

New York Times Bestselling Author
DONALD MILLER

BUILDING A STORY BRAND



Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen

Donald Miller

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Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen Donald Miller
New York Times bestselling author Donald Miller uses the seven universal elements of powerful stories to teach readers how to dramatically improve how they connect with customers and grow their businesses.

Donald Miller's StoryBrand process is a proven solution to the struggle business leaders face when talking about their businesses. This revolutionary method for connecting with customers provides readers with the ultimate competitive advantage, revealing the secret for helping their customers understand the compelling benefits of using their products, ideas, or services. *Building a StoryBrand* does this by teaching readers the seven universal story points all humans respond to; the real reason customers make purchases; how to simplify a brand message so people understand it; and how to create the most effective messaging for websites, brochures, and social media. Whether you are the marketing director of a multibillion dollar company, the owner of a small business, a politician running for office, or the lead singer of a rock band, *Building a StoryBrand* will forever transform the way you talk about who you are, what you do, and the unique value you bring to your customers.

Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen Details

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Author : Donald Miller

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aljouharah altheeyb says

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Sean Owen says

I don't enjoy business books, but occasionally I have to read them for work. The general thesis of "Building a Storybrand . . ." makes sense. There's a lot of marketing noise and unless you are really clear in your communication and focused on your customer's story you're not getting through. A clear message will have benefits externally with customers and internally with employees. A good observation, but hardly the basis for a 200+ page book. The rest of the book is inane anecdotes. Even worse the author can't stop hustling jargony titled seminars and services. He ends up sounding like that family member who was sucked into a multi-level marketing company and won't stop bugging everyone to get into his network.

Julie Clarke says

This is a good book, but I have a hard time giving a good review. I was the biggest fan of Miller and StoryBrand. I bought all the courses, listened to all the podcasts, read the advanced reader copy of this book. I was a true evangelist for StoryBrand even after they tried to charge me twice for a \$2k course. I met Don and his team in person and I enrolled in their Guide program. I have never received such terrible treatment. I've never been treated this poorly by another human being, much less a business. They were cruel and dehumanizing to me. They embarrassed me and effected my business. They tell businesses to Guide their customers, but they don't practice what they preach. Not only did they not allow me to take their course, they gave me a bogus reason why..

Like Jimmy John's, Chick-fil-a and Abercrombie & Fitch, Storybrand has a good product, but terrible unethical principals behind the scenes.

Kelly Hodgkins says

Building a StoryBrand by Donald Miller shifts the paradigm surrounding the key perspective when creating a brand story and highlights the power of storytelling to making a brand heard in the marketplace. Donald starts by saying, "Your customer should be the hero of the story, not your brand." His logic behind this is sound and easy to test, each of us is a consumer of brands, and, yes, brands that make me the hero and act as my guide draw me deeper.

He offers this approach to get the most out of his book:

1. Read the book and understand the SB7 framework
2. Filter your message through the framework.

3. Clarify your message so more customers listen.”

I've completed one, my business partner Karren and I are working on two - yes, this is helping hugely, and three, well on three I'll keep you posted but the testimonials shared in the book suggest this has worked for many.

As a brand strategist I related to this line “The fact is, pretty websites don't sell things. Words sell things. And if we haven't clarified our message, our customers won't listen.” It is a struggle to cut through the noise clutter we each live with and this book shares great ways to do just that!

The key challenge of the book is outlined as “So what's your message? Can you say it easily? Is it simple, relevant, and repeatable? Can your entire team repeat your company's message in such a way that it is compelling?” Wow, I read that and answered no, so did Karren! Spending time here is now our priority for our business, we do it for our clients but even then, found these questions insightful and guiding!

10% through the book, I wanted to know how to make this happen with the simple 7 StoryBrand framework and that's what the following chapters do, step by step, they walk you through the process of creating a story for your brand, hero, guide, villain and all!

The brand is cast into the role of guide, defined as needing to have a “precise one two punch of empathy and authority in order to move the hero and story along.” Isn't that exactly what we look for? Now, in case you're thinking this is a pie-in-the-sky creative-like process, feel reassured, each step is full of practical ways to make this work. To follow the guide thread, Donald elaborates on how to make the brand appear as a guide through testimonials, statistics, awards and logos. Each element is explained and he guides the reader on how to make the most of each aspect.

The book wraps up with using this framework on an internal marketing campaign which piqued my interest but felt like it needed its own book to make the most of the advice shared.

