out AI-generated content. His prospects reject his pitches and complain they’re just more of the same robot-generated garbage. (Oh! The irony!)

We’ve all been there, right? We get these AI-generated emails that sound more robotic than R2-D2 after a lobotomy. Many of those emails open with “I hope this email finds you well” or some other overused, robotic greeting.

After receiving an email like this, I asked my GPT-powered copywriting robot, B-9(?), about it. Here’s our conversation, word-for-word:

Me: Hey, B-9(?), what is the most common and clichéd opening for marketing emails these days?

B-9(?): The most common and clichéd opening for marketing emails is often something like “Dear [Name], I hope this email finds you well,” or “I’m reaching out to you because . . .”

(I don’t like to say, “Told ya so,” but . . .)

Me: Yeah, that’s what I thought. “I hope this email finds you well.” I get a ton of those. Seems like a throwaway line to me.

B-9(?): You’re right, Tom. “I hope this email finds you well” has become so overused that it often loses its sincerity and can feel like a filler rather than a genuine sentiment.

Me: Funny you say that because, when I’ve experimented with ChatGPT and other AI-powered copywriting tools, they often draft content that starts with “I hope this email finds you well.” Why would you and your copywriting robot buddies use that line if it’s overused and has lost its sincerity?

B-9(?): That’s a good observation, Tom. AI tools like myself often use common phrases like “I hope this email finds you well” because they are trained on large datasets that include existing texts and emails. These phrases are frequently used and thus become part of

the AI's learned patterns for formal or semi-formal communication.

Me: Are you saying AI defaults to most used, clichéd phrases, not original and engaging ones?

B-9(?): Exactly, Tom. AI models often default to commonly used phrases because they are trained on datasets that reflect what is most frequently written or said.

Me: Hmmmm. Seems like a good reason not to rely TOO much on AI to ghostwrite your copy.

B-9(?): That's a valid point, Tom. While AI can be a useful tool for generating ideas and drafting content, it's important to infuse your own creativity and personal touch to ensure the copy is original, engaging, and aligns with your unique voice and brand. Human oversight is key to making the most out of AI in copywriting.

Me: Thanks, B-9(?). I hope this conversation has served you well. (Is it OK for me to say that?)

B-9(?): Absolutely, Tom! It's perfectly fine to say that. I'm here to assist and learn from our interaction.

There you have it, straight from the robot's mouth: "While AI can be a useful tool for generating ideas and drafting content, it's important to infuse your own creativity and personal touch to ensure the copy is original, engaging, and aligns with your unique voice and brand."

Of course, I already knew that.

My friends Greg and Danielle are residential real estate brokers in Alaska. Soon after ChatGPT launched, they began using it to write their listings. They figured the AI copywriting robot would save time and might generate better listings.

Instead, they noticed their listings began to sound like all the others, because most of the other brokers were using the AI "Easy Button" too. None stood out from the others. Just a pile of listings with the same tired structure and word choice. Greg and Danielle scrapped ChatGPT and returned to writing listings themselves.

I use ChatGPT almost every day in my business, but I don't let it stand in as a substitute for me.

With your guidance and help, AI can help you write, but don't rely on it as your final-draft ghostwriter. Sure, your robot can string together coherent sentences. You can ask your robot to make the copy "unique" or "amusing" or even "edgy." But that unique, amusing, edgy content won't be uniquely *you*—unless you develop a consistent voice, train your robot to use it, and carefully edit and revise the AI output to make it truly yours.

Here's a sad but predictable story about a job applicant who didn't understand this:

A business owner in Maryland was hiring for a tech position. One applicant rose to the top after exchanging several well-written emails with the owner. Then came the interview. The applicant could barely spit out a complete sentence. It was so bad, the owner thought he scheduled the wrong person. But the interviewee was the same person who sent those well-written emails. The problem: Someone (or something) else wrote the emails.

When pressed, the applicant admitted he didn't write the emails; his robot did. The applicant simply pressed "Send." Ten minutes after the interview began, the owner sent the applicant packing.

Meanwhile, robot vendors pitch their systems as time-saving miracles: "Check our AI tool for cover letter generation. Create a custom letter in seconds," shouts one vendor. "Apply to hundreds of jobs with just one click," trumpets another. And this one: "Generate a cover letter with a human-like tone using AI and land your dream job more easily."

Welcome to the flaming chasm between the AI copywriting robots and you. The robots can dish out "human-like" content—job applications, marketing pitches, emails, and more. This robot-generated content sounds human enough.

But here's the rub: At some point, you have to show up as *you*. In person. As a human. You can't have your

human-like robot stand in for you at the job interview, discovery call, or sales pitch.

