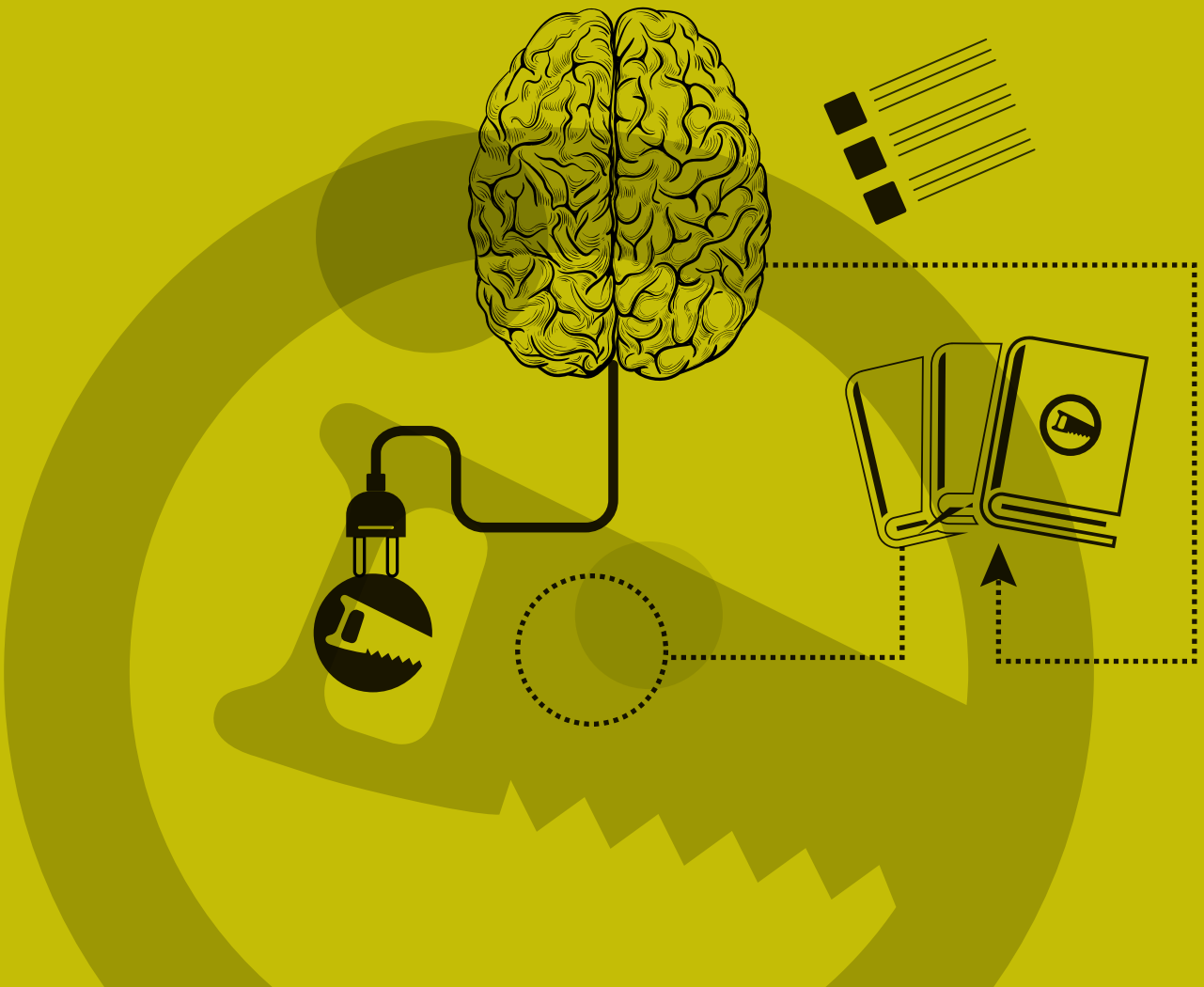


The Renegade CMO's GUIDE TO STORYTELLING

By Drew Neisser



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Introduction

In 2013, Renegade faced an existential crisis. Within four months of each other, two of our largest clients launched national TV campaigns created by other agencies that we, as their social media agency, could tell were dead on arrival. It doesn't take an Einstein to realize that when you see negative comments outnumber positive ones 50:1 that you've got a problem on your hands. Unable to leverage the campaigns on social channels, we began to wonder if there was a more productive approach to marketing, one that would rally all of a brand's stakeholders around a common connection.

Thus began our journey into storytelling. Uncertain that this suddenly hyped—yet ancient art form—would actually do the trick, we became students again, devouring all available resources from books to events, audio courses to podcasts. [You can find the best of those resources on [page 42](#).] From there, we started interviewing practitioners who seemed to be getting it right, each filling out our understanding like chapters in a book—or should we say ebook? In the end, we determined that storytelling was the way out of our crisis and more importantly, the means by which we could help our clients cut through the morass of ineffectual content and trivial social media.

In the pages ahead, you'll learn from CMOs like Douwe Bergsma of Georgia Pacific who restructured his marketing department around storytelling and Manny Rodriguez of UC Health who recognized that his patients, not the hospital or its staff, were the real heroes. David Beebe, the former head of content at Marriott International shares how to build an internal storytelling machine, while best-selling novelist Chris Bohjalian offers insights into the importance of conflict in a compelling narrative. As you will see, this storytelling is not for the faint of heart. It requires courage, both to embrace the conflict that is at the heart of all great stories and to revisit your metrics, avoiding the isolated action in favor of the collective impact. No one said the journey would be easy—but since when was marketing easy?

Here's to courageous adventures!

Drew

Chris Bohjalian

Novelist

Learning From a Novelist



When the phone rang on October 18, 1998, two guys were in a basement wondering how to tell the homeowner that his Eisenhower-era furnace was beyond repair. As he contemplated their predicament and watched his kindergartner, Grace, play with a friend, Chris Bohjalian answered the call that changed his life. It was none other than Oprah Winfrey, who announced she had just selected “Midwives,” his already-bestselling novel, for her book club. A year later, “Midwives” was still on the bestseller list, and 19 years after that, Chris is the author of 16 novels, many of which have won awards and attracted huge audiences.

Because Chris started his career in advertising (we worked together at J. Walter Thompson in the mid ‘80s) and we marketers are increasingly obsessed with the idea of brand storytelling, I thought he would be an interesting and instructive guest for *Renegade Thinkers Unite*. Happily, he was all that and more, offering valuable insights to any brand that’s looking to consistently create content that people actually want to

consume. Since we talked for 55 minutes over a two-part episode, here are a few of the key takeaways.

Writing starts with a disciplined approach

Don't try to be perfect the first time; dedicate time for editing and refining your drafts.

The fact that Chris became a successful novelist was of no surprise to those of us who knew his work ethic. "I was writing between 5 and 7 a.m. in the morning before going to work at Thompson and then Monday and Tuesday nights when I came home from work," Chris recalled. And though his hours changed as he got older, "the goal is to write a thousand words a day [since] it is a whole lot easier to edit garbage than a blank page." Bohjalian then edits his work with a messy fountain pen and ultimately his books go through seven to nine drafts. How many drafts is your content going through?

Be true to your brand and your audience

Does your audience know what to expect from your content? Don't be afraid to commit to a voice and style that works, and stick with it.

During our time together at JWT, there was another budding author on an adjacent floor by the name of James Patterson. At the time Patterson was Executive Creative Director and an intimidating character to us account people, but he nonetheless wrote a blurb for the back of Chris' first book. When asked about Patterson's writing, Bohjalian complimented "his deep respect for his readers and his understanding that he needs to be giving them something back." Chris also pointed out that "James Patterson is also a brand and readers have very specific expectations of what they're going to get when they open one of his books." Do consumers know what content they can expect from your brand?

