



# THE ART OF STORYTELLING IN PR

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How To Define And Create Your Brand Story

**Mynewsdesk PR Academy**

Study Guide | 1 of 5

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## Part 1

# Building Reputation In The Digital Age

The way brands reach customers and stakeholders has changed dramatically over the last decade. Where once we focused on advertising and pitching the media for attention, brands today **can reach consumers directly by publishing content.**



## Part 1 | Building Reputation in the Digital Age

# ‘Content’ takes many forms – both online and offline.



### Digital media

Brands now publish blogs, produce videos, generate ebooks and design infographics. This is just a handful of the digital content types available for brands wanting to publish content online. (Digital media is also used to describe the online version of media companies – everything from The Wall Street Journal online to digital-only sites like Mashable.)



### Email

Another channel available to brands, email is a great way to send out highly customized content to a particular segment of your audience. Because individuals subscribe to receive your emails, they're more likely to be highly engaged.



### Events

Live events and online events are also considered 'content'. They may be big industry showcases, smaller executive events, or even a webinar-based educational series.



### Social media

These are networks your audience visits – and where you'll want to promote the content you've created, as well as engage with your customers and stakeholders. Where digital media is more likely to describe the content itself, social media is one of the places you'll go to promote that content.



### Interactive

This is a big umbrella term for a variety of content types – from brand apps to web-based interactive tools.



### Print

Many brands have come full circle and are again publishing in print – including beautiful print magazines that offer a look and feel not available online.

## Part 1 | Building Reputation in the Digital Age

Although the term is overused, **brand storytelling** aptly describes the new ways brands reach their audience. That's because to get attention you can no longer interrupt (as commercials and advertisements do). Now you'll win attention with a great story.



True brand storytelling is the **ability to find common interests with your target audience, and tell stories about those common interests** in a way that is interesting, educational, entertaining, or useful.

For some industries, 'brand storytelling' seems a natural fit. For example, a retailer that sells cooking equipment might publish recipes, or an outdoor gear retailer might offer advice about backpacking destinations.

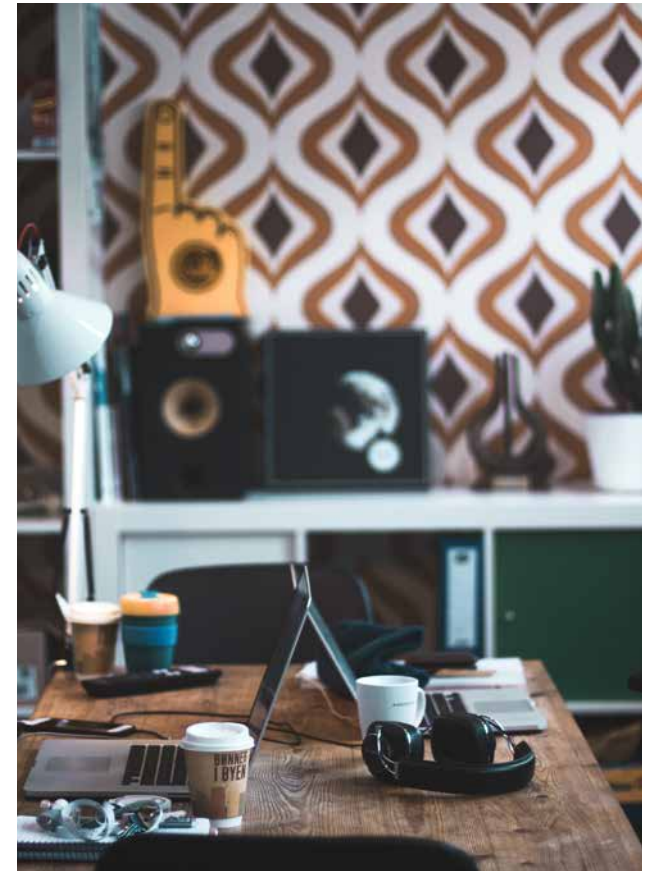
Yet **every business has a story to tell**. No matter what industry you belong to, your customers and prospects care deeply about shared topics and interests – be they professional or personal. For example:

- A company that **builds software** for designers can blog about design innovation and up-and-coming designers.
- A **healthcare consultancy** might publish a series of e-newsletters about digital transformation in that industry.
- A heavy **equipment manufacturer** can host webinars related to managing risk in the Chinese supply chain.

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**Part 1** | Building Reputation  
in the Digital Age

The important thing is to **publish consistently** – whether writing articles, producing videos, or publishing educational information via social media. To build an audience and sustain its attention, you must become a regular publisher of interesting, relevant content. For many this means publishing every day, but even one or two times a week is enough.



## Part 2

# What's Not Storytelling?

Just because you publish content doesn't mean you're telling a good story. **What doesn't work?**



### 1. Selfish storytelling

Any message you share that's mostly self-referential, promotional or product-based is not storytelling. If you want to get noticed online, don't just talk about yourself in the form of press releases, product-focused content, or, worse, an announcement about your incredible company picnic on Thursday. Aim to educate or entertain.



### 2. Narrative-only content

Your audience has a lot of options, so your content will need to get their attention not just with words, but with visuals and great design.



### 3. Self-serving punchlines

Beware the urge to plug your company at the end of an otherwise decent storytelling effort. There are graceful ways to insert a call to action in your brand storytelling.



### 4. Speechifying

As you become more adept at publishing content, you'll want to reach out and include others – people outside your organization – in your efforts. That might mean customers, experts, or simply fans. Getting outside perspectives will make your story more interesting and more shareable.

