

The Story Copywriter Podcast

Episode 2: The Business Owner



Episode 2: Business Owners: Should you be writing your own copy?

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Estimated reading time: 10 minutes. Contains 1990 words

In this episode of The Story Copywriters podcast, we're going to begin a series of episodes where we talk about the different roles needed to build an effective marketing system that nurtures and educates potential customers over a long period.

This is not a one person game. You can't do it all by yourself.

You must decide which role or roles you're going to take. Which ones allow you to play to your strength? And which roles do you help with?

The four roles are:

1. The Business Owner or Product Owner
2. The Systems Expert
3. The Copywriter
4. The Implementor

I've learned about these different roles the hard way.

Back in March 2016, I waited on an aeroplane stuck on the tarmac at Heathrow Airport. I was heading to Phoenix, Arizona for the annual Infusionsoft user conference called Icon.

At the time I ran mostly a Google AdWords business serving Infusionsoft users, so I figured I really needed only one extra client to pay for the trip.

But as I sat on the tarmac, I had a bad feeling in my stomach - I knew people were going to ask me what I did. And I didn't have a clear, concise answer. I mostly did Google ads, but also some Infusionsoft support and I sold Infusionsoft.

I basically did anything people asked of me. The turning point of that event came at the last talk by Gary Vaynerchuk. He said something that stuck with me. He said, *"All of you sitting there in the audience who are trying to do 10 different things should just stop. Just stop. Pick one and start winning."*

And that's true, both at the business level (e.g. you're trying to sell AdWords and build Infusionsoft campaigns) and when building a marketing follow up system. You must decide which of the roles you're going to occupy yourself, and which you're going to get help with.

And today we're going to look at the Business Owner or Product Owner role if you're working in a big company.

This is the person who will be the voice of your business. They are the public face of the business, they might have their face on the website, they might even have their name in the domain name.

I'm going to cover three ideas in this episode:

1. Your Story Matters
2. You must be visible
3. Acknowledge time constraints

1. Your story matters

If you are the owner of your business, then your message and your story matters. It's tempting to dismiss our knowledge and dismiss our story, assuming our story isn't relevant to the message. Most business owners assume that their personal story isn't interesting enough to share. Or they consider they haven't done enough interesting things that people want to hear about.

We assume that our own life experience is a bit boring, uninteresting - we haven't had enough exhilarating near-death experiences to share.

However, it's not the near-death experiences that really build trust and connection. Yes, they make good stories - they're interesting stories to tell and listen to. But your readers can't always relate to them as much as they can with more mundane stories. Perhaps a story about an argument with your spouse or the time you realised something about yourself. These are the stories that almost everyone can relate to because we've also done the same thing under different circumstances.

Like my trip to the Infusionsoft conference in Arizona.

I think every business owner will probably recognise some elements of truth in that story. When someone hears a personal story like that, memories kind of shoot up like geysers out to the ground. Listening to a story evokes memories.

Perhaps while listening to my story about my trip and what Gary Vaynerchuk said provoked a similar memory about one of your efforts to keep your business running.

It's normally not the dramatic experiences that we really need to be telling in our marketing. It's really small turning points that swing big doors.

Because we assume our story is 'run of the mill', boring, we tend to be a little blind to the key turning points in the story. That's why it's helpful to talk through your story with a second person. Your story is like this fuzzy thing, it's like this thing that exists on the end of your nose. You can see it, but you're too close to it to see it properly. You lack clarity on what really matters.

What we're looking to do is firstly pull your story into the open.

Then we identify the small events that led to changes and revisions in your personality, revisions in your approach to events, or that led to upgrades in your level of thinking about your topic. These events are normally the most relatable ones to your audience. And because they're the most relatable, they're the ones that build trust. They're the ones that allow people to see that you are like them, that they can trust you. And this will help you keep listeners for a long time.

So please don't tell me that your story is boring, or that you haven't done enough interesting stuff, or that you don't think anyone will be interested. That isn't true. We're all living in a story. Every story has turning points. And every story has a character change.

The words must always come from the business owner

There's this idea that you can hire a copywriter and they'll pluck words from the ether. But the words must always come from you as the business owner, or product owner. That's because your message and your story matters.

Any copywriter you hire is always an extension of you.

