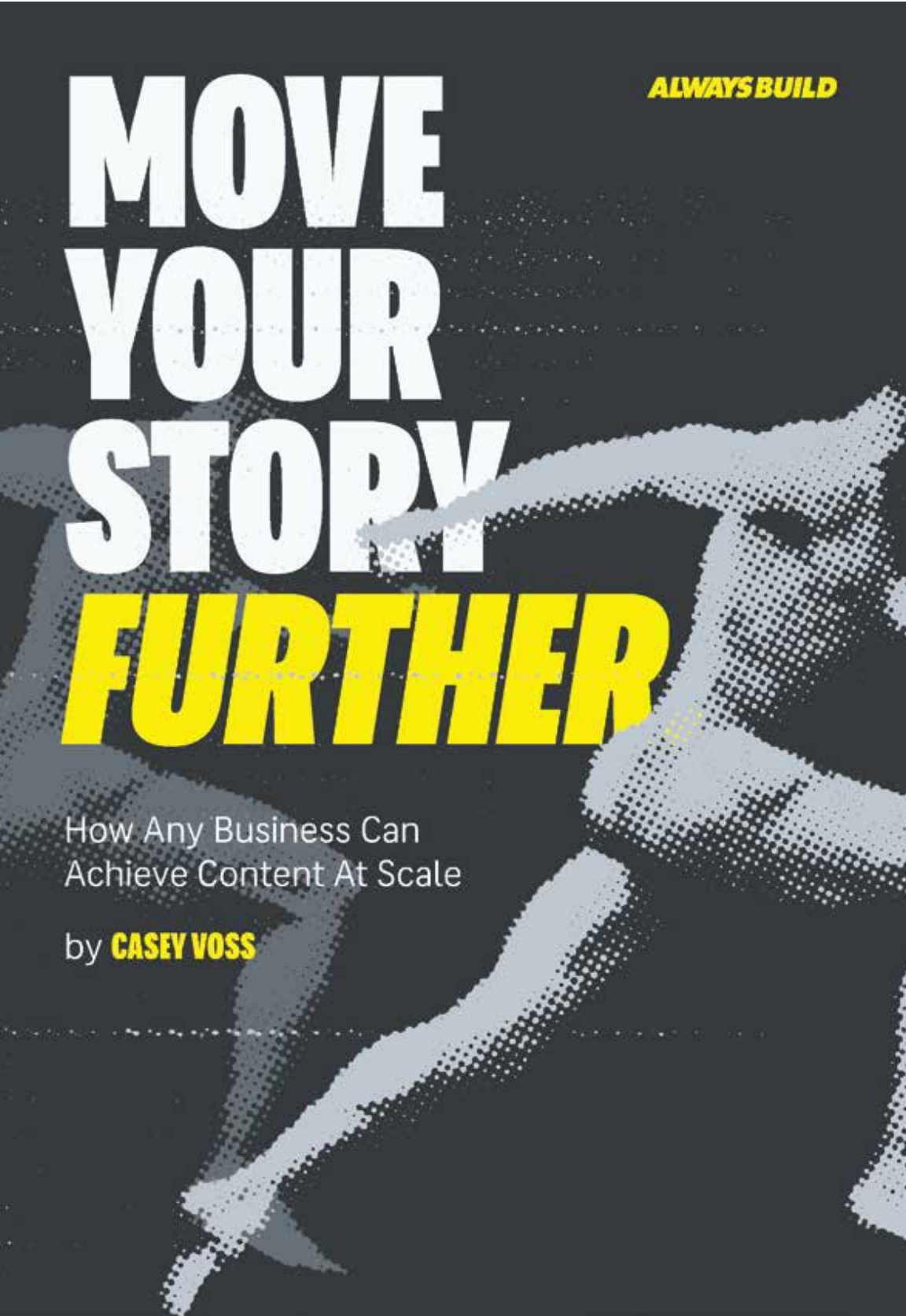
ALWAYS BUILD

# MOVE YOUR STORY FURTHER

How Any Business Can Achieve Content At Scale

by CASEY VOSS



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# WELCOME TO YOUR UNIQUE STORY PROPOSITION *BOOTCAMP*

Over this 30-day journey, we'll take you through practical steps, checklists, exercises, and case studies to help you:

1. Interpret your brand as a narrative
2. Dial in your Unique Story Proposition
3. Make it resonate with your audience
4. Market your story effectively
5. Enhance your other major USP: unique selling proposition.

