

STORIES MADE MEANINGFUL

The foundation of your marketing. 

What
business are
you really in?

What is an organization's story?

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The story that an organization tells is the foundation of its brand, culture, strategy, and marketing. It provides employees and

customers with an understanding of the organization's functions, values, beliefs, and direction.

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A story is different from the messages used in marketing.

An organization's tagline, elevator speech, and About Us paragraph is not their story. These are the tools that marketing teams use to help communicate their story. Without a great story, these tools fail to move, influence, and inspire an organization's audience.

Stories must be meaningful.

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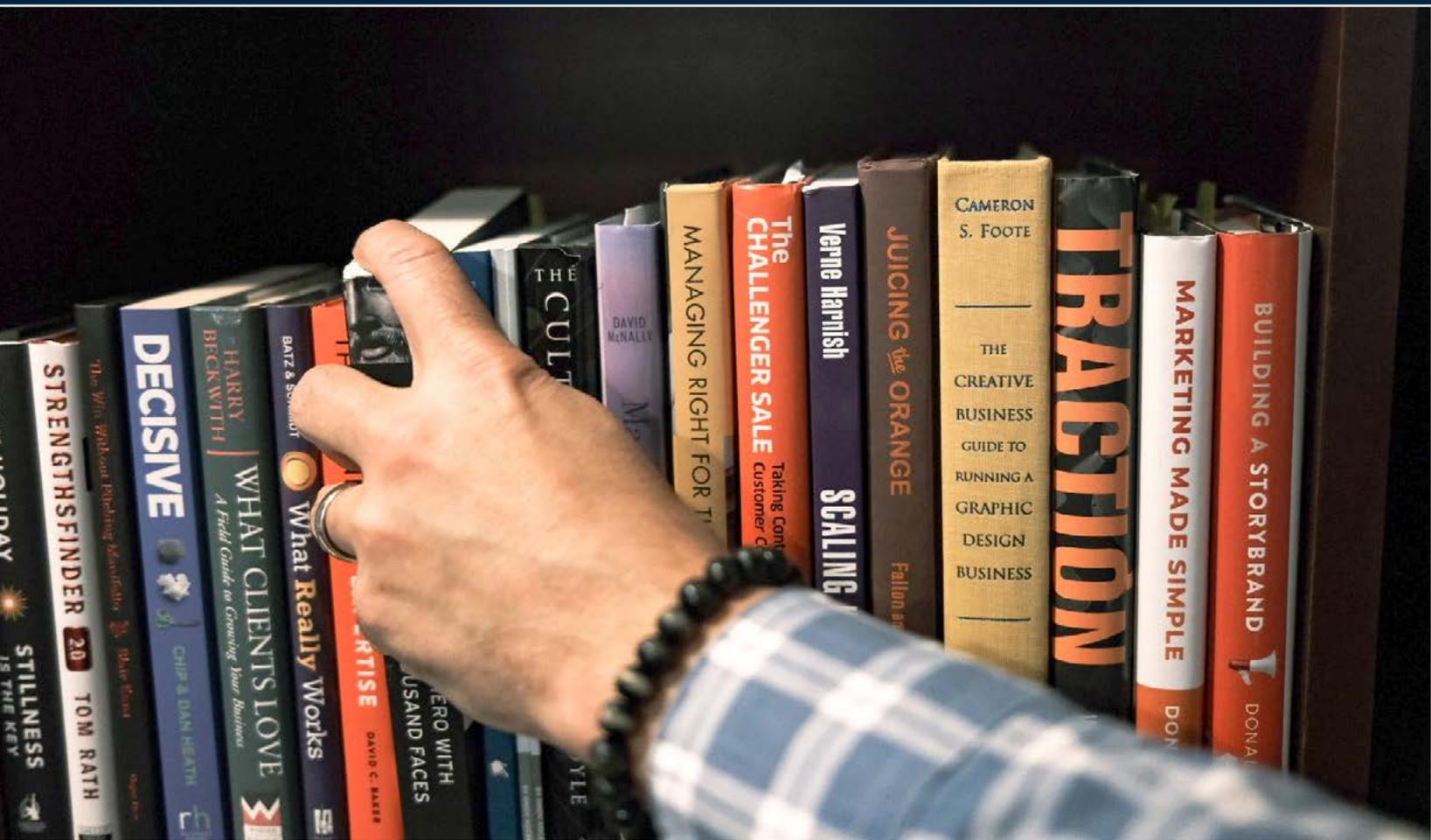
They focus on things people really care about. No matter the product or service, there is a deeper reason why customers buy from an organization. This reason may not be understood or communicated, but it always affects people's perception and ultimately, the bottom line.

