

Marketing Through Stories

By Nadine Tanner

Tell me a story. Tell me a story that I can connect with—a story that speaks to who I am, what I do, what I strive to achieve.

Cave drawings show us that our ancient ancestors captured stories in pictures, and many aboriginal peoples still maintain an oral history through story-telling. From bed-time stories of fairy tales and fantasy to our adult choice of movies and novels, story-telling captures something at the very soul of our being.

In Carol Pearson's module *Engaging The Hidden Dynamics of Success*, we discovered our stories: our personal archetypes and those of the organizations we work with. In addition to engaging in a personal path of discovery, I uncovered a practical gift to apply to my company's marketing program—the gift of story-telling.

I don't believe myself to be an expert in archetypes or Jungian psychology, but after this module I decided to apply some of my learnings. So instead of crafting elaborate descriptions and feature lists I took to story-telling, and I'd like to share *that* story with you.

As a marketing professional I want to attract potential buyers. The ultimate goal is, of course, to get them interested enough to buy. Like a lighthouse, marketing casts a beacon onto an ocean of prospective clients, warning them of the dangers of buying from competitors and steering them towards the benefits of our product's safe harbor. The product has a story to tell, as does the company and prospective customers. The key is telling the story in such a way that it authentically portrays the company and product, and at the same time touches a basic, core story within the customer that speaks to what they do and what they want to achieve.

The true gift is to sell the story, not the product.

So how to begin the story? My first step: determine my company's archetype. Carol described this as the *mythic story of an organization* where one or more of history's great tales (from literature, art, sacred writings) is being played out. This story or archetype encapsulates the company's values, its cultures, its goals. It tells the story of how people work together within and outside the company. In effect, it is the company's brand.

Next step: determine my customer's archetype. What are my customer's values at the company level, but more importantly at a personal job level? I talked to customers, became familiar with their work processes, their objectives. This story describes what the customer wants to accomplish in their work, what gives their work meaning, what points to success, what makes them a leader.

The final step: Blending the story of my company and what it delivers with that of my potential customers and what they want to accomplish. In the blending, customers hear a familiar story, one that elicits a core feeling or sentiment. My product's story is then enveloped by this story. Customers are attracted by a product story that brings out a deep feeling at the core of their value and worth to their company.

This process has given me a much deeper understanding of my company and my customers. I now have a clearer vision of how our stories connect and how the blending of our stories can accomplish our collective goals.

Nadine Tanner is director of marketing and communications at Coemergence Inc., a Halifax-based competitive intelligence software company.