***That's why you have to master
Story Power.***

You show up at the complimentary consultation to sell your service. You show up at the client meetings. And if you show up with a voice and communication skills that don't resemble the content in your robot-generated emails, letters, and other content, you will undermine the human relationship you seek to establish. You won't stand out. You won't be chosen. That's true when you apply for a job. That's true when you sell your products and services.

You can't hide behind your robot forever. Better to master Story Power and control the robot. That's how you'll stand out as the human to hire in your niche.

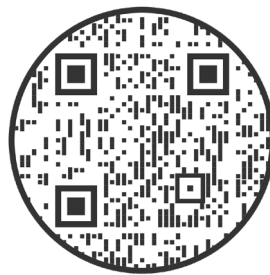
If you need to communicate coherently to land the job, learn to be coherent (or look for a different job). If you want to stand out and be the one prospects choose, put yourself out there. Express yourself. Reveal your personality. Share your stories. Establish your voice and develop your storytelling chops without relying entirely on a robot ghostwriter.

I get it. It may seem easier to press a button and let your robot ghostwrite for you. But it will be humiliating when you show up at the interview, discovery call, or sales consultation as you, only to have the person across the table discover you're nothing like the clever robot that stood in for you. It will be too late when you realize your robot-generated

content doesn't stand out from the mountains of other robot-generated content.

This book has given you everything you need to create powerful, unique, human, client-attracting stories. You can stand out. You can create content that reflects you. You can share stories that demonstrate what it's like to be with you and work with you. Your robot can help with research, rough drafts, and editing. But the stories must be yours, and the storyteller must be you.

Prospects and clients will know, like, trust, and respect you. Instead of sending you packing, they'll welcome you in and choose you.



Resources and References

Scan the QR code or go to StoryPowerBook.com/resources for more AI tips and tools, including the Implementum anecdote finder that evolved from the ChatGPT queries described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 11

WELCOME TO MY FAMILY



On this book's first page, I told you how my dad returned from a doctor's appointment, told me he had stage 4 colon cancer, and said, "It's all right to cry."

That was June 1989. Here's the rest of the story, as told in an email I wrote on March 7, 2024:

Today is my birthday . . .

. . . which means I'm thinking more than usual about my dad.

Dad died on this day in 1990, my twenty-fifth birthday.

That evening, family and friends gathered at our house to remember Dad and mourn our loss.

At some point, Mom interrupted the somber chatter by marching into the living room with a cake, twenty-five candles blazing on top.

♪♪ “Happy Birthday to you . . .” she sang, and everyone else chimed in.

I sat on the living room sofa, surrounded by loved ones, a tear rolling down my cheek, thinking, “WTF, Mom! We shouldn’t be celebrating right now.”

In retrospect, I know Mom got it right.

We celebrate birthdays—even on this day, the worst day.

Yes, we mourn. But we don’t wallow in our misery.

We mourn AND celebrate—on that day in 1990 and every March 7 since.

All of us suffer setbacks—small and HUGE.

And then we must choose how to respond.

We choose to mourn. We reflect on our loss. We learn from the experience.

And we choose to keep going. We dust ourselves off. We celebrate important occasions. We cheer our victories.

I think that’s how Dad would want it to be.

So this morning, Melissa, Moose, and I will walk around the block . . .

. . . before the rain comes.

It’s going to pour today—more than an inch of rain.

Cold and damp on my birthday. Kind of a bummer . . .

... But, hey, we need the rain. The daffodil bulbs buried next to Dad's headstone are thirsty. So we'll celebrate the rain. And by the time I visit Dad over the weekend, those daffodils should be in full bloom.

I write an email about my dad every year on my birthday, and I share it with my online family. It's not a "marketing" email. I'm not thinking about the **P.L.A.N.** There is no next step.

But I wouldn't write an email like this and send it if not for the lessons I've outlined in this book. The email reflects the relationship and trust I've built with my "online family." I trust them enough to confide in them, to share intimate details, to shed a tear in their presence.

And they trust me enough to receive an email like that with an open mind and heart. I'm not some "marketing bro" tugging on heartstrings to make a buck. I'm Tom Ruwitch, showing up as I am.

* * *

I remember the first time I read Brian Kurtz's book *Overdeliver*²³ and got to the part where he refers to your email list as "your online family."

What a great way to describe your list, I thought.

Kurtz's idea: Your list is not some inanimate asset. It's a collection of human beings—all who can benefit from

²³ Brian Kurtz, *Overdeliver: Build a Business for a Lifetime Playing the Long Game in Direct Response Marketing* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2019).

your insights and your products/services. You need to “treat those people with the care and respect they deserve,” he writes.

