



DEVELOPING YOUR MARKETING STORY **THE ART AND SCIENCE OF YOUR STORY**

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The Art: Persuasive Engagement

We learn through stories. Stories are how we understand and how we remember, a way to hold information and to make sense of things. Stories create personal mastery as well as connection to others. Muriel Rukeyser said, “The world is made up of stories, not atoms.”

A recent study at Princeton used brain scans to find that when one person tells a story and the other actively and empathically listens, their brain patterns synchronize. Their neural activity mirrors each other. If the listener fails to comprehend what the speaker is trying to communicate, or become disinterested, the brain patterns decouple.

The persuasive communicator must appeal to the emotional, imaginative mind first. The decision process – especially a decision to make a change – relies first on emotion and only secondly on reason and logic.

If you begin by stating the conclusion that you want your listener to come to, it jars the listener who doesn’t already agree with you. A listener is more receptive to a stepwise gradual approach that reaches a conclusion, rather than being presented first with the conclusion.

- **Paint a picture of the future**
When you create a vision of a future situation and invite the listener to inhabit it with you, he or she will wonder how to get there. First decide what the benefits are to your listener to accept your idea. Note the benefits and values in the picture of the future scenario.
For example, “Imagine for a moment it’s a year from now. In the last year, you’ve had a 30% increase in sales, and marketing costs have gone down by 65%.”
The listener becomes curious about how he got to that situation, and may be more receptive to listening to the system by which he arrived.
- **Use engaging language.**
Emotional engagement begins at the front of sentences and is hypnotic because bypasses the rational, logical mind and directly accesses the imaginative, emotional mind.
 - Have you ever ...?
 - Think of a time when ...
 - That must feel ...
 - Imagine what it would be like if ...

A persuasive metaphor incorporates the key points of your message, though in a story about a seemingly unrelated subject. A metaphor is something other than what is expected, a stand-in for the obvious. Then, relate the points in your story to the key elements of your marketing message.

The Science: The Neuroscience Of Your Story

We have highly evolved brains and sophisticated thoughts. Neuroscience can help us understand how people perceive, process, and interpret an offer or pitch to make it successful.

Incoming messages are processed *first* in the midbrain, before going to more highly evolved parts of the brain. Any new input goes directly to the amygdala (in the midbrain), then to the hippocampus (also in the midbrain) to attach meaning. The midbrain has no capacity for reasoning, so the first perception is an emotional one. *Then* the stimulus goes to the forebrain to consciously assign reason and logic.

The midbrain is where your potential client connects with you and takes in your initial message. The highly evolved forebrain focuses on problem solving and reasoning to evaluate details of the story. This is the part of the brain that brings closure on the collaborative agreement of Mentor Coaching.

Neuroscientists have found that we make decisions – such as a “buy” decision – first at a midbrain level. It has been shown that we make “buy” decisions up to 10 seconds before we are actually conscious of the process

The most important point here, as neuroeconomics teaches us, is to focus on the initial and engaging connection with the client in developing your story. Then proceed with the details to make it a story. It is more effective than thinking about and focusing on the end of the coaching offer, not because it’s creative and different to do it this way, but because it’s how the brain works.

THE STORY ARC

The specific process of this engagement incorporating these mind and brain considerations:

- Set the frame
- Tell the story
- Reveal the detail
- Offer the solution
- Present a value proposition
- Get a decision

1. Set the frame

Learn the current challenges and needs of your potential client. Ask also about the client's future goals. The frame is the most important part of this process, because it's how you focus your experience and power in co-creating a new story with the client. Identify the problems, issues, needs, and wants of your potential client. You must start where the client is now, before you can move that client to any action you want him or her to take. The best way to learn this, after your initial research, is to ask and listen very carefully.

"What is the greatest challenge for you and your business right now?"
"In a year, where would you ideally like to be?"

2. Tell the story

Rather than trying to market, sell, or convince, listen for the benefits that are needed for your potential client, and the value that you can bring. Begin with results you can deliver, and segue to a top line of how to get to those results. Remember not to offer too much detail, or the midbrain will shut down. Telling a story engages the right brain (emotional), and then telling the point of the story engages the left brain (logic and reason). The result of involving both sides of the brain is *balanced learning*.

3. Reveal the detail

This middle part of the story arc builds anticipation to set up a conclusion.

4. Offer the solution

This compelling hook concludes your co-created story with the client. The solution doesn't seem like a selling proposition, any more than the story arc seems like a presentation – because you have elicited the client's needs, challenges, and goals. You have written yourself into the solution.

5. Present a value proposition

Describe the benefits of your proposed engagement, and the value the client will derive. The value proposition is distinct and highly relevant. Your Unique Benefit Statement can apply specifically to this client, identifying the outcome and your role to help the client achieve success.

6. Get a Decision

State your recommendation, as any other professional would, in a clear, brief, and simple way. Be specific about what this involves, the framework of how you would work together, including the fee. Then ask for any questions or clarification.

WRITING YOUR STORY

1. Understand Your Brand

- A brand is a recognized set of promises and expectations
- Great brands tell great stories – stories that are based on the core purpose and inherent motivation that fuels them. Brands contain compelling, enduring stories that quickly convey the meaningful role that a brand story can play in the life of the client. Decision-making processes in the brain involve shortcuts in analysis, such as brands, familiarity, and trust.
- Early communication – print, digital, personal – is an opportunity to advance the learning and understanding to potential clients of value and meaning.

