

StoryBrand BrandScript

from *Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen* by Donald Miller (2017)

Introduction

Effective marketing isn't about telling your brand's story—it's about helping customers see themselves as the hero. Donald Miller's *StoryBrand BrandScript* provides a framework for crafting clear, compelling messages that engage audiences and drive action.

Summary

- Customers don't care about your story; they care about their own
 - Your customer should be the hero of the story, not your brand
 - Nobody will listen to you if your message isn't clear, no matter how expensive your marketing material may be
 - If you confuse, you'll lose!
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Two Big Mistakes

The first mistake brands make is they fail to focus on the aspects of their offer that will help people survive and thrive.

The second mistake brands make is they cause their customers to burn too many calories in an effort to understand their offer.

Connect Through Story

If we want to connect with customers, we have to stop blasting them with noise.

The story is atomic. It is perpetual energy and can power a city. Story is the one thing that can hold a human being's attention for hours. Nobody can look away from a good story.

The three crucial questions to answer to engage in a story:

1. What does the hero want?
2. Who or what is opposing the hero getting what they want?
3. What will the hero's life look like if they do (or do not) get what they want?

The three questions to answer for customers to engage with our brand:

1. What do you offer?
2. How will it make my life better?
3. What do I need to do to buy it?

This is called "passing the grunt test." Could a caveman look at your website/marketing materials and immediately grunt what you offer?

The SB7 Framework

A CHARACTER (Luke Skywalker)

SB Principle #1: The Customer Is The Hero, Not The Brand.

Customers want to know if your brand can truly help them get what they want. To engage them, create a "story gap"—a clear contrast between where they are now and where they could be. This gap fuels their motivation to take action.

To make an impact, define a single, relevant ambition for your customer—something simple and meaningful. Become known for delivering on this promise. The most compelling desires are those tied to survival, such as:

- Conserving financial resources
- Conserving time
- Building social networks
- Gaining status
- Accumulating resources
- The innate desire to be generous
- The desire for meaning

WITH A PROBLEM (Evil empire is after him)

SB Principle #2: Companies Tend To Sell Solutions To External Problems, But Customers Buy Solutions To Internal Problems.

The more we highlight the problems our customers face, the more they'll engage with our brand. Every great story needs a villain—an obstacle that creates tension and fuels the hero's journey.

A strong villain should be:

- A root cause of the problem
- Relatable to the audience
- Singular and clearly defined
- Real enough to feel urgent

The three types of conflict:

External Problems: A tangible, physical challenge the hero must overcome. This serves to manifest their deeper internal struggle.

Internal Problems: Frustration or self-doubt that drives the hero's actions. People are more motivated to resolve an internal struggle than an external one.

Philosophical Problems: The “why” behind the conflict. This taps into a larger purpose, giving people a reason to care.

The perfect brand promise solves all three problems in one shot.

MEETS A GUIDE (Yoda, Obi-Wan Kenobi)

SB Principle #3: Customers Aren't Looking For Another Hero; They're Looking For A Guide.

Every human is on a transformative journey—they wake up each day as the hero of their own story. But if a hero solves their own problem too easily, the audience loses interest. That's why storytellers introduce a guide: someone who encourages, equips, and leads the hero toward success.

A brand that positions itself as the hero is destined to lose. The companies that thrive are the ones that recognize the story isn't about them—it's about their customers.

The Two Key Traits of a Guide:

Empathy: Builds trust by showing customers, I understand you. I've been there.

Authority: Establishes credibility through testimonials, statistics, awards, or recognizable affiliations.

When customers encounter a brand, they subconsciously ask:

Can I trust this person (or brand)?

Can I respect this person (or brand)?

By embodying empathy and authority, your brand earns trust and becomes the natural choice to make a strong first impression and guide customers to success.

WHO GIVES THEM A PLAN (Trust the force)

SB Principle #4: Customers Trust A Guide Who Has A Plan.

Making a purchase is an act of commitment, and commitment comes with risk. Customers hesitate because they ask themselves:

What if it doesn't work?

What if I look foolish buying this?

A trusted guide provides a plan—a clear, actionable path that gives the hero hope and confidence.

There are two types of plans brands can use to build trust:

The Process Plan: Outlines the steps customers need to take to do business with you, making the journey feel simple and achievable.

The Agreement Plan: Eases fears by addressing potential concerns, reinforcing guarantees, or setting clear expectations.

To make your plan stick, give it a name that frames it in the customer's mind as the obvious path forward.

AND CALLS THEM TO ACTION (Fight the empire)

SB Principle #5: Customers Do Not Take Action Unless They Are Challenged To Take Action.

In every great story, the hero doesn't act on their own—they must be challenged. The same is true for customers. If we assume they'll take the next step without a clear invitation, we'll lose them.

Direct Calls to Action:

Be explicit about what customers need to do next. Examples include:

- *Order/Buy Now*
- *Call/Register Today*
- *Schedule an Appointment*

Transitional Calls to Action:

Not every customer is ready to commit immediately. Offering a lower-risk step can build trust and move them toward a decision. These approaches help:

- Stake a Claim to Your Territory – Establish authority in your field
- Create Reciprocity – Offer value first, making customers more likely to engage
- Position Yourself as the Guide – Reinforce trust before the sale

Examples of Transitional Calls:

- Free information (e.g., guides, webinars)
- Customer testimonials
- Product samples
- Free trials

THAT RESULTS IN...

Failure (The rebellion is crushed)

SB Principle #6: Every Human Being Is Trying To Avoid A Tragic Ending.

A story without stakes is boring. Customers need to understand what's at risk if they don't take action. Brands that fail to highlight potential negative outcomes leave customers asking, "So what?" and disengage.

People are more motivated by avoiding loss than by gaining benefits. Yet many brands hesitate to emphasize the consequences of inaction, making their message flat and forgettable.

The "Fear Appeal" Four-Step Process:

1. Show vulnerability – Make customers aware of a real threat they face.
2. Create urgency – Help them see that inaction increases their risk.
3. Offer a solution – Provide a clear action that protects them.
4. Issue a challenge – Push them to take the necessary step.

Moderate fear-based messaging is the most effective in driving both attitude and behavior change. Done right, it engages customers emotionally and compels them to act.

Success (The death star is destroyed)

SB Principle #7: Never Assume People Understand How Your Brand Can Change Their Lives.

The best leadership advice? *Always remember, people want to be taken somewhere.* Without a clear vision, both people and brands fade into irrelevance.

To make your story compelling, paint a vivid picture of success. The ending should be specific and clear—customers need to see how their lives will improve.

The Before & After Grid:

- What do they have?
- What are they feeling?
- What's an average day like?
- What is their status?

Three Ways a Story Ends with Transformation:

1. Gaining Power or Status – Customers achieve success that elevates their standing.
 - Offer exclusive access
 - Create scarcity
 - Provide a premium experience
 - Build identity association
2. Finding Wholeness Through Connection – Customers feel complete through an external factor.
 - Reduced anxiety
 - Less workload
 - More time for what matters
3. Achieving Self-Realization – Customers reach their full potential.
 - Inspiration
 - Acceptance
 - Transcendence

People don't just want products; they want transformation. Smart brands define an aspirational identity for their customers—helping them become who they want to be. More than selling, great brands change people's lives.