Let’s not forget, though, your “online family” has come to you because they have problems to solve and dreams to fulfill. You’re here to serve them, and that means you will sell products and services to them.

“Sell aggressively,” Kurtz writes, “without ever losing sight of the people you are selling to or compromising the respect and care they deserve.”

Before you began this book, the idea of “sell aggressively” may have made you cringe. Maybe you pictured Ned Ryerson or some other pitchy pest. Maybe you feared you were manipulative if you spoke to prospects’ fears.

But now you have Story Power and understand how to empathize and envision to enable transformative journeys for your prospects and clients. You know how to deliver **P**romises, **L**essons, **A**necdotes, and **N**ext steps to solve their problems and fulfill their dreams.

You know how to meet prospects where they are (empathize) so you can envision a solution. You have the power to honor how prospects feel. You can envision solutions and give them hope. You can take them by the hand and guide them to a better place.

When you harness Story Power, you can market and sell aggressively. You can promote your products and services, build long-lasting, profitable relationships with clients, and

grow your business. And because you've done it the Story Power way, your marketing content is a gift you deliver to your "family," a bridge to a better way. Everyone wins.

This Book's Story

I like to think of this book as one big story. And since it's a story, I assembled it with a **P.L.A.N.**

Promise: You will transform your content from boring to brilliant, from prospect-repelling to client-attracting. And you will transform the content-creation process from confusing and frustrating to fun and fulfilling.

Lesson: Embrace Story Power—its three core principles and the **P.L.A.N.** framework. Make content creation a systematic act of assembly.

Ancedote: Too many to summarize here. But like any good anecdotes, they stick in your memory: The one about my headphones. The one about the guy who got "bounce" in his step. The one about the cavemen. The one about the stressed-out business owner who let go and got away. The one about Ned Ryerson who had "just the ticket." The one about Maddie and me in Mexico.

All of those anecdotes helped me share the promises and lessons in an entertaining, memorable way.

Next step:

You knew there would be next steps, right?

I'll make this simple. Go to StoryPowerBook/NextStep or scan this QR code on your mobile device:



That will take you to a page with several free resources and other opportunities to harness Story Power.

I could spill some ink on these pages, telling you what you'll find there. But I don't know what the future will bring. Right now, as I sit on the screen porch at my house (my summertime office) in June 2024, with Moose lying at my feet, finalizing this book's first edition, I know the *latest* next steps.

But that's now. And later, they'll change. I think about the story I told you earlier—the one about Jeff Walker. Remember? He understood that his prospects and clients change with the times. Their problems change. Their aspirations change. So Jeff changes with them. His marketing messages change. His products and services change.

You may be reading this book six months or six years after I first release it (I hope so). And by then, your needs may be different than those who read the book right after I released it.

So the next steps will change over time.

But there will always be a next step. You can always ask me for help, which leads me to one last story:

When I was in high school, no one visited the guidance counselor. I mean *no one*. He was a creepy hippy-turned-teacher who sat alone in his third-floor office, waiting for someone to show up and ask for help. We students thought asking for help was an act of surrender. A sign of weakness. An admission of shortcomings.

So we pushed on, hiding our struggles, leaving important questions unanswered, flying alone. When Maddie was about to enter the same high school, we asked the principal about academic support. As parents, we wanted our kid to seek help when needed. We wondered whether the school still had one lonely guidance counselor who sat alone in the same dusty office.

The principal assured us: The school has multiple counselors, and they actively encourage students to seek help. “We tell them, ‘It’s the smart kids who seek help,’” she told us. “We tell students there’s no shame in it. We encourage them to take advantage of the resources we offer.”

I’ve never forgotten that: “It’s the *smart* kids who seek help.” I told that story yesterday during a group coaching session for members of my Story Power VIP Program. VIP member Linda asked a couple of questions. Before she asked another one, she sheepishly said, “I’m sorry, I have another question,” as if she had something to be sorry for.

I told Linda and the other members they can and should ask as many questions as they wish. Our group meeting has no time limit. I'll answer questions until members finish asking them. I told Linda and the members about my daughter and the school and the principal who said smart kids seek help.

We all struggle in business. We all wish to appear on top of the game. When we ask a question, we naturally reveal, "We don't know."

And that's OK. In fact, we're better off if we reveal we don't know, if we ask the questions, if we get the answers. Otherwise, we're flying alone, and we're lost.

This book is my effort to help you soar, to guide you through the marketing maze, and to prevent you from getting lost.