Drawing from our extensive experience collaborating with global storytellers, this guide has been meticulously crafted to deliver actionable insights and tailored "Brand As Story" strategies specifically for your business needs.

You'll gain invaluable experience in interpreting brands as captivating narratives, unlocking the transformative potential of storytelling in your marketing and strengthening your brand's presence in the marketplace.

In a fiercely competitive landscape, mastering the art of storytelling is not just advantageous – it's crucial for distinguishing yourself amidst the noise. Our ultimate goal is to guide you through the process of identifying and refining your brand's Unique Story Proposition and marketing it with precision and purpose.

## READY TO MOVE YOUR STORY FURTHER?

# WHO WE ARE

# WE ELEVATE BRANDS BY ENHANCING THEIR STORIES AT EVERY STAGE OF THE MARKETING FUNNEL.

With a deep understanding of narrative impact, we uncover a brand's Unique Story Proposition and transform it into compelling, high-performing marketing materials.

# YOU MIGHT BE THINKING:

Great, another marketing book. Why should I spend my time on this one? What can I get out of it?

Fair questions. We'd be asking them too.

Why this one? Because we learned the power of the Unique Story Proposition the hard way. We started as artists – directors, cinematographers, drone pilots, editors – creating content that captivated audiences globally. Yet, we struggled to treat our own brand with the story it deserved.

The truth was that we were driving blind-folded. We faced numerous false starts, brand iterations, and underwhelming narratives because we didn't grapple with key questions:

- What are we selling?
- Why are we selling it?
- Who wants to buy it?
- What is our story?

Answering these questions properly was time-consuming and agonizing. It was the longest and hardest journey we've ever been on, but it taught us invaluable insights. We learned that those who tell the best stories dominate their industries.

And, we'd seen the success in this approach working firsthand with prestigious brands.

We crafted content in the tundra amongst polar bears for big brands like Netflix and Disney.

We created health campaigns for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Canadian Medical Association.

We helped conservation organizations like Oceans North protect marine areas.

We launched new products for major burger brands like A&W.

We even searched for the vaquita, the world's most endangered marine mammal, for Discovery Channel.

While you might not be saving whales... or maybe you will be ;), story-driven marketing performs at any scale and at every stage of your funnel.

**ULTIMATELY, WE WROTE THIS BOOK BECAUSE IT WORKS. AND, WE WANT IT TO WORK FOR YOU.**

Part 1

# THE UNIQUE *STORY* PROPOSITION

**OBJECTIVE**

Understand the inherent value of stories along with the concept of a Unique Story Proposition and why it's crucial for your brand.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

- Why story matters?
- The definition of Unique Story Proposition
- Differentiating between Unique Story Proposition and Unique Selling Proposition
- The role of storytelling in branding

**CHECKLIST**

- Understanding the Unique Story Proposition
- Understanding branding as storytelling
- Begin identifying your brand's core values

**EXERCISE**

Organize your brand's narrative by sketching out your characters, plot, and themes.

**GOAL**

Begin to uncover your brand's Unique Story Proposition by framing your brand as a storyteller.

Part 1 Chapter 1

# WHY STORY?

# STORYTELLING.

It's an ancient art that's been used for centuries to convey messages, teach lessons, and connect communities. Cave paintings like those found in the Lascaux and Chauvet caves in France date back around 17,000 and 30,000 years depicting scenes that tell stories about daily life. And, long before writing was developed, humans shared oral traditions like myths, legends, folktales, and songs that were passed down through generations.

Humans love stories for deep-seated psychological, social, and cultural reasons.

# WE'RE DRAWN TO

**CONNECTION AND EMPATHY**

Stories allow us to connect with others and understand their experiences, nurturing empathy. By stepping into the shoes of characters, we can experience a wide range of emotions and situations beyond our own lives.

**COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT**

Stories engage our brains in a unique way, activating regions involved in sensory experiences, emotions, and memory. This engagement helps us process information more effectively and remember it for longer.

**MEANING & PURPOSE**

Stories help us make sense of the world and our place in it. They provide context, convey values, and offer explanations for complex concepts, helping us navigate life's challenges.

**SOCIAL BONDING**

Sharing stories strengthens social bonds and creates a sense of community. Through storytelling, we transmit cultural norms, traditions, and collective knowledge, ensuring cohesion and continuity within groups.

**ENTERTAINMENT AND ESCAPE**

Stories provide entertainment and an escape from reality. They allow us to explore different worlds, adventures, and possibilities, offering a mental break and sparking our imagination.

**LEARNING & TEACHING**

Stories are an effective way to teach and learn. They convey lessons, morals, and practical knowledge in an engaging and memorable format, making complex ideas more accessible.

**IDENTITY & SELF-REFLECTION**

Through stories, we explore our own identities and reflect on our personal experiences. They help us understand who we are, our values, and how we relate to the world around us.

**CULTURAL TRANSMISSION**

Stories are a primary means of transmitting culture. They preserve history, traditions, and shared beliefs, ensuring that cultural heritage is passed down through generations.

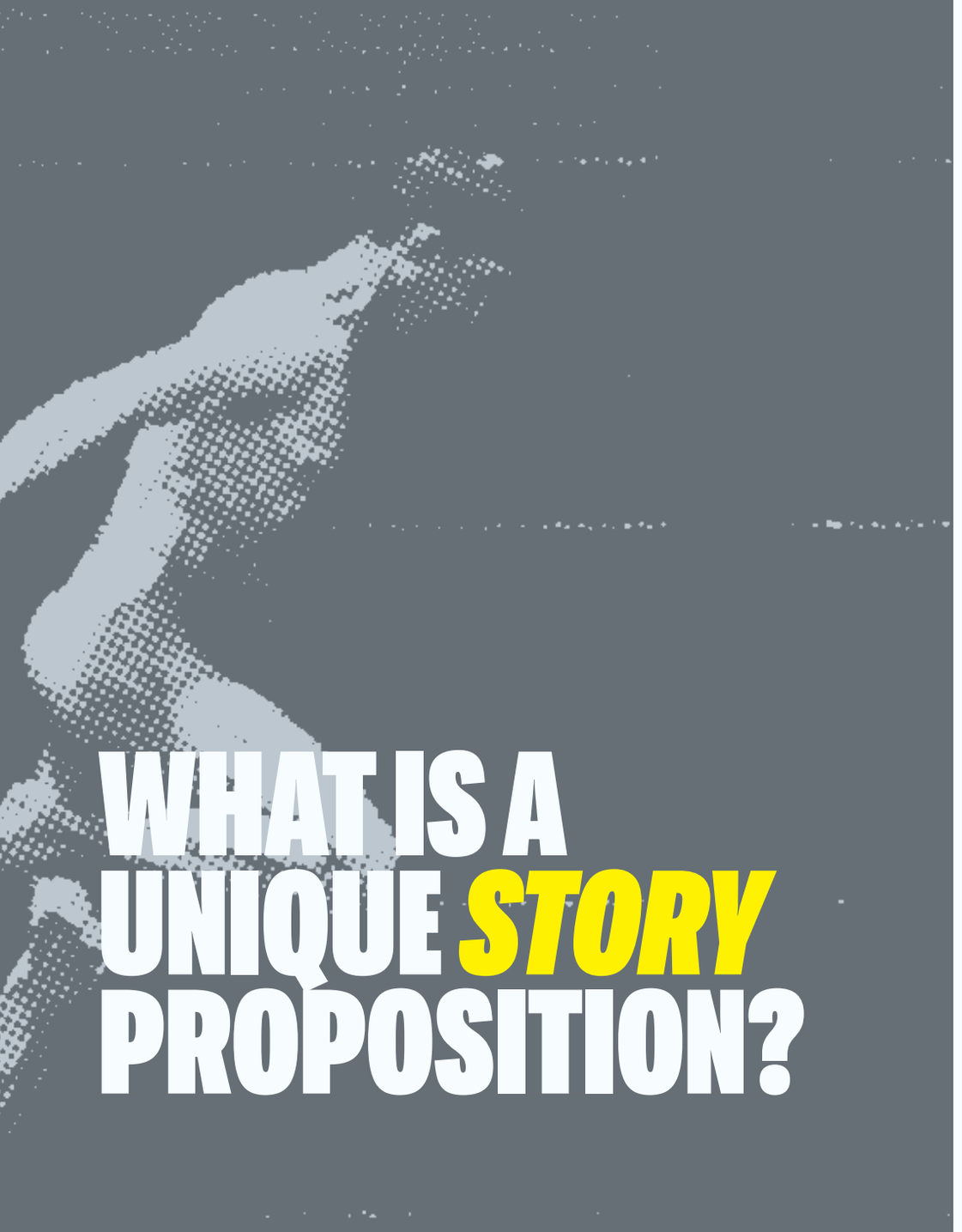
This deep-seated attraction to stories can be harnessed to create compelling marketing that resonates on a personal level, generating emotional connections and driving engagement.