Stories must be unique.

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They are different from the competition. Even where the products or services between two organizations are similar, what these two

organizations stand for is not the same. And the reasons they provide their deliverables should be connecting with people on different levels.



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TRACTION

MARKETING MADE SIMPLE DONALD

BUILDING A STORYBRAND DONALD

What a story isn't.

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When most people think of “stories,” they think of their history, situations they’ve been in, and tales of what brought them to this place. They might think of their favorite movie, book, or special memory. But why is it so challenging to create a great story? Why do some stories fall flat?

In business, an organization’s facts, statistics, features, benefits, and value propositions are essential. They act as the entry fee into the larger market of opportunity. These pieces don’t differentiate or inspire customers to take action. In the larger market, these incomplete stories become noise.

What makes a story meaningful and memorable?

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The critical elements to a story lie underneath all the notable facts and figures. It's the values and deep desires that are at stake. With clarity around values and desires, a brand can start to understand the business they're *really* in.

When crafting a story, begin with building a meaningful foundation for the organization to grow upon. Finding this foundation allows you to articulate the organization's meaningful difference and will impact marketing long-term.



Ankle and knee braces are the signature product for McDavid USA. Before developing a meaningful story, their marketing focused on product materials, levels of support, and pain relief. This caused their perception in the market and their sales performance to weaken and fall behind their direct competitors.

To compete in the sporting goods market, McDavid needed a deeper story.

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Looking past the facts, features, and benefits, McDavid's story was more than managing knee pain. Removing pain from athletes allowed the customer to participate in the activities they love. But they don't just allow you to participate, McDavid's products allow customers to perform. To achieve their best. To push themselves farther than ever before. To have confidence in themselves.



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McDavid doesn't just sell knee braces, they sell ***confidence.***

The following pages outline **six questions** that should initiate a conversation about your organization's story.

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If answered meaningfully, these should provide a solid starting point in crafting an organization's lasting foundation. These questions will help get to the heart of what business you are *really* in.



01

Why does your organization exist?

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The reason beyond making money, making basic widgets, or generally serving people. Think about the reasons that drive you to keep

refining your craft. What keeps you motivated and inspired every day, week, month, and year? The bigger the better. Vast but not vague.

02

Where is your organization going?

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This is a shared picture of what the organization can create. A place or goal that continuously challenges your organization to

improve. This ideal place should be for others, resilient, and idealistic. What is the ideal state we are hoping to arrive at?

03

Who does your organization serve?

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All of the audiences the organization affects. Think about the people who interact directly with your organization versus the final

consumer of the deliverable (they often differ). Think about the downstream effects, benefits, and emotions.

04

Who is on your organization's team?

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The characteristics that every team member needs to help the organization achieve its goals. These should be unique to your

organization. These characteristics help define the culture of the organization. What type of person will help the company succeed?

05

What are you going to accomplish?

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The finite objectives that act as milestones on the road to success. These are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time

bound goals that provide short term focus and motivation. How will we know if we are on the right track?

06

How are you making an impact?

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The high-level actions that an organization makes to create meaningful change for their customers. Think about the most important

activities that provide a difference. How does the business move the needle forward internally and externally?

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A story inspires and guides marketing.

If done properly, your marketing should effectively communicate the organization's meaningful why to customers, employees, and the world.

This foundation can be extremely valuable for marketing, and should not exclusively be used in the marketing department. An organizational story can support and guide decisions in multiple areas of an organization regarding personnel, strategic planning, innovation, and resource allocation.

So, what
business are
you **really** in?