In short, I loved this book, it has a fresh way of sharing the age old story telling techniques with brand application and explains how to make it happen in your business. Highly recommended, currently being recommended to friends, five out of five!

Chad Warner says

One of the best branding and messaging books I've read. Miller shows how to use storytelling to make your messaging and branding simpler and more effective. I like the straightforward, common sense approach.

Here's the basic story framework you can customize to write your "brand script": A character who wants something encounters a problem before they can get it. At the peak of despair, a guide steps into their lives, gives them a plan, and calls them to action. That action helps them avoid failure and end in success.

To the customer you must present yourself as a guide who has a plan to solve their problem. You can create your brand script for free at mystorybrand.com.

I read this because I'm always looking to refine the marketing of my web agency, OptimWise. Of course, I'm also interested in learning ways to improve the websites and web marketing we provide for clients. This book was recommended by another business owner.

Introduction

Businesses that invite their customers into a story are remembered. Others are forgotten.

The Key to Being Seen, Heard, and Understood

Most marketing doesn't work because it's too complicated. Using stories in marketing makes communication simpler and more predictable.

Focus on aspects of your offer that will help customers survive and thrive. All great stories are about survival (physical, emotional, spiritual). Position products and services as aid to helping people survive, thrive, be accepted, find love, achieve aspirational identity, bond with tribe that will defend them physically and socially.

Must identify what customer wants, what problems you're helping solve, and what life will look like after they engage your products/services.

The Secret Weapon That Will Grow Your Business

Basic story framework: A character who wants something encounters a problem before they can get it. At peak of despair, a guide steps into their lives, gives them a plan, and calls them to action. That action helps them avoid failure and end in success.

Questions your marketing materials must answer within 5 seconds

- What do you offer?
- How will it make my life better?
- What do I need to do to buy it?

The Simple SB7 Framework

Customer is hero, not your brand.

When you give a speech/presentation, position yourself as Yoda and your audience as Luke Skywalker.

Customers want a simple, clear path to do business with you.

If there's nothing at stake in a story, there's no story. If there's nothing at stake in whether a customer buys your product, there's no reason to buy. Must show cost of not doing business with you. Brands that help customers avoid something negative engage customers because they define what's at stake. Use negativity sparingly.

A Character

When you fail to define something customer wants, you fail to open a "story gap," and they have no motivation to engage you; there's no question that demands resolution.

Pare down customer's ambition/desire to a single focus and aim overall brand marketing at that. Marketing of individual products/services can aim at subplots of that focus.

Focus must be relevant to customer's sense of survival: save money, save time, build community, gain status, accumulate resources (make money, increase productivity, decrease waste), find meaning (be generous, be part of a cause).

Has a Problem

Position products/services as weapons customers can use to defeat a dastardly villain. Villain should be personified. E.g. time management software stops distractions in its tracks, because distractions dilute potential, wreck family, steal sanity, cost time and money.

Villain should be

1. A root source, not a symptom
2. Relatable, recognizable
3. Singular
4. Real (don't fear-monger)

Desire to resolve frustration is greater motivator than desire to solve external problem. E.g., Apple sold resolution to problem of users being intimidated by computers.

Give customers a sense of meaning; they want to be involved in a story that's deeper than themselves. Position products/services as tools customers can use to fight back against something that shouldn't be.

Frame buying your product/service as resolution to external, internal, and philosophical problem. E.g., Edward Jones: Villain: financial firms that don't listen to customers. External: I need investment help.

Internal: I'm confused about how to do this. Philosophical: If I'm going to invest, I need an advisor who will thoughtfully explain things in person.

4 questions to answer in Problem section

1. Who's the villain?
2. What external problem is villain causing?
3. How is that problem making your customers feel?
4. Why is it unjust for them to suffer at hands of villain?

And Meets a Guide

Customers aren't looking for another hero. They're looking for a guide.

Guide must have empathy and authority.

Need empathy because everyone wants to be seen, heard, understood. Say, "We understand how it feels ..." "Nobody should have to experience ..." "Like you, we're frustrated by ..." "We care ..."

Express empathy by highlighting common interests.

Authority means competence and experience.

How to show authority through marketing

1. Testimonials. Use a few (~3), not too many, and keep brief.
2. Stats. E.g., number of customers, how much money they've saved, percentage their businesses have grown.
3. Awards. Include award logos or other indications.
4. Logos of recognizable businesses.