In marketing, effective storytelling transforms brands into relatable entities, making messages memorable and impactful. It's not just about selling a product – it's about engaging your audience, building trust, and creating a lasting impression.

“STORIES ARE THE CREATIVE CONVERSION OF LIFE ITSELF INTO A MORE POWERFUL, CLEARER, MORE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE. ***THEY ARE THE CURRENCY OF HUMAN CONTACT.***”

Robert McKee,
**AUTHOR**

Part 1 Chapter 2



# WHAT IS A UNIQUE *STORY* PROPOSITION?

A Unique Story Proposition is the narrative that defines your brand and sets it apart from the competition.

Unlike a Unique Selling Proposition, which focuses on the specific benefits and features of a product or service, a Unique Story Proposition emphasizes the story behind your brand. This story encompasses your brand's mission, values, history, and vision, creating an emotional connection with your audience.

**HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM A UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION?**

A Unique Selling Proposition focuses on what makes your product or service better than the competition. It highlights the specific benefits that customers will receive and why they should choose your brand over others. Some examples include lower prices, higher quality, unique features, or superior customer service.

While a Unique Selling Proposition is essential, it often lacks the emotional depth and connection that a Unique Story Proposition provides. The two concepts are synergistic, with the Unique Story Proposition enriching and supporting the Unique Selling Proposition.

**EXAMPLE**

**Unique Selling Proposition:** Our coffee is made from the finest organic beans.

**Unique Story Proposition:** Our coffee is a product of our family's century-old tradition of cultivating the finest organic beans, handpicked by farmers who have dedicated their lives to this craft.

# 8 REASONS WHY YOUR UNIQUE STORY PROPOSITION IS *CRUCIAL*

**1. ADDS DEPTH TO YOUR UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION**

While your Unique Selling Proposition states what makes your product or service unique, the story behind it adds layers of meaning. It explains the "why" behind your "what," making it more compelling and relatable.

**Example:** If your Unique Selling Proposition is that your athletic shoes are designed to improve performance, your story can highlight the journey of an athlete who achieved their dreams using those shoes. This personal narrative makes the Unique Selling Proposition more believable and emotionally engaging.

**2. CREATES EMOTIONAL CONNECTION**

A strong story appeals to emotions, which can enhance the perceived value of your Unique Selling Proposition. Emotions drive decision-making and loyalty, making your selling proposition more powerful when tied to an emotional narrative.

**Example:** Patagonia's Unique Selling Proposition is its high-quality, sustainable outdoor gear. The story of the brand's commitment to environmental activism and sustainable practices creates an emotional connection with customers who value these principles, enhancing the appeal of the products.



**3. BUILDS TRUST AND CREDIBILITY**

Sharing the authentic story of your brand builds trust. When customers understand your brand's journey, struggles, and commitment to its values, they're more likely to believe in your Unique Selling Proposition.