## Part 3

# Storytelling: From Planning To Action

**Defining your brand story and landscape.** If you're going to publish excellent content, you need to make it engaging for your audience. Here are the steps involved:



### 1. Defining your brand story and landscape.

What does your organization stand for? What values define your culture? How do you want your customers to perceive you? Think of your culture and values as a backdrop for storytelling – or a story landscape. It won't be the main point of your story, but will figure prominently.

### 2. Research customer interests.

What are your customers' pain points? What do they seek more knowledge about? What inspires them? It's critical you research what matters most to your customers to ensure that when you publish content it will be relevant and interesting to them.

You may find that different segments of your audience want different things (for example, small business owners may require different information from their enterprise counterparts). Take your time completing this step, ensuring the time and money you invest in storytelling will pay dividends.

### 3. Define your storyline

Combine your brand's values and mission (step one) with your customers' interests (step two) to figure out the broad theme or themes you'll write about.

### 4. Choose a format

There are dozens of ways to publish great content, from simple (blogging) to complex (documentary filmmaking). Using a blogging platform or news platform is a great way for companies to experiment with storytelling in a way that's easy to adopt and expand.

**Don't forget:** *Your story must be more than words on a page. Images and video will help tell your story, and are critical to making stories shareable on social networks.*

## Part 3 | Storytelling: From Planning to Action

### 5. Build a narrative

Now it's time to delve into your topic areas and storylines. What topics are of interest to your audience and suited to the market you serve? Are there particular themes or stories you'd like to explore? We recommend narrowing in on a particular topic area – something you'd like to be known for as an expert source of information.

### 6. Build an editorial calendar

Many brands choose to build an editorial calendar weeks or months in advance. This gives the team enough runway to plan for interviewing, contracting with writers, and sharing the plan with the social media team. An editorial calendar will also allow you to build multiple storylines within a given topic or theme.

#### Sample Editorial Calendar Template

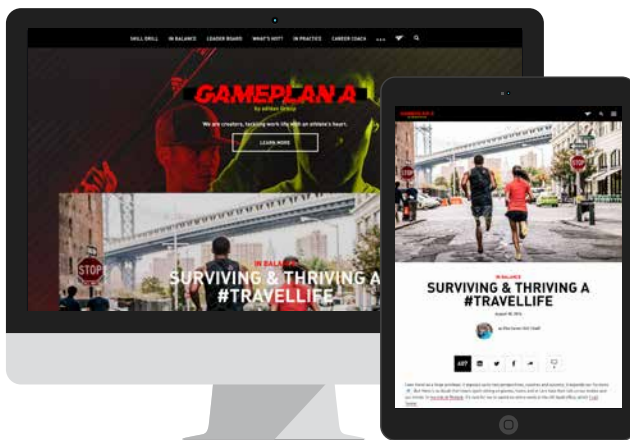
<b>Format</b>	The format of the content item. <i>e.g. blog, interview feature, infographic etc.</i>
<b>Title</b>	Title of the content item.
<b>Description</b>	Brief overview of the topic and the key points the content item will cover.
<b>Pillar</b>	The topic area under which the content item is categorized.
<b>Target Persona</b>	The audience persona to which the piece is targeted.
<b>Funnel Stage</b>	Stage of the buyer journey to which the content corresponds. <i>e.g. awareness, conversion etc.</i>
<b>Author</b>	Author assigned to the content item.
<b>Publication Date</b>	Scheduled date of publication.





**Part 3** | Storytelling: From  
Planning to Action

## Relaying your brand story.



For those of you with a long history in public relations, a brand storytelling approach will be an adjustment. Instead of making your company/product the focus of your pitch, you must now think like an editor or journalist. Instead of thinking, “How do I sell more?” your goal now is, **“How do I draw in more readers and build an audience for my content?”**

Take the example of Adidas Group, the holding company for many athletic brands, including Adidas, Reebok and CCM. Adidas’ new content site is called [GamePlan A](#), and it focuses on “creators and entrepreneurial minds with an athlete’s heart”.

The site interviews top athletes and coaches, trying to dissect the mind of high-performing athletes, and apply those lessons to everyday people. It’s an excellent example of how to take brand values, combine it with customers’ passions, and identify a landscape of stories from which to draw ideas.



## Part 4

# Key Terms

### Brand storytelling

The ability to find common interests with your target audience, and tell stories about those common interests in a way that is interesting, educational, entertaining, or useful.

### Brand values

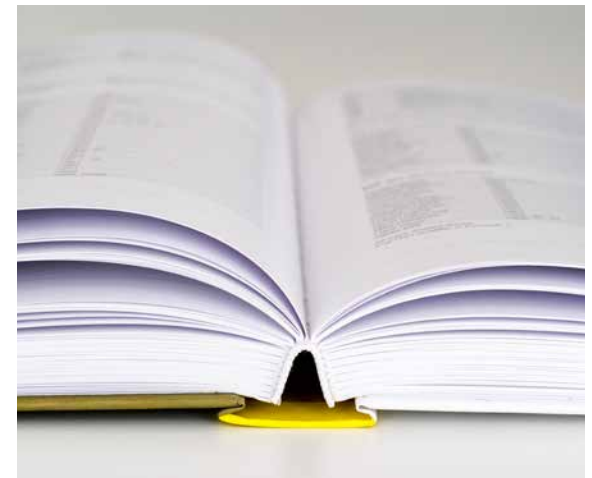
What does your organization stand for? What defines your culture? How do you want your customers or the public to perceive you? Think of your values as a backdrop for storytelling – or a story landscape. It won't be the main point of your story, but will figure prominently.

### Storylines

Combine your brand's values with your customers' interests to figure out the broad theme or themes you'll write about.

### Content format

All the dozens of ways your company can publish content, from blogs and eBooks, to videos and podcasts.



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