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Entrepreneurs Who Master Storytelling Win More

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The entrepreneur's challenge is to effectively communicate their value proposition, not only to customers, but also to vendors, partners, investors, and their own team. Especially for technical founders, this is normally all about presenting impressive facts. But in reality facts only go so far. Stories often work better, because humans don't always make rational decisions.

Most people care the most about the things that touch, move, and inspire them. They make decisions based on emotion, and then look for the facts that support these decisions. Thus it behooves every entrepreneur to learn how to craft stories from their personal experience and the world at large that make an emotional connection, as well as tie in the facts.

I just finished a book "[Tell to Win: Connect, Persuade, and Triumph with the Hidden Power of Story](#)," by Peter Guber, a thought leader on this subject and long-time business executive. He asserts that everyone today, whether they know it or not, is in the emotional transportation business, and compelling stories are the best way for you to move your business forward.

More importantly, he provides the insights and guidance that we all need to do this effectively. I have extracted these ten basic principles for telling the right story, at the right time, and telling it right:

1. **Select the right story for the right audience.** The most successful story tellers are also attentive story listeners. They understand that it's more important to be interested in their listener than to appear interesting. What does the audience want and need? Armed with this insight, you can



Starbucks Chairman Howard Shultz talks to the media at the Vancouver Waterfront Station location, celebrating 20 years of Starbucks in British Columbia. (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

tailor a story that will achieve both your goals.

2. **Choose when the listener will be receptive.** Getting to know your audience also means figuring out the place and time where they will be most receptive and least subject to interruption or distraction. They need to be able to give you your full attention, so you need to look, listen, and locate their optimal context.
3. **Finding the source material for good stories.** The key is not to expect to find a story fully born, perfectly framed, and read to be told, but to constantly stockpile fragments and metaphors that have the potential to become stories. The most effective story material comes from firsthand experience, infused with your personal feelings and emotions.
4. **Make sure your call to action resonates.** Every story needs something that will move the audience emotionally to hear your call to action. This may mean finding a hero or a villain in the story, showing your real passion and emotion, or describing the excitement and fear of others.
5. **Get in the right state for your story.** Getting in state isn't just a mental, emotional, or physical process; it's all three. This state is vital to telling a story because reading your intention is what signals listeners to pay attention to you. Intentions speak louder than words. Train both your body and your mind on your clear intention to succeed.
6. **Tell the story with authentic contagious energy.** Like intention, authenticity and energy cannot be faked. If you are telling a story you don't believe in, your audience will sense it instantly. The good news is that they will pick up just as instantly on your genuine enthusiasm and conviction.
7. **Demonstrate vulnerability and perseverance.** Everyone has something in common with every other person, so open up and expose your fears and concerns, allowing others to do likewise. The trick to perseverance is not to eliminate fear, but to use it to ramp up your energy, heighten your passion, and intensify your sense of urgency.
8. **Make the story experience interactive.** You can make any business story more memorable, resonant, and actionable by asking for input or a response during the story, or getting an emotional interaction. Engage the audience physically or verbally, which makes them feel like part of your story, and that they have a stake in the outcome.
9. **Engage the senses of your audience.** Scientists tell us that words account for only the smallest part of human communication. The majority is nonverbal, more than half based on what people see and more than a third transmitted through tone of voice. The more the audience feels the story in their bodies, the more positive they will react to it.
10. **Listen actively with all your senses.** Even when you make the story a dialogue, rather than a monologue, how you listen as a teller is as important to your success as the actual words you speak. You must listen to gauge emotions, attention, and interest – moment to moment. More engaged listeners will be more likely to heed your call to action.

Examples of great storyteller entrepreneurs include [Howard Schultz](#), founder of Starbucks, and [Chad Hurley](#), founder of YouTube. Both demonstrated many times the ability to turn “me” into a “we,” by being able to tell a story that shined the light on an interest, goal, or problem that both the teller and the listener shared. That connection ignited empathy, secured trust, and gathered commitment to the call to action.

Stories have been used since the beginning of time to share knowledge, history, and ideas. Sure they contain facts, but often emotion is what makes them work. How often do you get beyond the facts in your pitch to customers and investors? If you want to kick your business up a level, maybe it's time to add some stories to your message.

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