2. Where To Start

- Understand your constituency
 - Who are they?
 - What are they looking for?
 - What problems do they have that you can provide benefits?
 - What do they value?
 - Why do they need you?
- Understand who you are to your potential clients
 - What skills and benefits you bring?
 - Where do your values align with those of your constituents?
 - What attributes do you need to be known for?
 - Understand your competitors and where you fit into the competitive landscape.

3. Develop Your Story Told In Your Voice

- Your story needs to be told in an effective and efficient way. The four basic qualities of good writing, as well as effective communication in all forms, include:

- Clarity
 - Brevity
 - Simplicity
 - Humanity
- Learn the art of storytelling to convey your story within a very concise framework.
 - Hone what you're saying.

Remember that the most important communication is listening to your client to see what benefits you can bring.

They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.
Carl Buehner

HOW TO GET YOUR POINT ACROSS IN 30 SECONDS OR LESS

The purpose of an elevator speech is not to close the sale. No one ever bought anything in an elevator. Today, elevators are much faster and attention spans are much shorter. The length of the average elevator ride in New York City is 118 seconds.

The challenge: to describe what you do as a Mentor Coach in such a compelling way that the person you are with wants to hear more.

Even if potential clients had enough time to listen to you, their minds can only accept a certain amount of information in a steady flow. The average individual's attention span is 30 seconds or less. Most commercials are 30 seconds for that reason, and manage to sell products. Obviously, all conversations do not have to be 30 seconds, because building rapport takes longer. But the heart of the matter should take place in 30 seconds or less. The right message can convey your point within the time frame.

- Focus your thinking, writing, and speaking
- Keep your conversation on track
- Speak clearly and confidently

As an overview, there are two simple elements:

- What problem are you trying to solve?
 - Capture the attention of your potential client with an Undeniable Benefit Statement that is clear, simple, and specific.
 - Identify the problems, symptoms, issues, needs, and wants of your client.
- Show the value proposition – how will your collaboration solve that problem? (Remember that your grandmother should be able to understand what you're saying.)
 - Succinct
 - Easy to understand
 - An irrefutable value proposition
 - Benefits are clear and specific

- Specifically state the action you want the recipient of your message to take

Practical communication can cause a business career to rise or fall on the basis of the spoken or written word. We need to communicate effectively, persuasively, and concisely.

In 30 seconds, you should:

- Get your listener's attention
- Keep the listener's interest
- Tell a wonderful story
- Make a specific recommendation

Objective And Approach

The basis of communication is a clear *objective*. Your focus is to listen to a potential client; the objective is your internal organizer. A clear objective orients your communication and purpose.

How do you determine your objective?

- Why do I want to meet with this person?
- Why do I want to have this conversation?
- What do I want to achieve?
- Why am I going there?
- What is the destination of this conversation?
- What do I want to write in that letter?
- Why do I want the interview?
- Do I understand the context in which the client operates?

The right *approach* is the theme of your engagement with a client.

How do you find the right approach?

- What am I talking about?
- What is the basis of my game plan?

- What is a single best statement that will lead to my objective?
- Will other statements fit within and relate to this one?
- Will this capture the needs and interests of my listener?

If the answer relates directly to your objective, as well as the needs and interests of your listener, you have found the right approach. You should have only one approach. A clear-cut approach stated in a simple sentence is a guarantee against detouring or confusing what you are talking about.

The Undeniable Benefit Statement

The UBS is a statement or objective used specifically to get and hold attention – to engage. The UBS is *one succinct, distinctive, and compelling sentence that immediately tells people who you work with, what you work on, and the benefits.*

Your UBS is an initial conversation, not an elevator speech. It is the beginning of a relationship. It should relate to the approach, objective, and listener.

To craft a UBS, you will have to get clear about who you are, what benefits you offer, your ideal client, and your brand. Craft the message with clarity, brevity, simplicity, and humanity. Avoid language that makes promises, sounds esoteric, or feels vague or abstract.

I work with **(WHO)** _____ to provide **(BENEFITS)** _____.

To hone your UBS for a specific client:

- Does your UBS generate interest in the listener?
- Does the UBS lead to your objective for this client's needs?
- Does it relate to your approach?

Your UBS should be the first component of your 30-second message.

You must know your objective and be sure it's what you want to achieve for a specific client. Know your subject so that you can know what to focus on and speak to their interest. Understand the person in the context of his or her specific business. Keep the subject, objective, listener, and context always in mind in what you say.

The Test Drive

- Does this UBS describe in concrete and specific terms what I do so that anyone can understand it and know when it is appropriate to refer clients to me?
- Does this UBS distinguish me from everyone else?

- Does this UBS focus my intent on great ideas about finding my ideal clients and how to engage them?

Success is when someone says, "Tell me more."

No one ever bought anything on an elevator

Seth Godin

If your elevator pitch is a hyper-compressed two-minute overview of your hopes, dreams and the thing you've been building for the last three years, you're doing everyone a disservice. I'll never be able to see the future through your eyes this quickly, and worse, if you've told me what I need to know to be able to easily say no, I'll say no.

The best elevator pitch doesn't pitch your project. It pitches the meeting about your project. The best elevator pitch is true, stunning, brief and it leaves the listener eager (no, desperate) to hear the rest of it. It's not a practiced, polished turd of prose that pleases everyone on the board and your marketing team, it's a little fractal of the entire story, something real.

"I quit my job as an Emmy-winning actress to do this because..." or "Our company is profitable and has grown 10% per week, every week, since July," or "The King of Spain called me last week about the new project we just launched."

More conversations and fewer announcements.

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