Have the courage to stay in your lane

Learning from one's mistakes is hardly a new concept, but Chris raises the bar with his clinical self-examination. "When my books have failed artistically, it's usually because I lost courage," he shared. He went on to explain, "I'm really proud of the opening third of 'The Night Strangers' but then I lost courage and instead of focusing on one individual's PTSD and the ramifications for his family, I took one of those hard left turns into the sensational and

"When my books have failed artistically, it's usually because I lost courage"

that's not my specialty." Do you know your sweet spot and how to tell if you're veering out of your brand's subject or style lane?

Stay social on social media

Use social channels to reveal the people behind the brand.

Like many brands, you might expect Chris to flaunt his product (i.e., books) on his social channels. But drop into his feed and you'll get a personal tour of his beloved "802" (AKA Vermont) as well as other aspects of his life. Chris even makes a point not to post about his writing. "Goodness gracious, my fans don't need to learn a whole lot about my books on the social networks. They want to know what interests me about either Vermont or Armenia because those are my passions," he explained. Chris also invests time in getting to know his fans on social media. "The social networks are fun," he concluded. Are you creating social content that reveals the human side of your brand?

Want more? Listen to [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of the podcast with Chris.

Coss Marte

ConBody

Working Out Your Why



Coss Marte is the founder and CEO of ConBody, one of the fastest growing fitness programs in New York. Marte's road to success, however, was forged along a path less traveled. His brilliant business ethos didn't evolve at an Ivy League school, but rather on street corners, and later, in prison. Marte's story is unique, and ConBody just wouldn't be the same without it.

The long warm-up

By age 19, Coss Marte was earning, he estimates, around \$2 million per year as a drug dealer in New York City. Like any budding entrepreneur, he learned to read people, manage others, optimize his operations and pivot. When the law finally sent Marte to prison in upstate New York, a medical examination revealed that he had maybe five years to live due to extremely high cholesterol.

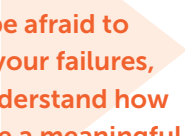
Marte returned to his cell and attempted to exercise. "I probably lasted about five minutes," he says, "and just thought to myself: I need to take advantage of the time and concentrate on myself,

my body, my mind.” The next morning, he began running around the prison yard, despite the heckling of his fellow inmates. The next day, he did it again. And again.

Within a year, Marte had lost 70 pounds. Inmates began approaching him for help with their own exercise regimens—and he eventually helped twenty of them lose a combined half ton of weight.

Even while transforming lives, Marte continued his drug operation until he had what he calls a spiritual awakening. “I started realizing that I was creating a web of destruction,” he says. “For the first time, I started praying and asking God, ‘How can I give back?’” From this moment, ConBody was born, although without a name yet, and Marte wrote his entire program in solitary confinement.

When Marte was released a year later, however, he had trouble making ends meet. He took an \$8/hour job scrubbing toilets and lived on his mother’s couch. “It was a struggle, it was not livable, it was not sustainable,” he says. “I needed an escape.” Determined to make ConBody a reality, Marte turned to the Defy Program (defyventures.org). “[They] helped me reconstruct my business plan and reteach me the transferable skills from illegal entrepreneur to legal entrepreneur and do it the right way,” he says.



Don't be afraid to share your failures, and understand how they are a meaningful part of your story.

Sweating it out

Marte began to execute his program in local parks and studio spaces, eventually raising enough money for his current studio location in the Lower East Side. Fast-forward several years and ConBody’s marketing is about to go nationwide. Marte’s early marketing efforts involved approaching a defined target one-on-one in public parks and sharing his story—to women ages 25 to 35, wearing workout gear. And his instincts weren’t wrong: “That’s primarily our clientele now,” Marte says.

But it’s more than just Marte’s remarkable story that has helped his company excel in the crowded fitness space. For starters: the brilliant branding. “I was tired of hiding that I was an ex-felon,” says Marte. He decided that the program would own and embody the idea of incarceration. The name of the program—a prison-style boot camp, of course—evolved from “Coss Athletics: Prison-Style Boot Camp” to “ConFit” to “ConBody,” short for convict body.

The tagline is “Do the time,” in keeping with prison lingo. “You commit yourself to your body an hour a day or 30 minutes a day

to do the time,” says Marte. The studios complete the experience. “We have no equipment. All the body weight stuff is exactly the same when I worked out in a prison cell,” he says, “just using limited space and my own body weight to get that prison body I always desired.”

The instructors, too, are all former convicts. Drawing upon his own difficulties with finding work after prison, Marte’s team trains Rikers Island inmates to become certified trainers, with a contract from the city. “We were wanting to create a direct pipeline from the inside out, and give somebody an opportunity as soon as they come out to work with us,” says Marte. “And it’s working.”

“I was tired of hiding that I was an ex-felon.”

The program is gaining momentum—several viral BuzzFeed videos have been of particular marketing value for ConBody, and with the launch of ConBody Live, a video subscription service, Marte’s instructors can now reach patrons worldwide. They even launched a Kickstarter program to improve the current app. “Our goal is to reach 100,000 people and hire 50 ex-cons to join our platform.”

As a CEO and chief marketer of sorts, Marte’s workplace challenges differ from those of his peers. Some of the instructors struggle with parole, homelessness and the psychological effects of prison life, but Marte’s outlook draws on the strength of his experience, pun intended. “As an entrepreneur, you just don’t know what’s going to happen, what you have to deal with,” he says. “You’ve just got to roll with the punches.”

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Coss.

Meredith Kopit Levien
The New York Times

Seizing the Day



About 18 months ago, Meredith Kopit Levien and her team at The New York Times made a bold decision. “We needed to start thinking about The New York Times as a consumer brand and take its power as a brand much more seriously,” she says. As Chief Revenue Officer, Kopit Levien understood that for The Times to continue providing value to advertisers as well as to readers, it would need to innovate and transform consumer expectations.

“There was always this sense that we had this opportunity...to begin to behave more like a world-class consumer brand.” They hired talent with extensive brand experience and dug deep into their brand definition with the help of the newsroom. Eventually, they settled on a simple brand statement: that The Times helps people understand the world.

Breaking

And then, the 2016 presidential election arrived at The Times’s doorstep. Literally, if you’ll remember. “The news became the

news,” says Kopit Levien. “We had an extraordinary moment in terms of news cycle. We saw our traffic and engagement go to a place beyond anybody’s expectation.” The team also recognized an opportunity to reiterate why journalism matters.

From this extraordinary set of circumstances came The Times’ Truth campaign, which launched during the weekend of the Oscars. The first iteration was a series of ads reminding the world about the role of journalism in holding power accountable and delivering the truth.

Stories fit to print

Know the larger stories that your audience is reading and telling themselves, and understand how your story fits into those larger stories.

If this first phase of the Truth campaign was the “why” of The New York Times, phase two is the “how.” Launched just a few weeks ago, it focuses on the craft of journalism at The Times, recounted in a short film series by Darren Aronofsky. Each film portrays the lengths that journalists go to capture stories like the Ebola outbreak, for example, or the risks that they take to cover the war in Iraq.

“It’s about the commitment, the resources, and the expertise that it takes to cover the world and to find the truth,” says Kopit Levien, “And to do so in a way that people can believe in and trust; in a way that gives people a tool to help make sense of what’s going on around them.”

Kopit Levien’s team had a difficult time settling on the final featured stories. Given a daily publish rate of 200–250 stories, not to mention several Pulitzer prizes’ worth of photojournalism at their disposal, it’s not hard to imagine why. Those chosen eventually

came to life not only through Aronofsky’s films, but also through print and a plethora of display work.

“It’s about the commitment, the resources, and the expertise that it takes to cover the world and to find the truth”

Social media plays an important role in the campaign and to the publication’s overall marketing activities. Kopit Levin touts Facebook in particular for its

effectiveness in the lower customer funnel, a billions-strong user base and the ability to target the right readers. The Times also publishes daily on Snapchat Discovery. “The digital business that we run today requires that we have a direct relationship with our users,” she says. While The Times’ proprietary app lives on millions

of mobile home screens, Kopit Levien explains that social is invaluable for driving sales. “We are most focused on that: building subscriptions and also selling advertising.”