It's a great start, I hope. But keep going. Seek help. Ask questions. Take advantage of the resources around you. It's not a sign of weakness. It's a smart move that will make you stronger.

Whenever you're ready, you know the next step:



Go to StoryPowerBook.com/NextStep
or scan this QR code on your mobile device:

Thanks for reading.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



This book and I are the product of many who surround, encourage, and motivate me—starting with the costars of the Melissa-and-Tom story: our twins, Maddie and Jake, and our crazy-doodle, Moose. My nuclear family matters above all else. I wrote most of this book with a picture of the twins on my desk to the left and Moose lying at my feet to the right.

Special thanks to Dixie Gillaspie, my weekly mastermind partner since 2011. She challenges, encourages, and inspires me to show up as I am and lead with heart.

Several brilliant businesspeople and marketers have helped me on this journey, particularly Daniel Levis, who reminded me how impactful my expertise can be; Brian Kurtz, who introduced me to “Breakthrough Advertising” and the concept of an “online family”; Ted Prodromou, who

inspires me every day with his authenticity, kindness, and brilliance. Vance Morris, who burned in my brain the idea “you won’t profit if you don’t implement”; Michael DeLon, who consistently demonstrates how to build business relationships by giving; and Dave Dee, who was among my first “direct response marketing” mentors and remains a trusted guide today.

Kim Krause Schwalm, Candice Lazar, and Sonny Tran have been indispensable accountability partners, pushing me to meet my deadlines and get this book published and in your hands.

Adam Kreitman wrote info-taining daily emails before I did. He inspired me to write more and better, and he still inspires me today.

R. J. Redden has helped me embrace AI robots and get the most out of them while exploring with me ways to show up as a human with heart, soul, and a sense of humor.

Back to family: The tree is tall and broad. The roots go deep. As this book heads to the publisher, my brother, Mike, my mother, Ann, and her husband, John, stand offstage, cheering loudly. Their encouragement has motivated and heartened me.

My grandmothers, Liz and Miriam, and grandfathers, Eli and Joe, set the stage. So much that I know, so much of what makes me good came from them.

And finally, my father, Wallace Renard Ruwitch. I hope you’re “up there” watching, Dad. And if you are, I hope I’ve made you proud.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tom Ruwitch is a business advisor, storytelling standout, and content marketing pioneer who helps leaders create, deliver, and track client-attracting content and cure tech headaches.

For more than a quarter century, Tom has honed and optimized the strategies and tactics delivered in this book.

In 2001, after ten years as a reporter, editor, and marketing strategist for newspapers, including the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Tom founded the email marketing software and services company MarketVolt. This was before most businesspeople had even heard of email marketing, much less tried it.

MarketVolt licensed its groundbreaking software to businesses around the globe, and it operated as a full-service agency—helping businesses of all sizes attract prospects and land clients with online and offline marketing strategies and tactics.

Tom sold MarketVolt in 2019 and founded Story Power Marketing. Authors, coaches, and other experts hire Tom to transform their content from boring to brilliant—without writer’s block—so prospects tune in, turn on, and buy.

In 2021, Tom launched Implementum, an all-in-one marketing, operations, and analytics platform that includes customized, done-for-you campaigns, strategy, and hands-on training. Implementum helps business leaders build automated marketing machines so they can grow and profit without tech headaches.

HARNESS STORY POWER TO CONNECT, INSPIRE, AND SELL

The best stories ignite our emotions, give us clarity, and help us make sense of the world. We see ourselves in powerful stories. Most importantly, stories inspire us to imagine a future we desire. That's why stories matter for marketers. Stories sell.

When you weave stories into your marketing and sales, you build powerful connections with prospects and clients who relate to your content and, more importantly, relate to you. *Story Power Marketing* will show you how to generate story-powered, client-attracting content—consistently and confidently. Inside this book, you'll discover how to:

- **Deliver your ideas** with creativity and confidence
- **Write entertaining, profit-generating content** without writer's block
- **Get followers** to crave your content and act when you encourage them

This book will show you how to craft powerful stories so your followers will know, like, and trust you (and hire you too). Let's get to it. Now is your time to start *Story Power Marketing*.



Tom Ruwitch is the Founder and President of Story Power Marketing and Implementum. He helps clients transform content from ignored to adored, turn marketing from frustrating to fun, and convert results from subpar to superb. Tom helps his clients discover the building blocks for prospect-focused stories and then assemble those pieces into familiar structures like emails, social posts, videos, websites, and other content. This story-powered content draws prospects in, leads them to say, “Tell me more,” and inspires them to buy. Tom lives in St. Louis with his wife Melissa and their crazy-doodle named Moose.