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The Best Social Media Marketing Tells A Story

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By [Tim Devaney](#) and [Tom Stein](#)

Storytelling is the oldest form of marketing, and social media is the newest marketing twist. Put them together and you have a powerful, cost-effective way of building relationships with customers and selling your product or service.



(Photo Credit: iStockPhoto)

“Storytelling has always been important in marketing but with social media there are so many more ways to reach people than before,” says [John Sadowsky](#), author of *The New Marketing: Social Media, Email and the Art of the Storytelling*. “Today the campfire is virtual—and if you can involve your friends in telling their friends, your story can go viral in a way it never could before.”

Sadowsky says a brand’s story should be five things: personal, authentic, simple, engaging and inclusive. It’s an easy formula to learn, but it takes time and effort to master.



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“It’s like golf,” Sadowsky says. “Anyone with average motor skills can learn to be a good golfer but takes hard work. Storytelling is the same. The trap is that since we all know *how* to tell stories, people think they’re telling *good* stories. But it’s much more complex. It takes practice.”

Random Tweets Are Not a Story

It’s important to know what a good business story is—and what it is not. It’s not a random post or tweet: “Hey, look! I like this!” The stories you share should consistently tell your community about your core business principles, such as value, service and reliability.

“There are lots of companies that tweet left and right,” Sadowsky says. “But you have to do it with authenticity. If more than one person is tweeting for your company, it’s important that you have alignment and consistency in your story. So before you even go online, understand what your message is. Have a conversation about the story you want to tell and the values you’re trying to project.”

Once you learn to tell your story well, you can do it less often—because your community will tell it for you. Companies that succeed at storytelling engage their customers to such an extent that their customers start talking back. That gives your

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you. Companies that succeed at storytelling engage their customers to such an extent that their customers start talking back. That gives your story—and your brand—credibility.

“Before social media, it was brands just blasting out their messages,” Sadowsky says. “It’s not about that anymore. It’s about engaging your community and having them take over the conversation but with you helping to shape that conversation.”

Dunkin’ Donuts Finds the Sweet Spot

Your goal is to spur your customers to tell their stories about their experiences with your brand.

Sadowsky gives an example of a company that does this very well: Dunkin’ Donuts. Its [“Fan of the](#)

[Week” campaign](#) features photos of Dunkin’ Donuts customers who Like the company at its Dunkin’ Donuts Fan of the Week [Facebook](#) FB +2.05% page. People pictured there usually share their photos with their friends, their friends share the photos with more friends...and Dunkin’ lives happily ever after.

And you don’t need to be a multinational corporation like Dunkin’ Donuts to do the same. “You don’t have to spend millions on marketing to tell your story on social media,” Sadowsky says. “This is something all companies can do cost-effectively. Social media put storytelling on steroids. Now you can tell your story with so much more scale and scope.”