**Example:** TOMS Shoes' Unique Selling Proposition is its "One for One" model, where a pair of shoes is donated for every pair sold. The story of how this model was inspired by the founder's trip to Argentina and witnessing children without shoes builds credibility and trust in the brand's mission and products.

**4. DIFFERENTIATES IN A CROWDED MARKET**

In a market where many brands might offer similar Unique Selling Propositions, a unique story can set you apart. It provides a narrative context that competitors might lack, making your brand more memorable.

**Example:** Ben & Jerry's Unique Selling Proposition is their high-quality, innovative ice cream flavors. Their story of two childhood friends starting the business with a commitment to social causes and fun resonates with customers, differentiating them from other ice cream brands.

**5. ENHANCES CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

A compelling brand story fosters a sense of belonging and community among customers. When people connect with your story, they're more likely to remain loyal to your brand, supporting your Unique Selling Proposition in the long term.

**Example:** Apple's Unique Selling Proposition is its innovative technology and design. The story of Apple's founding, its focus on challenging the status quo, and the narrative of creative thinkers using Apple products build a loyal customer base that passionately supports the brand.

**6. CONSISTENCY**

A well-defined Unique Story Proposition provides a consistent narrative that can be woven through all your marketing and communication efforts, ensuring your message is cohesive and clear making it easier for customers to understand and remember your brand.

**Example:** Nike consistently tells the story of athletes overcoming challenges. This narrative is present in every ad, social media post, and product description, ensuring a clear and cohesive message about determination and excellence.

**7. EVERGREEN**

A consistent Unique Story Proposition unlocks the power of evergreen content. This unified narrative not only strengthens brand recognition but also maximizes efficiency, ensuring your content remains relevant and impactful over time.

**Example:** Airbnb's story of belonging and trust is timeless. Content such as blog posts about unique stays, host stories, and travel guides remain relevant and engaging year after year.

**8. AUTHENTICITY**

Today's consumers value authenticity. A genuine and compelling story can build credibility and authenticity, making your brand more relatable and trustworthy.

**Example:** LEGO's story of fostering creativity and imagination is authentic and resonates deeply with customers. The brand's commitment to learning and play is evident in every product and campaign, building trust with parents and children alike.



# "GREAT STORIES HAPPEN TO THOSE WHO CAN *TELL THEM.*"

Ira Glass,
**HOST OF THIS AMERICAN LIFE**

# BRANDING *IS* STORYTELLING

# YOU CAN THINK OF BRANDS THEMSELVES AS STORIES.

They have characters: heroes, supporting characters, and villains too. They embody values, face challenges, and inspire us with their journeys. They're narratives unto themselves that engage and resonate with us, making their missions and products more relatable and meaningful. By understanding brands as stories we can better appreciate their impact and place in our lives and whether or not they're worth our time and money.

Just as a well-crafted story captures the audience's attention and evokes emotions, effective branding creates a cohesive and compelling structure that resonates with customers.

# *6 WAYS* BRANDING PARALLELS STORYTELLING

## 1. CHARACTERS

### Protagonists (Heroes)

In a story, the protagonist drives the narrative forward. In branding, the hero is often the customer, the brand itself, or its products/services.

**Example:** In Apple's branding, the hero is the innovative products like the iPhone and MacBook that promise to make the user's life easier and more enjoyable.

### Antagonists (Challenges/Problems)

Every good story has challenges that the protagonist must overcome. These challenges are the problems that your brand solves for your customers.

**Example:** In Nike's branding, the challenges are personal fitness hurdles or societal expectations, and the brand (and its products) helps customers overcome these obstacles.

### Supporting Characters

These can be the employees, founders, customers, or other elements that enrich the story.

**Example:** Starbucks includes baristas and loyal customers as key supporting characters in their story of community and connection over coffee.

## 2. PLOT

### Beginning (Introduction)

Introduce your brand's origins, values, and mission. This sets the stage for your brand's narrative.

**Example:** Ben & Jerry's often shares their origin story, starting as a small ice cream shop and growing into a socially responsible company.

### Middle (Conflict and Development)

Highlight the challenges your brand addresses and how it innovates or takes action to overcome these obstacles.

