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The Moral of the Story is...Use Stories to Sell

By Lisa Lake

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Every story has an emotional response to elicit. When campers are sitting around a fire in the dark woods, they tell stories that generate fear and excitement; stories about psychotic killers with hooks for hands, and teenagers who pick up strange hitchhikers.

When women have lunch with their girlfriends, they tell amusing stories about their husbands and boyfriends to relate to each other. And when you tell a story on your website, in an article, or even in an ad, you are letting people know that, "this product, service, or business opportunity worked for other real live people, so it could work for you, too!"

People don't remember statistics, but they have a special storage compartment in their brains for stories. Stories are an innate part of human beings. As long as there have been people, there have been stories. They are a part of every culture that is or ever was, ranging from writing on walls, to oral traditions, to dramatic plays, to the modern novel. Stories capture our hearts and imaginations, so we tend to pay more attention to them than we would, say, hard-sell ads.

Consider how often you leave the room during commercials, as opposed to how often you leave during Friends or E.R. Maybe the difference is no more than the mode of presentation. If commercials were 30 minutes long and told a story, maybe we wouldn't lunge for the remote or leave the room when they came on.

The Moral of the Story is...Use Stories to Sell

I'm kidding about the 30 minute commercial, but I'm not kidding about using stories to sell. Let's talk about how you can use stories in your own copy to keep people's attention, build trust and credibility, and, most importantly, sell.

After reading a fair number of popular novels, you may begin to notice a pattern in how the protagonists of the story develop. Although you aren't writing a novel for your website, ad, or article, you can use this same process of development in your stories to help you sell.

Let's take a closer look at character development in popular

writing and see what we can incorporate into our own stories, to increase sales and build credibility:

1. Remember the past—Whether you are relating your own story, or the story of someone who enjoyed success after doing business with you, give that person a past. In a novel, main characters don't appear out of nowhere. They have a past that begins before the circumstances of the novel. Similarly, when you tell a story in your copy, you need to let your readers know about your protagonist's past.

For an example, see Jim Daniels' story (<http://bizweb2000.com>) of how he built his Internet business. The story doesn't start with him at the moment his business took off. It starts with him working a miserable 9 to 5 job he hated. Then it moves to him working to build his Internet business.

Giving the protagonist of your story a past helps the reader to relate to that person, making them more three-dimensional and easier to believe in.

2. Generate empathy—You want your reader to feel what the protagonist is feeling. The information you convey must touch something in the reader, making him/her think, "I know just how that feels."

The more your reader can relate to the protagonist of the story, the more they will see their own lives paralleling that person's. For example, say you tell a story about the trials a woman with weight problems went through, how she felt about being overweight, and then tell how she was able to change her life with your weight loss supplements. If the story is told in a way

that makes the reader recognize feelings similar to those of the overweight woman, they will be likely to buy the product.

3. Generate sympathy—This is a different task than generating empathy. When you feel things empathetically, you are feeling what someone else is feeling. When you feel sympathy, you feel concern or sorrow for someone else.

The purpose of generating sympathy is to get the reader more involved in the story. We all love conflict and turmoil, so the more there is, the more interested we are. If you tell a story about a woman whose husband died, leaving her with debt and four kids to take care of, we feel a great deal of sympathy for her. And just as we all rubber-neck at the scene of a horrible accident, we can't stop reading about someone one else's problems and trials.

4. Show how the protagonist changed—If you read an entire novel in which the main character never learned anything or changed in any way, you would shut the book thinking, "What was the point?"

If the person you tell a story about doesn't change for the better, the story won't do you any good. When you are using a story to sell or build credibility, it must always have a happy ending. And that happy ending must come about because of your product, service, or business opportunity.

Don't be afraid to tell your story every chance you get. If you don't tell your story, other people will. And they often won't get the details right.

I remember a woman who owned a big string of electronics stores in the Southwest. Everyone in town knew the story about her first arriving in the area, with only \$300 in her pocket to start her first store.

One day I had a chance to ask the entrepreneur about this story. "Gosh no," she laughed. "I don't know where that story comes from. I started my business with a mountain of market research and plenty of investment money."

The moral of this story is, follow the character development patterns used by popular novelists. Using these techniques, writers keep people involved in a story for hundreds of pages. You will certainly be able to draw readers in and keep their

attention for a few paragraphs.

Lisa Lake has created a list of top promotional methods on her <http://MyAdBlaster.com>. Lisa also writes ad copy that sells for DrNunley's <http://InternetWriters.com> Reach her at <mailto:lisa@myadblaster.com> or 801-328-9006.

Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?

By Nick Vernon

Creative Writing Tips -

The writer, who doesn't have the time to plot, always finds the time to rewrite.

Sound familiar?

I've been guilty of this too, back in the early days of my writing apprenticeship. I was so eager to get stuck into writing my story that I wouldn't bother with plotting.

Plotting gives you a sense of direction. It's your map, which will lead you to write your story. Leaping into the unknown rarely works. Without a plot several things can happen.... Our stories aren't focused

We lose our way Our characters don't come to life because we don't take the time to develop them

We get stuck The story strays from us

And all this happens when we haven't figured everything out first.

Your plot is the foundation of your story. It's the skeleton, which will hold your story together. Your plot is there to work everything out first - to see if it can be worked out, and then flesh out that skeleton with other elements that make a story.

Plotting is the difference between writing a story for yourself and writing one for an audience. Writing for ourselves doesn't require too much strain because we only have ourselves to please. It's when we have to please our readers that the hard work begins.

If you are aiming to sell your stories, plotting is a must.

Have you plotted your story before writing it?

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information, articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

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Who Said You Can't Make A Profitable Income Selling Your Short Stories?

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