Who Gives Them a Plan

Customers trust a guide who has a plan.

2 types of plan

1. Process plan. Pre-purchase (steps customer takes to buy), or post-purchase (steps to use product), or both. Key is to alleviate confusion. Include 3-6 steps.
2. Agreement plan. Describe guarantee, values. Alleviate fears customers have about working with you.

And Calls Them to Action

You must believe in your product. If you don't clearly ask for sale, prospect senses weakness; they think you're asking for charity rather than to change their lives.

Transitional CTAs (lead generators)

- Free info (white papers, PDFs, podcasts, webinars, etc.)
- Testimonials
- Free samples
- Free trial

That Helps Them Avoid Failure

People are 2-3x more motivated to avoid loss than achieve gain.

Fear appeal

1. Make prospect realize they're vulnerable to threat.
2. Let prospect know they should take action to reduce vulnerability.
3. Let people know about a specific action/offer that protects them from risk.
4. Challenge people to take this specific action.

Use moderate levels of fear; people don't act on low levels, and block out high levels. Treat fear as salt in recipe; use sparingly.

Describe cost of not doing business with you: lose money, health risks, opportunity costs (make or save money), declining quality of life. E.g., for financial advisor: confusion about how money is invested, not being ready for retirement, lack of transparency from advisor, lack of 1-on-1 interaction, hidden fees. "Don't postpone your retirement. You've worked too hard for too long to not enjoy time with your grandchildren."

And Ends in a Success

Never assume people understand how you can change their lives. Tell them.

Vision you paint for prospects should be specific and clear.

How to write end to story: figure out how customer's life will look externally after their problem is solved, then how that resolution will make them feel, then how that resolution will make world more just place to live.

Promise that hero/customer will do one of following

1. Win a power or position.
2. Be unified with someone or something that makes them whole.
3. Experience some self-realization that makes them whole.

To make customer feel complete/whole: reduce anxiety, reduce workload, more time, self-realization, reach potential.

How to offer self-realization: offer inspiration, acceptance, transcendence.

People Want Your Brand to Participate in Their Transformation

Single greatest motivator: desire to transform into better version of self.

Companies that assist in identity transformation create passionate evangelists.

Ask yourself, "how does customer want to be described by others?"

E.g., Dave Ramsey. External problems: consumer debt and financial illiteracy. Internal problems: confusion and hopelessness. Philosophical problem: moral question of accruing debt over things we don't need. Identity transformation: personal strength through strategy and commitment.

Building a Better Website

5 things website should include

1. Offer, above the fold. Short, enticing, exclusively customer-centric. Tell customers what's in it for them. Promise an aspirational identity. Promise to solve a problem. State exactly what you do.
2. Obvious CTAs. Put direct CTA ("buy now", "call now") in top right of site and center of homepage, above fold. Put transitional CTA (lead generator) next to direct CTA in less bright color.
3. Images of success. Show compelling images of happy people who've had pleasurable experience engaging your brand.
4. Bite-size breakdown of revenue streams. Put overarching message that unifies various streams on homepage. Put separate divisions on separate pages.
5. Very few words. People scan, they don't read. Use brief, punch, relevant copy.

Using StoryBrand to Transform Company Culture

Your StoryBrand can engage employees as well as customers.

The StoryBrand Marketing Roadmap

5 almost-free ways to grow business

1. 1-liner
2. Lead generator
3. Automated email drip campaign
4. Collect and tell stories of transformation
5. Referral system

Create 1-liner that answers: Who is customer? What's their problem? What's your plan to help them? What will their life look like after you help them? E.g., "Most business owners don't know how to talk about their company, so we created a framework that helps them simplify their message, create great marketing material, connect with customers, and grow their business."

Lead generator must provide enormous value for customer and establish you as authority in field.

5 types of lead generators

1. Downloadable guide (~3 pages); give away the "why" and much of the "how"
2. Brief online course, webinar, training
3. Software demo or free trial
4. Free samples
5. Live events

Even if customers don't read your email newsletter, simply seeing it keeps your brand top-of-mind.

What to include in marketing emails

1. Talk about a problem
2. Explain plan to solve problem
3. Describe how life will look for reader once problem is solved
4. P.S.

Testimonials should showcase your value, results you get for customers, experience people had working for you.