**Example:** Patagonia focuses on environmental issues and how their products contribute to sustainability, showcasing their ongoing battle against environmental degradation.

### End (Resolution and Future Vision)

Show the positive outcomes of using your brand's products and paint a vision of the future that continues the narrative.

**Example:** TOMS Shoes tells the story of how their "One for One" model has improved lives worldwide and shares their future goals for further impact.

## 3. THEMES

### Core Values and Principles

Just like stories have underlying themes, branding emphasizes core values and principles that drive the narrative.

**Example:** Whole Foods Market's theme revolves around health, wellness, and sustainability, which permeates all aspects of their branding.

**4. EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

Evoke Emotions

Effective stories make the audience feel something. Similarly, strong brands evoke emotions such as trust, joy, excitement, or even urgency.

**Example:** Coca-Cola's branding often evokes happiness and nostalgia through ads that feature sharing Coke with friends and family.

**5. CONSISTENCY**

Consistency in Messaging

A story maintains consistent themes and character traits throughout. Similarly, your brand should maintain a consistent message across all touchpoints.

**Example:** Disney consistently emphasizes magic, wonder, and family-friendly fun across its movies, theme parks, and merchandise.

**6. EVOLUTION**

Evolution and Growth

Characters in stories grow and evolve, and so do brands. Branding allows for your narrative to develop over time, responding to new challenges and opportunities.

**Example:** Microsoft's branding has evolved from being a software company to embracing innovation, cloud computing, and AI, reflecting its growth and future vision.



**"PEOPLE DO NOT BUY GOODS AND SERVICES. THEY BUY RELATIONS, *STORIES, AND MAGIC.*"**

Seth Godin,
**AUTHOR AND ENTREPRENEUR**

# AIRBNB'S "BELONG ANYWHERE" CAMPAIGN

## THE CAMPAIGN

In 2014, AirBnB launched its "Belong Anywhere" campaign, which aimed to promote the idea that wherever you travel, you can find a sense of belonging with AirBnB. The campaign centered on storytelling, featuring videos and content that showcased real travelers' experiences and connections made through AirBnB.

The campaign emphasized the emotional aspect of travel and human connections, tapping into universal themes of belonging and acceptance. The "Belong Anywhere" campaign resonated with audiences, driving increased brand awareness, engagement, and bookings for AirBnB. The campaign received widespread acclaim and won numerous awards for its innovative use of storytelling to connect with consumers on an emotional level.

# Breaking down AirBnB and their campaign as story looks like this:

## CHARACTERS

### Protagonists

- **Travelers Seeking Unique and Authentic Experiences:** These individuals are adventurous, curious, and eager to explore beyond the typical tourist attractions. They value personal connections and desire to immerse themselves in local cultures.

### Supporting Characters

- **Hosts Offering Their Homes:** The hosts are diverse, ranging from urban dwellers to rural inhabitants, each with their unique stories, backgrounds, and homes. They're passionate about sharing their spaces and local knowledge, offering hospitality that reflects their individuality.
- **Local Communities:** They enrich the travelers' experiences, offering cultural insights, hidden gems, and a genuine sense of place.
- **AirBnB Community:** Other travelers and hosts who share their stories, tips, and experiences, creating a global network of like-minded individuals.

### Antagonist

- **Lack of Authentic, Meaningful Travel Experiences**
- **Conventional Hotels and Tourist Traps:** These represent the impersonal, cookie-cutter nature of traditional travel accommodations and destinations, which often lack the warmth and authenticity sought by modern travelers.

## ROLE IN PLOT

### Contrast with Inauthentic Experiences

- **Unique and Personalized Stays:** AirBnB emphasizes the distinctiveness of each stay, whether it's a cozy apartment in a bustling city or a tranquil cottage in the countryside. Each listing offers a personalized touch that starkly contrasts with the uniformity of hotels.
- **Genuine Connections:** The interactions between hosts and guests make for real, human connections, enhancing the travel experience with warmth and authenticity.

