

# The Enduring Art of Storytelling is the Key to Business Transformation

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Bio



***Stories are fundamental to how we understand our world—especially when it comes to complex ideas and products. In this article, we unpack why storytelling matters so much in technology marketing, and look at some examples of storytelling done right, shares, Ann Sung Ruckstuhl, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of Unisys.***

The future of effective content marketing is not in solutions that enable marketing teams to do the same activities with just more volume and efficiency



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*“Tell me the facts and I will learn, tell me the truth and I will believe. But tell me a story— and it will live in my heart forever.”*

So goes an old Native American saying. But however long ago this traditional wisdom may have been first spoken, modern historians, neuroscientists, and business people have come to agree—storytelling is the key to being heard.

Around 70,000 years ago, evolutionary changes in our species gave rise to spoken language, [says historian Yuval Noah Harari](#) in his best-selling book *Sapiens*. Our ability to exchange information allowed us to cooperate in large communities—and that was critical to our survival and success.

How did ancient humans exchange that information? Through legends, myths, metaphors and parables...in short—through storytelling.

**[Also Read: Not using Stories? Your Business will Fail](#)**

So elemental to the rise of Homo Sapiens were stories, in fact, that our brains are now hard-wired to respond to them. Stories that are personal, that build tension, and that focus on human characters [cause the hypothalamus to release oxytocin](#), says Claremont University

Neuroeconomics professor Paul Zak. That generates interest, empathy, and cooperation. “When you want to motivate, persuade, or be remembered,” suggests Zak, “start with a story of human struggle and eventual triumph. It will capture people’s hearts, by first attracting their brains.”

## Storytelling matters even more to technology marketers

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Ok, this makes perfect sense if we’re talking about a Hollywood movie, or a romance novel, or even a CPG television commercial—who doesn’t love a good story? But what does storytelling have to do with the relatively dry subject of technology marketing?

Everything!

A lot of people think about tech products in terms of specifications, compatibility, and features. (If HP was responsible for marketing sushi in the old days, they’d probably present Nigiri as “a slice of dead fish on top of a bed of rice, measuring 3 x 1 x 1 inch, and weighing 1.5 ounces!”)

But that’s not very appetizing. If you can’t convey your product so that it really appeals to the humanity of your audience, that oxytocin isn’t going to be released, and you’re not going to make the sale.

The good news is—even dry or difficult subject matter can be communicated with artfulness and emotion, by the right storyteller. A couple of masters in the craft come to mind:

Steve Jobs— famously broke from the technology marketing standards of his day, focusing purely on the lifestyle benefits of Apple products, rather than the technical specs. When the iPod made its debut, he described it as “1000 songs in your pocket” rather than “a tiny, 6.5 oz., portable MP3 player with 5GB of storage and a 60mW amplifier.”

Who can forget the original iPod advertising campaign, featuring silhouettes of young people, freely and fluidly dancing against vividly colorful backgrounds? Customers bought that feeling of being creative, happy and free with their friends, they didn’t buy a hunk of metal and plastic.

Franklin D. Roosevelt— did even better. During the Great Depression and 1930s banking crisis, industrial output was halved, a fifth of all Americans lost their jobs, 9000 banks closed and \$1.5 billion dollars of deposits were lost. Americans were panicked.

FDR reached out to the nation through his fireside chats to explain the monetary policies of The New Deal in plain English. He portrayed an optimistic future and renewed the confidence of the American people in their government and in the banking system.

“When the people find that they can get their money -- that they can get it when they want it

for all legitimate purposes, the phantom of fear will soon be laid..." he said, painting a picture of a brighter tomorrow, "...Together, we cannot fail."

**Also Read: [Comic Storytelling – The Secret Sauce to Your Marketing Campaigns](#)**

## Tech marketing is part art, part science

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Marketing today is "two parts art (brand positioning and storytelling) and three parts science (engagement, monetization and amplification, using data and technology)." The latter three are continually evolving and have captured the lion's share of marketers' attention in recent years.

But the ancient art of storytelling is still so fundamental to our humanity that we must not fail to carry on and improve this aspect of our professional craft. Whatever it is that you are offering, go beyond fact-based communication. What kind of future are you building? Why is that important? How are you living your values, both within and without your organization? And how are you making life better for the real humans that you are speaking to?

This is even more true for B2B marketers than it is for others. The buying journey for B2B tech products is often long and indirect, involving multiple stakeholders within customer organizations. Buyers won't remember the benefits of your product unless you can tell your product story in a compelling and desirable way. Marketers need to be able to go from 20,000 feet (the abstract and the sublime) down to sub-sea level (using technical demos, comparisons, and trials) all the way through the buying cycle.

**Also Read: [4 Unique Strategies to Level Up Your Content Marketing Game](#)**

## Marketers are 21st-century change agents

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We are arguably on the cusp of a new cognitive revolution, just as important to the story of Homo Sapiens as the last one. The convergence of connectivity, content, and community has turned marketers into change agents who drive business transformation, who break down silos, and who spur on the digital innovation that will shape life in the 21st century.

It's a rare privilege to be in the center of all that and to be tasked with creating the stories that will live in others' hearts forever, just as foretold by those who came before us. The question is...are you ready to rise to the challenge?