A wider circulation

The Truth campaign, however, is a little different than a one-and-done product push. Kopit Levin explains that it’s simply the first in a long game to encourage the public to pay for news—a complete category shift. “We did not enter into the current brand campaign with an expectation that we would change behavior quickly,” she says. “This is brand work, it is not direct marketing work.”

Nevertheless, The Times experienced record subscription growth in the first quarter of 2017 and digital advertising also showed strong numbers. “There is a small number of people in the United States and a small number of people in the world who directly pay for news, and we are looking to change that,” says Kopit Levien. “And that is a long game, and it’s a game we intend to play for a while.”

Links to videos:

[The Truth Is Hard To Find – Tyler Hicks](#)

[The Truth Is Hard To Find – Bryan Denton](#)

[The Truth Is Hard To Find – Daniel Berehulak](#)

[The Truth Is Hard to Find – Mark Mazzetti](#)

[The Truth Is Hard](#)

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Meredith.

Eric Reynolds

Clorox

Making it Big



When Eric Reynolds talks about brand building, you pay attention. As the CMO of the Clorox Company—and CMO Club Marketing Innovation Award-winner—Reynolds is leading the charge for household names like Brita and Burt’s Bees, and his teams are rounding an exciting corner in giving their brands new life—“in a nimble, studio-focused, team way.”

With Brita, for example, Reynolds drove a strategic reimagining of the brand amid apparent stagnation in the water filtration category. By leaning on new data and perhaps even more heavily on human storytelling, his team eventually tied Brita to the act of filtering out negativity in *The Filtered Life*, a campaign that is currently tackling online bullying in partnership with NBA star Steph Curry. With Burt’s Bees, Reynolds and his team are using the same elements—data and a strong story—to drive sales, including automated media buying for the brand’s lip balm based on the weather.

But it's more than metrics and storytelling that power a good brand. In his own words, here are 5 elements that Eric Reynolds found essential in bettering Clorox's brands: focus, data, mystery, patience and curiosity.

1) Focus: Know thy brand.

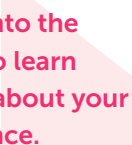


Think about why your business exists, and why that matters to your audience.

"Nothing ever gets better until you're really clear with yourself about what your brand stands for, why it even exists. At some point, someone has to say, 'Stop. We're doing all of this stuff—why? Why does it matter?' It's a leadership question. It's someone declaring a better future and willing to go back and question some of the fundamentals of the brand.

What I like about the Brita story is the commitment that the idea, the brand, the product experience, would lead us out of the woods. Leaning into the fundamentals was a way to win so that we'd have a brand for the next 50 years and not just rely on price promotion and other offers. I love the commitment to brand building as a craft and a business imperative together."

2) Data: Let science lead you.



Dive into the data to learn more about your audience.

"State-of-the-art means a strong commitment to brand fundamentals, and then harnessing all the amazing data and technology as a means to an end. One of the things that excites me is that we've used our data science to identify new segments within water filtration that would not have been apparent to us, that defy classic segmentation. Machine learning clusters consumers in ways we never would've, and I think that is very much part of the future.

The thing that keeps me up at night is that I believe small brands can do this, and that's my biggest fear. With a bit of technology and some good partnerships, you can approach what I just talked about and do it at a speed that we're still trying to approach. You just need smart people working on tough problems."

3) Mystery: Don't lose sight of art.

"Never lose the mystery in brand building. Clorox has had an exceptional history in terms of brand building. We have an incredible fusion of data and analytics that would be the envy of most companies. These are human questions we're trying to answer on

a human scale, and when [your brand] doesn't respect that, the culture can reject it. Bringing back this balance between mystery and science is tough to get back if you lose it."

4) Patience: Take the time to test, test, test.

"We got to the big idea of Brita faster than we thought. What took us longer was that we said, 'Let's make sure we don't just celebrate. Let's follow that idea down into the product moments, into the communication. Does the whole thing hang together?'

"These are human questions we're trying to answer on a human scale, and when [your brand] doesn't respect that, the culture can reject it."

I would tell all marketers that once you find the big idea, keep going, but really pressure test it and make sure it can

speak to your category authentically all the way down to your product experience. You'll know you're on to a good one when it speaks comfortably on all those levels."

5) Curiosity: For more, search beyond your borders.

Don't get stuck inside a bubble. Look outside for inspiration.

"A radical commitment to external focus is probably your greatest resource [in building a brand]. Modern organizations of any size—if they're not careful—militate against an outside view. It's not just reading the Wall Street Journal or AdAge; it's talking to theologians, particle physicists—trying to keep up with the conversations.

Ideas happen in networks, and I would encourage every modern marketer to open up their vision of where they're going to draw inspiration, guidance, or even technical assistance from. The lanes are getting wide, and that's where the magic and mystery is happening. If you don't have a good dose of humility these days, I think you're making a great mistake in terms of the health and future and momentum of your brands."

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Eric.

David Beebe
Marriott International

Think Hollywood



What's that adage? "Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day; but teach a man to fish, and he'll never go hungry." Widely applied to the value of long-term investments, today we'll learn why this biblical entreaty also applies to content marketing. Rather than feed your bottom line with a few entertaining pieces of content, or even a short-term campaign, content marketing can indeed be an ongoing source of sustenance for a business.

No one understands this better than David Beebe, VP Global and Creative Content Marketing at Marriott International, and a Content Engagement Award recipient at the most recent CMO Awards. Under his leadership, Marriott's global marketing department established their brands as preeminent travel lifestyle authorities through a never-ending storytelling program that focuses first on their audience.

"Now that consumers are in charge," he says, "we have to shift to not talking about ourselves, but what does that consumer want? How do I entertain them? How do I solve their problems? How do I build a relationship with them and provide value? Then,

they're more likely to pay attention to what I'm actually trying to sell." Spend some time with Beebe's story below and learn how Marriott established its content marketing empire.

Becoming a content connoisseur

David Beebe joined Marriott at just the right time. Combining the company's history as an innovator—did you know that it began as a hot dog vendor, introduced drive-up service and pioneered in-flight dining?—with Beebe's storytelling background made for a ripe content marketing opportunity. Plus, the CEO recognized that the landscape was shifting towards stories. "Combine all those things with leadership that really believes in that strategy

"Now that consumers are in charge, we have to shift to not talking about ourselves, but what does that consumer want? How do I entertain them? How do I solve their problems? "

and approach but also gives you permission to fail, and you have a runway to just try it and see what happens."

Beebe and his team sought to establish Marriott as the largest producer of travel lifestyle content. They set up an in-

house content studio, focusing first on short films and premium storytelling. For example, "The Two Bellmen" series featured scenes from LA, Dubai and Seoul, showcasing the brand with a story "that entertains people" before selling to them.

Putting purpose before process

Set concrete goals for your storytelling.

But not all content worked equally, and Beebe learned that the why behind the content was ultimately more important than the what. "Often times, brands don't know why they're doing what they're doing," he says, citing occasions where Marriott's marketers presented content tactics without any strategy. "They just want to create a film or a webisode," says Beebe. "If they couldn't explain why, we sent them back to the drawing table to really understand the purpose of it."

One effective "why" occurred with Moxy, a brand for the next generation of travelers. Beebe's teams created a web series with the goal of introducing the brand to the marketplace—a normally work-intensive task. Over a dozen episodes that subtly tied to sales packages engaged the audience with this new Marriott world on Instagram and YouTube.

Another film, titled “French Kiss,” was created to drive revenue and booked \$500,000 worth of rooms in just 60 days. “It’s a sales package where you get the same experience you saw in the film,” including meeting the general manager and enjoying champagne, chocolate, the room, the rate and a private tour. “You see the features and benefits of the hotel throughout the story, but you never see us talk about it directly to the viewer.”

