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Great Storytellers Get The Girls

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Kristy Short, Ed.D • May. 15, 2015



Well, not really the girls, but they do get a lot of attention—in this, the era of content marketing. Developing magnetic stories (content) is how companies convince overwhelmed, information-overloaded end-users that there is something worth their time and attention. It's how they pull consumers in; how they make them pause, even for a brief moment, to listen to what is being said about their product or service.

The folks telling these captivating stories aren't holding some great secret. The fact is that anyone can tell a story. Yes, *anyone*. And that includes accounting professionals. The greatest of storytellers have simply taken the time to define what makes their product or service outstanding, jotted down the juiciest nuggets, and developed a compelling plot. You can do this, too. We all can.

You don't have to be a gifted writer to develop good content. You do, however, need to understand the basics. The following tips were fashioned to help you channel your inner storyteller...no matter how deep you think she may be buried.

Everyone can tell a story

The first and probably most important step is recognizing that everyone can be a storyteller and has good stories to tell. Take yourself out of the accountant role for a moment to understand that, as individuals, we tell personal stories all the time—about our kids, sporting events, or humorous mishaps for example. Telling stories is an integral part of our lives; it's how we connect with other individuals. The same is true for how we talk about our businesses—how we spin the tale of the company's history or services offered. To get you started, considered a few questions to ask yourself and others. Any one of these can easily spark a story idea:

- Why did you start your firm? What was the passion behind it?
- What memorable experiences have you had as an entrepreneur?
- What pain points did you encounter and how did you overcome them?
- What pain points did you identify for your clients and how did you solve their issues through your services?
- What are the biggest lessons learned?

On first glance, these may seem like simple questions, but they can unleash a world of information once you really dig in. Coming up with a good story is like meeting a cool new person—you can't uncover their level of coolness without asking a few questions.

Keep your eye on the client

At the heart of your story should be, well, your heart—your clients. These are the people that keep your business pulse pumping. Think about their needs and interests—the very people who will, hopefully, be consuming your stories. Ask yourself: “What stories would they want to hear?” Great storytellers make a connection with their audience, and the best way to connect is to put your clients at the center of your plot.

And don't forget about *where* to publish your content. Knowing the channels where your clients tend to consume content is important. For example, posting all your content to your website only restricts your readership, especially if you have clients who get a lot of information from Facebook or Twitter. The best advice is to spread it around and put your content into as many channels as you can (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Google+, a dedicated blog on your website, etc.).

Collect, review, recycle

If you look intently enough, you'll find fantastic stories everywhere. In the age of content marketing, businesses are taking great strides to develop helpful, useful information, and publishing it all over cyberspace. Review other firms' stories for inspiration. You should also be collecting ideas internally from your employees, clients, and vendors—even ask family members. Pose a simple question: “What do you think makes our firm great or different from the others?” Ask a variety of people, and you'll get a variety of answers—all good stock for a bigger and better story.

Just do it

The biggest obstacle for most people, even experienced writers, is getting started. No one likes the cold reflection of a blank monitor. You just have to jump in and start writing your ideas down. Start simple. You could, for example, begin with telling the story of why you started your firm or why you've made recent changes. Did you identify a problem and want to solve it? Are you a passionate entrepreneur who wants to make the profession better? Are you running a technology savvy firm to meet the needs of a digitally driven client base? Do you have a mission to bring sexy back? Whatever your story, no one knows it better than you. So tell it. People will listen.

No sugar coating here. It will take work; and it may even take a village (remember to talk to those around you for ideas, staff, vendors, family), but you can be a great

storyteller if you put your mind, and keyboard, to it.

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