Ask customers these questions to build case studies or testimonials

1. What was the problem you were having before you discovered our product?
2. What did the frustration feel like as you tried to solve the problem?
3. What was different about our product?
4. Take us to the moment you realized our product was solving your problem.
5. Tell us what life looks like now that your problem is solved or is being solved.

Referrals and peer recommendations are up to 2.5x more responsive than any other marketing channel.

Create a small educational PDF or video for customers to share with others. Tell customers, "We created this to help people solve X problem. If you have friends with X problem, please send this to them. We'd love to help them too."

Offer rewards for referrals (10% commission or something else).

Regin Toftegaard says

Short, to the point and eye-opening

I can't even count the number of books I have read about marketing. Most of them have been good, but none of them managed to give me the clarity and concrete tools on how to build brand stories. This book has changed all that, and finally I have been given the much needed guide to create stories that sell

Michael Huang says

The central lesson is: to market your product, come up with a story. The story is not about you or your business, but about the customer. If you are unafraid of being stifled by a framework, the book offers the so-called SB-7 to help you craft your story: character, problem, guide, plan, calls to action, failure, and success.

1. The character is the customer/Frodo.
2. He has a problem: house is ugly/need to destroy the ring.
3. He needs a guide: your painting company/Gandalf.
4. There needs to be a plan: your expertise in choosing color/walk to Mordor.
5. Calls to action: now that they trust you, relieve any customer hesitation (money-back guarantee) so that

they can act.

6. Failure: in story you need the suspense of possible failure due to the villain: your competitor (show how you are not like "them")/Sauron.

7. Success: make the hero feel good about himself. Create a premium product for exclusivity; Create a sense of completeness when someone buys your stuff; Create a sense of self-acceptance.

The connection between marketing and story telling feels affected at times. But the author succeeded in showing he knows how to manipulate your sorry psychology to make you cough up your mulah. Makes me wonder whether I got tricked in paying \$\$\$ for my Pelikan M1000.?

Rachel Davidson Schmoyer says

Every copywriter needs to read this book. The business you are writing for is not a hero. The customer is. Genius.

Laura Noggle says

Want to improve your story? This book is for you.

Sometime you read things when you need to hear it. As an entrepreneur, and a writer, it can be easy to get lost in the narrative. Your story can be easily convoluted and needs to be simplified for maximum effectiveness.

I will definitely read this book again. There are many actionable steps throughout that I want to revisit and work on. From simplifying your website, to establishing a simple tagline, this book has excellent advice.

Most Important Points:

- Sell the problem you solve, not the product.

- Don't be the hero, be the guide.

One of my best reads of 2019 so far.

**** Edit ****

It's been a couple weeks, and I can't stop thinking about this book and recommending it to people.

Further Notes:

"What stories teach us is that people's internal desire to resolve a frustration is a greater motivator than their desire to solve an external problem."

"As an experiment, let's see if you can cut half the words out of your website.
Can you replace some of your text with images?"

Can you reduce whole paragraphs into three or four bullet points?

Can you summarize sentences into bite-sized soundbites?

If so, make those changes soon.

The rule is this: the fewer words you use, the more likely it is that people will read them."

Kyle says

Excellent resource on integrating story into your branding and marketing! Filled with movie analogies and helpful tips, this book is one I will revisit again and again.

Claire Brear says

Excellent. Simple, practical, and helpful with loads of useful examples. Just what I needed right now for my business.

Pavel Annenkov says

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Rachel Schultz says

I haven't read too many leadership or business books but my husband says a lot of them could have been a blog post and then are fluff. This book had substance every chapter and good marketing ideas.

If you learned about the Hero's Journey in high school literature class then you know a lot of what's in here. He applies that to marketing. Occasional things weren't the best but I liked, even though I have a general distaste for when people name their business or products stylized LikeThis. But based on how this author has named everything in his company, he LOVES IT!!!!

G.M. Burrow says

Helpful and easy to read. Tons of solid advice for communicating exactly what your company does. "If you confuse, you lose."

Carsten Hansen says

This book kind of amazing. When you read the advice on how to structure your message to your (potential) customer and even employees, it all seems so obvious. However, it wasn't until I read the book and the structure it delivers as to how to tailor your message to your product that I had actually given it a thought. I'm now in the process of changing my website, the inside of my books in order to deliver the message that seemed so obvious to me but upon introspection, I could see how I came up short. I'm looking forward to improving my results, sales, and customer interaction. Truly a game-changer for me.