Through these initiatives, Beebe and his team demonstrate how content marketing can drive the business in a sustainable way. “Brands are storytellers and media companies now,” he says. “It may not be their core business, but the opportunity exists, and that’s just exciting itself.”

Beebe’s blueprints

In sum, Beebe shares what brands need to properly execute content marketing:

1. A storytelling leader: “That could be, depending on the content, someone like me from TV storytelling to a journalist, to someone from a general media strategy world. The practice of content marketing is a specialty, and I think a lot of times CEOs don’t understand the fundamentals of storytelling versus what’s actually a campaign.”

2. A dedicated budget: “You can’t rely on the brands to contribute dollars for content development. You have to show them what it can do and eventually start to shift dollars from traditional media to content marketing.”

3. Creative control: “Our entire strategy is built around developing creative in-house. We don’t take pitches from production companies. We develop what we want to do, and then we go to the creative community to execute this type of creative.”

4. Internal buy-in: “The final thing is being able to educate people that content marketing is just one part of an entire marketing mix. You should be creating a content advertising ecosystem versus a bunch of siloed campaigns that don’t talk to each other.”

Want more?
Listen to the [podcast](#)
with David.

Douwe Bergsma
Georgia-Pacific

The Value of a Never-Ending Story



Today, I'd like to tell a tale of marketing success. It's a story of non-fiction that—you guessed it—is all about storytelling. Far from the stuff of childhood classrooms and evening family time, weaving storytelling into a marketing strategy can give your campaigns longevity and renewed engagement. Here to illustrate is Douwe Bergsma, CMO of Georgia Pacific. Storytelling was a major strategic change for his company but helped its work earn a place among Co.Create's most creative ads and Ad Age's Creativity 50, plus the honors of a Cojones Award and the CMO Club's award for Creativity & Storytelling.

Is storytelling the next wave of marketing? Not necessarily, says Bergsma. The better way to approach it is as a new form of brand communication. "It is not about storytelling as in a different way of labeling or describing advertising," he says. "It's more of a fundamental strategic approach to how to view your communication efforts across all touch points."

At Georgia-Pacific, Bergsma and his team now approach brand communication as if they're writing a movie or ballad or onstage with an improv group. The first step? Creating a story framework. "If you visualize an iceberg, the storytelling part is the part that's above water and the story framework is the larger part that's underneath the water." It's what the author knows but the audience doesn't—yet—and requires what he called a "fundamental human truth." Bergsma tells me that this is similar to what other marketers might call brand purpose, assets or values, but fully explained and perpetuated in a tale that, in theory, never needs to end. In other words, the framework is built around an ongoing conflict. "And like any storyteller would tell you, the conflict is the motor of any story. If the conflict stops, the story stops. It is the element that continues to propel the story forward and drive the intrigue and engagement of your audience."

This is in stark contrast to the era of marketing in which the product was simply the solution to the conflict—and the end of the story. "The next thing you know, you need to start all over again" with your marketing message, says Bergsma. "Instead of embracing a conflict, many brands say, 'we need to avoid them because we don't like conflicts.'"

"And like any storyteller would tell you, the conflict is the motor of any story. If the conflict stops, the story stops."


To illustrate how storytelling solves this stop-start effect, let's take Georgia-Pacific brand Brawny. Here, the conflict is between toughness and gentleness, and the "fundamental human truth" is about protecting yourself and loved ones. "This requires you to be understanding and open to what life throws at you, but also have the tenacity, toughness, and strength

to tackle any challenge. We were inspired by a quote from Roosevelt: 'speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far.'" Bergsma and his team translated this idea into a campaign complete with the 1970's Brawny Man, a giant who's both gentle and strong.

Ground your stories in a conflict that extends beyond the specific problem your business addresses.

Bergsma tells me that in an ideal world, the two conflicting sides are positives, like safety and freedom, that sometimes collide but are both desirable. Another classic example is man versus nature. "In the best stories, the main characters are going through a "man vs himself" internal conflict and, for example, become more brave and take more risk as the story progresses," says Bergsma. "We try to seek those same elements for our brands."

Marketing stories, of course, can't be cracked open or held in your hands. In our context, the pages and chapters must exist in multiple media. Says Bergsma: "If you believe in true storytelling, what



Take advantage of
all the touchpoints to
spread your story.

you do on Google or Facebook and what you do on network TV help deliver 'chapters' of the story." He offers as an example Georgia-Pacific's partnerships with AOL and Meredith, which, when combined with their Amazon product pages work together to reveal the full story. One of these AOL stories for Brawny highlighted "Everyday Giants" like Khali Sweeney, who started a boxing gym in Detroit which evolved into an after school academic support program for youth. "It's only when you're exposed to multiple touch points that you start to understand the value and the deeper meaning of the story," Bergsma says.

Bergsma rattles off additional touchpoints that partake in the storytelling: video ads, Google searches, social media, eCommerce, the in-store experience and especially package design. "To fully appreciate the value of the brand and the meaning a brand could have in a consumer's life, we have to consider all of these elements as part of the story," he says. "That was a big, big paradigm shift. Without this shift, we would not be able to turn storytelling into a competitive advantage in the marketplace."

We conclude our chapter with several of Bergsma's kernels of wisdom. First, resist the temptation to focus solely on the storytelling. Again, the framework is step one. "Draft a brief; write a tweet. But before you do the brief, you actually need to know your story's framework," he says. "It's like sending an improv artist on stage who doesn't know what a story framework is."

Second, citing the help of lead storyteller Shari Neumann, a former Coca-Cola employee, Bergsma stresses the value of hiring and retaining natural storytellers. Because what's a story without a skilled author (or several dozen)?

Third, storytelling is not a linear process. In other words, the process of creating a story is a story in itself, with pitfalls and plot twists. "You need to be very agile and experimental and embrace the mistakes and the failures you have along the way and have a very experimental mindset," Bergsma says. "You need to do a lot of trial and error and go down specific pathways to figure out what's going to work for the brand or what doesn't."

Doug Zarkin
Pearle Vision

Mine Your Heritage



When Doug Zarkin grabbed the reins as CMO of Pearle Vision five and a half years ago, he found a 55-year old brand that was “stuck in the death spiral of where brands never want to live – in the middle.” By Zarkin’s count the brand had gone through 10 different positions, 10 different reasons to believe, none of which caught hold in the preceding decade. He was also greeted with a letter from a franchise owner that said, “Dear Doug: Welcome to Pearle Vision, I hope you suck less than the last person who had your job!” In our interview below, you’ll see how Zarkin rose to the challenge and helped guide Pearle Vision into a clear positioning and a winning executional plan.

Neisser: When you first got to Pearle Vision and recognized the need for a new positioning, how long did you give yourself?

Zarkin: If you know anything about retail there’s a sense of urgency. I essentially had six months to crack the code. In fact when I joined the company my predecessor actually remained on the team to essentially keep the business going while I was working on

crafting the future state. And so within six months we had to find what the brand was going to stand for. We identified that we needed to update the entire visual iconography, that we needed to update the store design and we began the journey. But by no means does the journey begin and end in six months — it's a journey that you have to continually press on every day.

Neisser: So that gives you three months to research and three months to execute. Talk about the positioning that you landed on.

Zarkin: The positioning of "genuine eye care from your neighborhood doctor" which came about from a philosophy that I learned from my first client side job at Avon — you have to go out in the field. Any marketer worth his salt knows that a positioning that doesn't make for great execution is just words on paper. And so looking inward to what we stood for as a brand required me to look outward from the boardroom and get into our locations, talk to our doctors, talk to our franchisees, understand what we really were embodying in a three dimensional way and then bringing that back and looking at what we as a brand could really own.

"By no means does the journey begin and end in six months — it's a journey that you have to continually press on every day."