I remember a client a few years ago, was a little stunned to realise that I recorded every conversation, every phone call, every Zoom meeting. I have an app on my phone that records every phone call. It's not a legal obligation to tell people what you're doing, unless you're going to use the recording commercially. This means that when I'm talking with business owners, I can capture those comments, anecdotes or stories that business owners often throw away because they think they're not relevant or not interesting enough.

If I'm having a meeting with the business owner, I'll also have a recorder app on my phone. I leave my phone on the table between us and record what's being said. Because you never know when the business owner is going to say something that will be very useful for a marketing email. If I didn't capture it then these comments, insights and stories can very easily evaporate into the ether. And it's very hard to retrieve later.

2. You must be visible

Your story is a powerful tool, and personal stories are the most powerful type of story you can tell when you want to build trust and connection. It's a personal story that when told correctly and with vulnerability, not a polished perfect way, but in a way that allows people to see the real you, to see your mistakes. It's the personal stories that build the most trust.

Of all the personal stories you can tell, some are ready to tell straight away. Some are to tell one day. And others you may never tell because they're too personal or too painful.

What we're trying to do is expand the pool of stories that you're comfortable sharing.

When I speak to most business owners initially, they're not only reluctant to tell personal stories, because they don't think they have anything interesting to say, but also there's often a personal reluctance to be visible, to expose themselves and expose their mistakes. One way to overcome this is to get into the habit of telling your story. The more you tell personal stories, the more you see how they can build connections. The more willing you are going to become to share stories from your past.

Don't hide. Don't hide behind your brand. Don't hide behind your marketing. There are some very good books about storytelling. One of those books is Story Brand by Donald Miller. It's worth a read, but it focuses on telling a story from a brand perspective. And that isn't really what we're talking about here. We're not just telling the story of the brand, we're telling the story of the business owner behind the product, because ultimately people buy from people.

So, please don't hide. Instead, step out from behind your brand or marketing and tell personal stories in a vulnerable way.

3. Acknowledge time constraints

It's common to see business owners attending my copywriting training with the best of intentions to write their own emails. They attend the training; they learn the skills and they start to write. And then, they go back to their business, and the time available for writing evaporates.

There are too many demands to run the business. They're putting out fires, they're closing sales. Producing either a weekly email, or even a monthly email tends to drop by the wayside. There's just not enough time. And this relates in part to your ability to write emails quickly. The faster you can write an email, the more likely it is that you can be both a business owner, and a copywriter.

It is possible to be a business owner, a systems expert, a copywriter and an implementer at the same time. And if you're a one person business, then effectively you are de facto taking on all four roles.

But as your business grows, you want to be very clear on where your strengths lie. Once your business hits a certain level, you can't take on multiple roles. If you're the business owner and the copywriter, then at some point the copywriting work is going to become too much of a distraction from higher value activities.

So you need to get clear in your mind which role you want to play. Are you going to sit in the copywriting chair? If copywriting really is your forte, then absolutely, take it on. Otherwise, consider getting some help.

If you're going to be the copywriter, then I strongly recommend that you write and publish to a public schedule.

Don't just write emails whenever you feel like it. Tell the people on your mailing list that you're going to send them an email every Friday, or every second Friday, or every first Friday of the month. Wherever it is, there has to be a public deadline, because the deadline prioritises the copywriting.

I also recommend dedicating time to writing. That could be an hour in the morning, it might be an hour at lunch or in the evening. But there has to be some time blocked off in your calendar that is non-negotiable.

It's blocked off so that meetings can't be booked and phone calls can't be taken. You disappear into your office and write. If you don't, too many other demands will creep in.

I also suggest joining a community to get some accountability.

There's a lot of power in having an accountability partner. It's one thing just telling yourself that you're going to email on Friday. It's another thing to tell an accountability partner that you're

going to email on Friday, because then on Thursday evening, when you haven't done it, you feel bad, especially if you're both working to a public schedule, and one of you has done the work.

Accountability partners are a great way to keep you writing and publishing.

Summary

The business owner or product owner must play a role in the production of effective marketing follow up.

As the business owner, your story and your message matters, please do not dismiss your story as being too boring.

You need to be visible. Please don't hide behind your brand. Try to expand the pool of stories that you're comfortable telling. Practice telling your personal stories and you'll soon feel comfortable sharing.

Acknowledge that setting some time constraints can help you to write. Block some non-negotiable time in your calendar.

Get an accountability partner and set deadlines and goals for writing and publishing.

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