## PLOT

### The Adventure of Finding a Home Away from Home

- **Exploration and Discovery:** Travelers embark on a journey to find accommodations that feel like home, discovering hidden gems and local secrets along the way.
- **Creating Memories:** Each stay is an opportunity to build lasting memories, deeply connected to the people and places encountered.

## IMPACT

### Overcoming Generic, Impersonal Travel

- **Sense of Belonging:** By choosing AirBnB, travelers overcome the impersonal nature of conventional travel, finding places where they feel welcomed and valued.
- **Fostering Community:** This choice strengthens the sense of community, both locally and globally, as travelers and hosts share and connect.

## THEMES

### Belonging, Trust, and Community

- **Sense of Belonging:** Travelers feel at home wherever they go, forging emotional connections with their temporary homes and hosts.
- **Trust:** The platform is built on mutual trust between hosts and guests, ensuring safe and enriching experiences.
- **Community:** A global network of individuals who share similar values and desires, creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

**EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

Creating a Sense of Connection

- **Personal and Meaningful Travel:** AirBnB transforms travel into deeply personal and meaningful experiences, far beyond just accommodation.
- **Emotional Connections:** The interactions between hosts and guests often lead to lasting friendships and cherished memories, adding a profound emotional dimension to travel.

AirBnB's brand as a story weaves a compelling narrative where the protagonists, travelers and hosts, overcome the antagonist of impersonal travel through unique, authentic, and personalized stays. This journey emphasizes themes of belonging, trust, and community, creating an emotionally engaging experience that redefines what it means to travel.

**"THE STORIES WE TELL LITERALLY MAKE THE WORLD. IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, *YOU NEED TO CHANGE YOUR STORY."***

Michael Margolis,
**AUTHOR**

# START YOUR BRAND NARRATIVE

## OBJECTIVE

Let's embark on the crucial task of sketching out your brand's narrative spine. This is the beginning of your brand's journey in identifying your Unique Story Proposition and telling a powerful story.

By filling out these sections, you'll begin to create a comprehensive and compelling narrative for your brand that resonates with your audience and drives your brand's success.

# 1. CHARACTERS

### PROTAGONISTS (HEROES)

Identify your customer, brand, service or product as the hero of your story.
Describe how it drives the narrative forward for your customers.

### ANTAGONISTS (CHALLENGES/PROBLEMS)

Define or name the challenges or problems that your brand helps to solve.
These are the obstacles your hero must overcome.



### SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Recognize the key players that enrich your brand's story, such as employees, founders, or loyal customers.

# 2. PLOT

### BEGINNING (INTRODUCTION)

Outline your brand's origins, values, and mission to set the stage for your narrative.

### MIDDLE (CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT)

Highlight the challenges your brand addresses and the actions you take to overcome these obstacles.

### END (RESOLUTION AND FUTURE VISION)

Showcase the positive outcomes of using your brand's products and paint a vision of the future that continues the narrative.



## 3. THEMES

What are the core values and principles that drive your brand's narrative?

## 4. EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Determine how your brand can evoke emotions in your audience, such as trust, joy, or excitement.

## 5. CONSISTENCY IN MESSAGING

Ensure that your brand maintains a consistent message across all touchpoints, reinforcing its narrative.

How can you maintain consistency in your brand's messaging?

## 6. EVOLUTION AND GROWTH

Recognize that your brand narrative can evolve over time, responding to new challenges and opportunities.

How has your brand evolved, and what future growth do you anticipate?

# THE UNIQUE STORY PROPOSITION: *RECAP*

**IN THIS SECTION, WE'VE:**

1. Identified the Unique Story Proposition
   - Why it's important
   - How it differs from your Unique Selling Proposition
   - How to think about your brand as a story
2. Examined AirBnB's unique story
3. Began creating your own brand as a story

**CHECKLIST**

**Identify Your Brand's**

- ✓ Characters
- ✓ Protagonist
- ✓ Antagonist
- ✓ Supporting Cast
- ✓ Plot
- ✓ Beginning
- ✓ Middle
- ✓ End
- ✓ Themes
- ✓ Impact/Emotional Engagement
- ✓ Consistency Strategies
- ✓ Evolution/Growth Opportunities