As a brand founded by a doctor, Dr. Stanley Pearle in 1961, we had a heritage that we could stand for — genuine eye care. We needed to do it in a way that was authentic. We wanted to be that premier optical brand that owned the neighborhood--that could win the battle for patients at the community level. And so every part of 'genuine eye care from my neighborhood doctor' means something. It most importantly means the art of sacrifice — there's a lot of things we shouldn't do.

Neisser: Let's talk about how that positioning got executed. How did you align this at the local level?

Zarkin: First off, we refer to both our doctors and opticians as eye care experts. Our locations are often in strip malls next to a nail salon or a Chipotle for example, so we don't even call them stores anymore, they're EyeCare centers. We don't have "customers" —we treat everyone as a patient. And the reason why is because when you talk to somebody and you think of them as a patient, it automatically denotes an expectation and delivery of an experience of a higher level of care. These seem like really small things but in the spirit of the sum of marginal gains all of these nuances have allowed us to really embrace the DNA of the brand and the new positioning.

Neisser: You mentioned the idea of sacrifice. What did you give up?

Zarkin: So I go back to what my first boss taught me which was that marketing is the art of positioning, which is the art of sacrifice. There are a lot of things you could say but what are the opportunities where you believe you can win. Being owned by Luxottica, which owns brand like Ray Ban and Oakley, and holds the optical license for well over a dozen premier fashion brands, we carry the best-in-class assortment of frames.

“Marketing is the art of positioning, which is the art of sacrifice.”

And we could talk at length about the amazing product we carry and we do in some channels, but we knew that alone wasn't going to meaningfully distinguish us in a growing competitive and commoditized category. So we had to look at what was going to allow us to win. And that was to really embody the spirit of Dr. Pearle, whose vision was to combine a best in class doctor with that unmatched commitment to care from the exam room to the retail floor adding on the best available frames with state of the art lenses to become that neighborhood destination that people trust with their eye care and eye wear needs.

Neisser: Let's turn to execution. How have you turned this positioning into a story with emotional appeal?

Zarkin: Among a host of things, we revived the iconic tagline “Nobody cares for eyes more than Pearle.” The magic in those words is that it basically sets us up as the standard bearer for what quality of care in this category should be. What we've realized is that if we focused on earning your trust through a series of small moments of listening for your eye care needs, you'll be more receptive to trust us to help guide you into that perfect pair or pairs of eyeglasses. On average

“We've realized is that if we focused on earning your trust...you'll be more receptive to trust us to help guide you (in purchase decisions)”

we're converting + 70% of the people who visit one of our doctors into a eye wear customer. They're trusting us from the exam room to the retail floor. That's the goal. That is a very different type of consumer focus than aiming your message at someone who's making an eye care or eye wear destination decision primarily by responding to an ad offering three pairs for \$99. It takes it from a commodity decision into a care-based decision.

Focus on earning your audience's trust before you try to secure a purchase.

Neisser: So how has this impacted the business?

Zarkin: I can honestly say that we are a brand with a stronger degree of trust than we had 5 or even 10 years ago. From a consumer perspective, when we look at things like doctor quality perception where we're up consistently double digits per annum. When we're looking at exam comps, we are consistently doing well above plus 3 which means we're on the right track. When we look at net promoter score we are doing better than we ever have done. Earning trust from those people in the neighborhood around each of our EyeCare centers, that's how we know we can continue.

And the progress in the area of trust can be felt from our franchisees as well. Trust earned through provocation and collaboration. A team of local doctor and optician owner-operators that are equally passionate and committed to Pearle Vision as the premier neighborhood eye care business.

Neisser: Has it affected your business in other ways?

Zarkin: Our biggest success is that as a system we are truly growing. The latest edition of Entrepreneur Magazine named us the #24 franchise opportunity, which was up from 115 from a year ago, ahead of some of premier franchise brands in a host of categories. 2016 was a record year of growth and 2017 will shatter those achievements in the area of growth and development. Pearle Vision is back where it belongs and our formula for the future is simple...stay focused as a brand of people caring for people.

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Doug.

Manny Rodriguez

UCHealth

The Customer Centric Story



Many who work in health care marketing have firsthand experience with the systems they support, whether it's a sick relative or a child recovering from a broken arm. But not many have the story of Manny Rodriguez. Before taking on a chief marketing title at UCHealth, Rodriguez held another important distinction—that of leukemia survivor.

He underwent treatment at a variety of the nation's best centers, including MD Anderson, Memorial Sloan Kettering and Dana Farber, in addition to UCHealth. While the care was always excellent, his experience with each was vastly different. Once at UCHealth, he found himself poised to better a system that bettered him.

"We've gotten away from the fact that what we do is about the patient," says Rodriguez. "I don't want to be a healthcare marketer; I want to be a consumer marketer who is marketing to patients. When I came here, I wanted to bring that notion of consumer marketing and lifestyle marketing to a health care brand."

Rodriguez helped create the Chief Marketing and Experience Officer position with his executives, who in turn urged him to fill those shoes. "I was at the point in my career where I wondered what's my legacy, and where do I give back?" he says. Rodriguez's leadership earned him a Marketing Innovation finalist nod in the most recent awards from The CMO Club, and below is the story of how he and his team are transforming UCHHealth into the patient-focused lifestyle brand that, if you ask the employees, it always has been.

The patient promise

After 18 months of initial research and thousands of interviews, Rodriguez and his team understood that "great care" wasn't

"I was at the point in my career where I wondered what's my legacy, and where do I give back?"

enough to differentiate UCHHealth from its competitors. "What we heard not only from our consumers, our patients, our providers, and our employees is that we need to be a patient-centered brand," he says, "that focuses on innovation and quality outcome."

They looked to build a campaign that featured only the patients, uttering not a single word about UCHHealth. The result was over a dozen videos like "Peyton" and "Becky" told from the patient's point of view, by the patient him or herself.

Telling the stories

While the stories look effortlessly told, Rodriguez says that his team initially believed compelling narratives would be their biggest challenge. "How are we going to get the average person to create an emotional story that people are going to want to resonate with, that people are going to want to engage with, and people will be inspired and motivated by?" he says. "We felt it was very important that the patient tell their own story, not an actor."

During the process, director Pam Thomas and photographer Martin Schoeller drew feeling from the patients in a way that was not only natural, but beautiful. "Pam is a great storyteller," says Rodriguez. "She's just got this way of disarming you. So when she was interacting with these patients, and they're nervous and they're scared, she talks to them and she's joking," capturing unscripted moments all while the camera is rolling.

In fact, hiring non-healthcare talent is one of Rodriguez's keys to effective storytelling for healthcare. "I've yet to hire anybody in industry," he says, instead sourcing from Disney, ad agencies, CenturyLink and even the Seattle Seahawks. "We think differently."

Building a lifestyle brand

Change the conversation to talk about what's meaningful, rather than what's expected.

While great storytelling alone is cause for celebration, Rodriguez and his team have the bigger picture in mind for UCHHealth. "We're trying to change the conversation from a, 'Let me fix you when you're broken,' to, 'Let me help you live a more active, healthier lifestyle.'" In his view, giant lifestyle brands like Nike have taken credit for the role that belongs to healthcare brands like UCHHealth.

He cites UnderArmour's campaign with Michael Phelps, touting his dozens of Olympic medals. "Think about Michael Phelps—he's wearing the least amount of clothes possible when he's in the pool," says Rodriguez. "UnderArmour has nothing to do with his performance. But the physician, the trainers, the medical staff behind him, his coaches—there are human beings behind him."

Rodriguez hopes that his team can help healthcare re-claim this association with not just sick-turned-healthy, but health-made-healthier. And that when an athlete wants to achieve a goal like climbing the Seven Summits, he or she would turn to UCHHealth first, not a hiking or outdoor magazine.

The employee check-up

The campaign is resonating in particular with employees—a surefire sign that the storytelling properly encapsulates the UCHHealth brand and mission. "We heard a lot of, 'Finally, leadership gets it.' [Our employees] are in a business where you work long hours, you don't get paid very well, you don't sleep well. And they do it for the patient," he says. "So finally, here we are, we're not talking about anybody else but the patient."

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Manny.

Peter Weingard
New York Public Radio

Stories in the Voice of the Audience



Walking around the studios of New York Public Radio in New York City, you're confronted with conflicting realities: one symbolized by a primitive radio microphone from 1924 and the other by an advertising poster from 2016 with the headline, "More Influential than Russia." As pioneers of FM broadcasting, it's probably not surprising that New York Public Radio is the largest public radio station group in the United States. What is surprising is the station is also one of the largest podcast producers; its content arm, WNYC Studios, generates more than 36 million downloads a month from over 20 different shows.

WNYC's transformation from a traditional regional broadcaster to a multi-platform media powerhouse offers lessons for just about any marketer, especially those seeking to become content providers. Setting the stage for our extensive conversation, Peter Weingard, CMO of New York Public Radio, explains, "It's like being in a new business all of the time because what the business looks like today is not what it looked like a year ago." This enlightened perspective is just the beginning of the CMO-worthy insights Weingard offers.

Redefine Your Category

With a monthly audience of over 26 million people across all of its platforms, including live-streaming, podcasts and traditional radio stations (WNYC AM & FM, WQXR, WJPR) and live events, clearly the company has moved well beyond its original broadcasting roots. But Weingard refuses to define his competitive set as media or content, insisting, “We are in the curiosity business.” This broader definition reflects the mission of the organization and its specific desire to create compelling content regardless of the channel. He adds: “We create well-crafted, well-edited stories that have a visceral, emotional attraction to them.”

“We are in the curiosity business.”

Think about how your industry is changing.

How does that affect the story of your business and the stories your customers are telling about themselves?”

Leverage Your Brand Essence

While New York City is literally in the brand DNA of WNYC, Weingard is quick to point out, “We can’t be your father’s NPR. NYC is more diverse than the rest of the country, and we need to reflect the city that we call home. And we do.” This is evident in the diversity of both staffing and programming at WNYC, as well as a collective desire by the organization to be “the home of courageous conversations.” Weingard also sees these “real and authentic conversations, the kind you’d have in the streets of Brooklyn” happening at events they host in The Greene Space, their performance space.

Involve Your Audience

As a non-profit organization, New York Public Radio depends on support from its 238,000 members, and Weingard proudly reports,

(There is) a collective desire by the organization to be “the home of courageous conversations.”

“We just had a record pledge drive, and we’re seeing increasing amounts of giving on the podcast portfolio.” To get to these record contributions, WNYC has made a concerted effort to create opportunities for audience participation, whether it’s letting listeners read the credits on Radiolab or designating a listener to share feedback from all listeners at

a MTA public hearing on commuting in New York City. “What we’re doing is actually trying to involve people in the stories, the station and the brand in very significant ways,” notes Weingard.

Expand Your Purview

As the station evolves, so has the role of the CMO. “I’ve seen a radical departure from what marketing used to mean then to what it means today,” Weingard explains. “When I started in advertising, marketing was mostly about marketing communications, and now I would say that’s probably the smallest and maybe the least effective part of the marketing toolkit.” In contrast to the old days, Weingard says his time is focused “on the product, the service, the delivery, the customer and all of the other touchpoints.”

Iterate Your Content


As more and more brands join WNYC Studios in the content creation business, there is growing interest in how to get the most out of any given piece of content. One answer is iteration: creating one primary piece of content and then extending it into other channels. For example, Radiolab (a popular show) now starts as a podcast, which can be of variable length and is adapted for radio, even though the show originally started on radio. “As a marketer I’m constantly looking across all of these different properties, all of the different consumers that we reach, and trying to figure out how best to optimize the experience for all of the different touchpoints,” explains Weingard.

Act Like a Startup

Weingard revels in the fact that New York Public Radio is both “a 93-year-old media institution and a really scrappy startup” in how people work and how the space looks. “We’re building an entirely new business and that includes developing entirely new business models for the way stuff is created,” he says enthusiastically. “Today we’re talking about podcasts, but already we’re thinking about smart speaker systems and how content is going to adapt to that,” he adds. In the spirit of startups and the tech world, Weingard encourages his fellow marketers to “develop agile teams and an agile mindset that can quickly pivot to take advantage of different emerging technologies” in order to thrive in the ever-changing media world.



Extend and spread your stories, by leveraging all the channels and touchpoints at your disposal.



Want more?
Listen to the [podcast](#)
with Peter.

Chandar Pattabhiram

Marketo

Transforming Brand from Science into Storytelling



One might think that a conversation with Chandar Pattabhiram, Chief Marketing Officer of Marketo, would eventually lead to the aspirational, grandiose vision of someone who believes that automation is the future of marketing. While Pattabhiram certainly does feel this way, he also touts the power of a more human side of marketing in the form of storytelling. Recently, Pattabhiram helped Marketo rebrand as not a programmatic company, but a company bent on engagement. An automation company that makes emotional connections? Yes! And it makes complete sense. Read on to learn why.

A new brand for a new era

“My proudest accomplishment is rolling out this whole era of engagement marketing umbrella messaging throughout the company and letting it permeate everything we do,” says Pattabhiram. After a period of research, focus groups and eventually C-suite buy-in, Pattabhiram and his team helped take

Marketo from a brand focused on the science of marketing to a brand focused on the science of storytelling. “At a brand level, we’re talking about a shift from mass marketing into engagement; and at a product level, we’re shifting from talking about marketing automation to engagement platforms.”

Pattabhiram acknowledges that this human-centric philosophy might seem like a mismatch for Marketo’s business, which has taken many brands’ marketing from a “soft science” to a programmatic, measurable one over the last decade. However, he says that storytelling has always been at the core of marketing. “What we’re trying to do is win the battle for the mind of the buyer, because people don’t buy products—they buy stories, they buy emotional connections,” he says. Without stories, customers won’t connect with a brand. “I’ve always believed that people buy

candles from you not because they need candles, but because they need light,” says Pattabhiram.

“People don’t buy products— they buy stories, they buy emotional connections”

What’s more, Pattabhiram foresees the discipline of marketing splitting towards two disparate needs—AI, and purely

human-to-human intelligence—likely making technologists’ jobs obsolete. “Technology might change what I call ‘think jobs’ and the ‘do jobs,’ but the ‘feel jobs’ of building emotional connection and storytelling are the jobs of tomorrow that technology cannot change,” he says. “Storytelling becomes that powerful weapon for every marketer to go master and become effective at.”

Selling doesn’t build an emotional connection. Instead, focus on how you’re making your audience feel.

Executing on “engagement”

So, how did Marketo ultimately drive home their new message? First, Pattabhiram and his team settled on a brand promise that everyone agreed on. The promise permeated down into product and sales messaging, then to paid and earned channels to create consistency. “From an execution perspective, it’s about driving really close synergies between brand and product messaging. This is where a lot of companies fail,” says Pattabhiram. “Their brand messaging is flying the plane at a very different altitude, and there’s no connection when it comes to product messaging.”

“I’ve always believed that people buy candles from you not because they need candles, but because they need light.”

Measuring the success of a new message like Marketo's involves finding both emotive and concrete results. "If your lifetime value, your bookings, and your revenue goes up," says Pattabhiram, "that means there is definitely a strong correlation between the new messaging system, and ultimately a financial success." On the emotive level, think of a game of word association where "athletic" equals Nike or "cool" equals Apple. "What I want Marketo to own is that when a CMO thinks 'engagement,' they think Marketo," he says. "Ultimately, if you were able to win that attribute in the buyer's mind, you have won the game."

The biggest lesson Pattabhiram learned through Marketo's brand transformation pertains to progress—and patience. "You can't go for the big enchilada of driving this entire brand message, product message, sales message, everything in one shot," he says. Instead, the story has to develop in stages as an iterative process—and you can talk to Pattabhiram about this at length after his keynote speech at the Marketing Nation Summit in San Francisco this coming weekend. "Don't treat it as a project," he says, "treat it as a program, and it's a continuous initiative that that you have to keep working on." In other words, the never-ending story.

**"Don't treat it as a project,"
treat it as a program...a
continuous initiative"**

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Chandar.

**Arra Yerganian,
Sutter Health**

Taking Care of Your Audience



After the tsunami of 2003, Arra Yerganian, an executive at a home construction company in Northern California, was approached by a group of mothers who asked if he would match the proceeds of a bake sale they were holding to raise money for victims. Of course, he said. When Yerganian later met with the Red Cross to hand over a check, he was struck by the altruistic nature of the volunteers' impending missions. "The fact that they were so selfless in their dedication to humanity moved me in a way that I had never imagined," he says.

Fast-forward nine months, and Arra Yerganian is the chair of the organization's board. Fast-forward even further, and Yerganian finds himself at Sutter Health, recently recognized by IBM's Truven Health Analytics as one of the top five large healthcare systems in America. As he tells it, he found his career's calling in caring after others. Now, as the Chief Marketing and Branding Officer, he's working to help Sutter Health, which is based in Northern California, do the same.

When so many competing healthcare systems claim the same mission of high-quality care, it's Yerganian's duty to help Sutter differentiate itself, both strategically and meaningfully. His efforts so far have resonated, as Yerganian recently received an Officers Award from The CMO Club, a prestigious honor bestowed on a marketing leader who brings his or her brand beyond the typical scope of marketing and growth to other functional areas of the company.

The Differentiating Diagnosis

"Sutter Health is a remarkable organization," says Yerganian. "We are an integrated team of clinical and non-clinical pioneers who are deeply rooted in our not-for-profit mission." Additionally, Sutter Health generates \$11 billion in revenue with a staff of 55,000. As the leader of marketing and branding efforts, Yerganian has a big ship to steer, especially given the changing landscape of a mostly homogenous field in terms of marketing.

According to Yerganian, the industry at large has a problem with brand differentiation because it largely still practices "lowest common denominator" marketing. "People talk about quality and expertise as if they're differentiators," he says. "Seems to me that everyone expects when they go to a doctor that they'll get quality care, and that their doctor is an expert in their field, right?"

For Sutter Health, standing out requires a brand promise greater than just high-quality patient care. "As healthcare undergoes a transformation in America, it's about putting people first, rather than patients," says Yerganian. "It's about understanding and connecting with people and families on both an intellectual and emotional level,"

he says. In other words, Yerganian and his department are actively changing the conversation towards the real people behind what other providers categorize as "the patient" or any other business would consider to be "the customer." "I believe that's what makes Sutter Health special and different from every other health system,"

For Sutter Health, standing out requires a brand promise greater than just high-quality patient care.

"It's about understanding and connecting with people and families on both an intellectual and emotional level."

he says. "We are the brand leaning in when others are leaning away."

Is your content helping you care for current customers or just woo new ones?

A Targeted Treatment

A more humanized approach means that the marketing department spends more time nurturing relationships with existing patients than acquiring new ones. "I call this the 'love the ones you're with' approach," says Yerganian, "and it is a big differentiator for us since so many healthcare companies are just trying to acquire as many customers as they can."

One way that Yerganian's team fosters Sutter's existing relationships is by placing more emphasis on marketing for their individual needs. Taking cues from his time at Procter & Gamble, his team spearheaded the effort to create, essentially, a family of brands. "I had a vision when I arrived 16 months ago to create a brand management structure along the lines of service like heart care, cancer services, women's health..." he says. This involved not only big data and research, but also forging stronger ties with medical experts, bringing them into the marketing fold for more specific and relevant content that still resonates across the brand. Take the "Smile Out" campaign, modified for each line of service. A person battling a sinus infection sees "Sniffle in, smile out," while orthopedics uses "Limp in, smile out," creating a coherent connection across very different areas of Sutter Health.

"Precision marketing," as Yerganian calls this, also helps the medical professionals and marketing team deliver a better experience for the people Sutter cares for. "When I think about emotional access," he says, "it's about how we care about and appreciate the people we work with. It's how our healthcare teams work together toward collaborative care so you are a person, not a statistic. These are the things that we are really striving to do every day that really separate us." It's a work in progress for Sutter Health, and it's getting healthier. "We have in our DNA the spirit of doing amazing things for people every day—we just need to bring those stories to light."

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Arra.

Larry Robertson
Lighthouse Consulting, LLC

Cultivating Creativity



Martech has done wonders for the practice of marketing. It has refined, streamlined and taken the guesswork out of some formerly nebulous areas of the industry. But martech and the need to support ideas with data have increasingly pitted marketing against its roots—the art of creativity.

The question today is: which side is the real driver of innovation? If you ask Larry Robertson, founder and president of Lighthouse Consulting, LLC and 8-time award winning author of “A Deliberate Pause,” it’s creativity, without a doubt.

“No innovation has ever come out a proven territory,” he says of using data to support decision-making. “If you demand a guarantee, if you demand proof up front, how on earth can you ever innovate? Data is absolutely important. But it’s not what drives creativity or guides change.”

So, if creativity is the essence of marketing innovation, then it must be the job of the CMO to be as creative as possible. Easier said than done, you might be thinking. Isn't creativity an inherent individual trait, like height or eye color? According to Robertson, this is a common misperception. Creativity has three truths: it's new, it exists everywhere and—most importantly—anyone can do it.

"If you demand proof up front, how on earth can you ever innovate?"

Like learning a new language or improving your physical fitness, becoming creative is a practice. A CMO simply needs to cultivate the right habits to be able to think creatively and recognize creative breakthroughs when he or she sees them.

Practice noticing

Learn to be more creative, by practicing the art of noticing.

The first habit Robertson recommends cultivating is the art of noticing. "It's tuning into what's going on around you, and when you feel that sense of fit, noticing why you feel that, what it's connected to, what it's saying about what you know or what you could know," he says. "It's that idea of just practicing looking around in a more questioning and purposeful way. It's actually fun, too."

"It's that idea of just practicing looking around in a more questioning and purposeful way"

On the way to a meeting or on a walk, Robertson would practice absorbing what before had been unremarkable details and soon began to see his environment in a new way. "I started posting pictures of these things I was seeing and curating each with a little line—a hint, another connection, a pun, a line from a song," he says. "The way people are coming back to me, I realize that I've spread noticing to them. Now they're noticing things too! It's a perfect example of the gradual and cumulative way a breakthrough comes about."

Pause to notice

Past simply understanding what it means to notice, Robertson says that creative leaders actually make time—called "pausing"—for the noticing to occur. "It's doing things in a purposeful way, even though you don't know exactly what you're going to see or what you're looking for. It's in the pause that you increase the odds of encountering a purposeful accident."

Pausing can take on any form, whether a quiet moment alone with your environment or a few minutes for open questioning

Robertson says that creative leaders actually make time—called “pausing”—for the noticing to occur.

in the middle of a meeting. “It’s the deliberateness with which you take them,” says Robertson, “and the noticing you do in them, and the questions you ponder, and the fit you sense when you pause, that all adds up to higher odds of a breakthrough idea occurring.”

Create your own luck (seriously!)

Finally, Robertson says that creative breakthroughs are a product of self-made luck. Research on both luck and creativity demonstrates that a person can, in fact, create his or her own good luck by boosting the odds of encountering it. “It comes down to really simple habits, as simple as putting yourself out there at the edges of your world; in a sports analogy, taking more at-bats.”

When a person expects to experience something good or interesting, research shows that the person is more likely to do so. “It’s little things like this, combined, that cause you to see more breakthroughs,” says

“It comes down to really simple habits, as simple as putting yourself out there at the edges of your world... taking more at-bats.”

Robertson. These patterns of self-made luck are pervasive in the work of MacArthur fellows, a highly creative class profiled in his new book, “The Language of Man: Learning to Speak Creativity.”

Want more?
Listen to the **podcast**
with Larry.

In sum, CMOs looking to cultivate their creativity would do well to first tap into a defining characteristic of marketing leaders—their innate sense of curiosity.

“The truth is, creativity is a gradual sorting; it happens through purposeful accidents,” says Robertson. “You want to be purposeful, but you want to allow the room to have these wonderful accidental things happen that allow you to see and create something new.”

About the Author

Drew Neisser

"The CMO Whisperer"

[Drew Neisser](#) is founder and CEO of [Renegade](#), the award-winning marketing agency that helps courageous CMO's create content that cuts through. A true renegade thinker, Drew has helped dozens of CMOs create marketing programs worth writing about and told the stories of over 250 CMOs via his [AdAge column](#), his first book [The CMO's Periodic Table: A Renegade's Guide to Marketing](#) and through a popular podcast series called [Renegade Thinkers Unite](#).

In the last 3 years, Drew and his merry band of Renegades have focused their attention on B2B storytelling, helping companies like Arrow Electronics, Business Wire, Donnelley Financial Solutions, Empire State Realty Trust, Magento, Tungsten Networks, Utak, Wiley and Workforce Software find, enhance and/or tell their stories via content marketing and social media.

Earlier at Renegade, Drew hatched numerous award-winning campaigns for a long-list of blue chip clients. His ideas for HSBC, Panasonic and IBM were all recognized by BRANDWEEK as Guerrilla Marketers of the Year. Among these is the legendary HSBC BankCab program, a restored and natural gas-powered Checker taxi that delighted HSBC customers with free rides for 13 years.

Drew's creative accomplishments include naming and launching the Toughbook for Panasonic and writing numerous taglines. These include "Where Family Comes First." for Family Circle Magazine, "Like Money. Only MAGIC." for Magic by Magic Johnson prepaid MasterCard, "I like your energy" for The Bu Kombucha and "Great tech support. Good karma." for iYogi.

A recent study by Leadtail ranked Drew as #10 among the top 25 CMO Influencers. He is recognized as a B2B marketing influencer by IBM (part of their Futurist program), Salesforce, Pega, Marketo, Oracle and Gartner. Counted among Brand Quarterly's "50 Marketing Thought Leaders Over 50" for 3 years running, he is a sought-after keynote speaker and has been a featured marketing expert on ABC News, CBS Radio, iHeart Radio and Tony Robbins' podcast among many others.

Drew has keynoted at numerous conferences including Marketo Nation, PegaWorld, The Financial Brand, Social ShakeUp, DMWF NY, The CMO Club Summit, Incite Marketing, Incite Social Media, and the Novantas CMO Summit among many others. He is also a skilled moderator and recently led a [live webcast](#) from the US Open for Deloitte and the USGA.

Diapered at Wells Rich Greene, trained at JWT and retrained at Chiat/Day, Drew founded Renegade in 1996. He earned a BA in history from Duke University and lives in Manhattan with his wife, two kids and a French bulldog named Louie. He is currently on the board of the Urban Green Council and the Duke Alumni Association. A Ben Franklin nut, Drew's favorite aphorism remains, "Well done is better than well said."

Reading List on Storytelling

There is no shortage of books and courses to help you become a better storyteller. Here are seven of the better ones.

1. [Story Engineering](#) by Larry Brooks

Geared for budding novelists, this book focuses on the “6 core competencies of successful writing” including Concept, Character, Theme, Story Structure, Scene Execution and Writing Voice.

2. [Building a StoryBrand](#) by Donald Miller

This book is among the best for brands just getting started down the storytelling road offering a step-by-step guide.

3. [Pixar Storytelling: Rules for Effective Storytelling Based on Pixar’s Greatest Films](#) by Dean Movshovitz

This one spells out Pixar’s formula in language even we marketers can understand!

4. [The Art of Storytelling, The Great Courses](#) by Professor Hannah Harvey,

Professor Hannah Harvey also happens to be a professional storyteller herself, making this more like a visit to The Moth than a classroom.

5. [Ted Talks Storytelling](#) by Akash Karia

For about the cost of a large double shot cappuccino from your favorite coffee bar, this little book packs a terrific punch, offering 23 storytelling tips derived from the over 30 of the most popular TED Talks.

6. [Story Selling](#) by Nick Nanton and J. W. Dicks

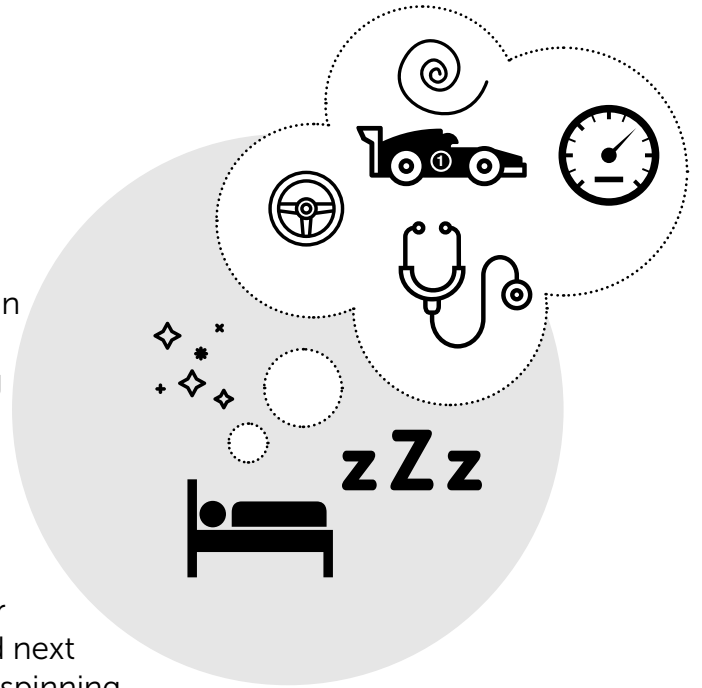
Having worked our way from novels to film to public speaking, this book will help you craft your business story and importantly, offer guidance on how to spread the word.

7. [All Marketers are Liars](#) by Seth Godin

If you’ve read any book by Seth Godin, you know that he always offers great examples of how this or that business found a unique way to cut through.

Epilogue

Janice was having strange dreams. In one, she found herself accepting scalpels and sutures from a doctor who suggested she perform the next operation on herself. In another, a racecar driver tossed her keys, opened a door and next thing she knew she was spinning out of a turn going 220 MPH at the Indy 500. Waking up in a cold sweat, Janice couldn't help but wonder what her subconscious was trying to tell her.



Janice, as turns out, is a newly appointed Chief Marketing Officer. She's been pushing her mid-sized software-as-a-service company to use the power of storytelling to create better content. It's not going so well. In fact, it's a nightmare. Her sales team is telling one story that feels more like a litany of features. Marketing is on a completely different page as is HR. It's a mess and all of the reading she's doing isn't making the challenge of unifying behind a single story any easier. It feels as if she's been handed scalpels and expected to be a surgeon.

What:

Content campaigns that cut through.

Why:

Because a little courage goes a long way.

Who:

Courageous B2B Marketers

When:

That depends on you, doesn't it?

Hoping that her peers might have the answer and that a night off would clear her head, Janice attended a dinner with a local chapter of [The CMO Club](#). Asking around, she kept getting the same advice, talk to The CMO Whisperer. "Say what?" said Janice. "Talk to Drew," they enjoined, "he and his team will fix your content nightmare." And thus, began Janice's next adventure into the land of courageous marketing.



About Renegade LLC

Renegade is in the courage business. We work with a select group of courageous marketers to help them become better content-driven social storytellers. The result is a high-performing demand generation engine for your organization, fueled by its own stories.

If you'd like to learn more, visit renegade.com or [click here](#) to email our CEO.

