

# 7 Secrets to Crafting Stories that Go Viral



***In today's congested marketplace you either TELL POWERFUL STORIES or...people forget you.***

These 7 secrets come from studying many of the great storytellers -- political orators, business leaders and motivational speakers. Once you know and apply these 7 secrets your communication will “stick” and go viral like nothing else.



## **Number 1: Get Clear on Your Desired Outcome**

Often people tell a story just because they like the story. In a business setting, you first want to get clear on these 6 things. This clarity is the framework you need to then find and build your story. Fill-in-the-blanks:

1. What is your role? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your offer? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is your story for? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What's in it for them to listen? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What do you want them to do as a result of listening? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Example #1: Marketing Coach**

1. Your role -- *a marketing coach speaking at a business startup networking event*
2. Your offer -- *how to use blogging to build your list*
3. Who your story is for -- *prospective clients*
4. What's in it for them -- *the possibility of having more clients and income*
5. What you want them to do as a result of listening - *refer you to others, become a client*

### **Example #2: Team Leader**

1. Your role -- *a team leader in a company*
2. Your offer -- *how to successfully merge two teams into one*
3. Who your story is for -- *team members*
4. What's in it for them -- *how to lower their stress and increase a sense of team*
5. What you want them to do as a result of listening -- *change their attitude towards the rival team, work together more successfully, increase effectiveness as a group*

## Number 2: Choose the Right Type of Story

There are many kinds of stories you could choose from. Great storytellers find one that creates the outcomes they want (e.g. what you listed in Number 1).

Here are possibilities. Tick off which of these you will explore.

- Story from your own life \_\_\_\_\_
- Story from someone else's life \_\_\_\_\_
- Myth, fairytale or legend \_\_\_\_\_
- Story from book, film, internet, TV \_\_\_\_\_
- Fictional story you make up \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Number 3: Decide on a Hero

Every story needs a hero or central character. Focus on how this central character changes. If you are telling a story from your own life, then YOU are the hero.

My hero or heroine = \_\_\_\_\_

## Number 4: Choose a Story Structure

Great storytellers know that all stories have 4 elements that can affect structure: idea, setting, character, and event. All four of these elements are in most stories, however usually one dominates the others. They just choose one to dominate their story while also keeping their desired outcomes in mind.

**Idea structure** – This kind of story mainly focuses on a question and ends when the question is answered. For example, most mysteries use this structure. Who committed the crime? Other idea structures might be why did the ancient civilization of Atlantis come to an end, or why did the apes take over in Planet of the Apes?

**Setting structure** – This kind of story mainly focuses on the place, the world, the environment in which the story happens. For example the Wizard of Oz wouldn't be much of a story without the Land of Oz. In fact the story ends when she leaves Oz.

**Character structure** - This kind of story mainly focuses on the transformation of the character's role in the communities that most matter to her. Many biographies have this

structure. Another example is a fairytale like Cinderella. The story ends when the heroine changes her role within her community from scullery maid to Princess.

**Event structure** - This kind of story mainly focuses on how something is wrong in the fabric of the universe. The world is out of order. For example, the unnatural murder of a king by his brother in *Hamlet*. The reappearance of a powerful adversary in *The Lord of the Rings*. The event story usually ends at the point when a new order is established.

The structure of my story = \_\_\_\_\_

## Number 5: Write Your First Draft

Great storytellers know that first drafts are never very good. They are usually too long winded, unclear, missing parts, etc. They allow themselves to just get the first draft down without interrupting the creative flow by correcting mistakes.

You can start by writing it out long hand or use computer. Good storytellers know that the writing style has to be for the spoken word. This means it will be more informal. To that end, you might want to try voice recognition software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking. Also, this will help you be more free flowing, and less in “editor” mode. Just go start-to-finish even if you don’t like what you’re writing. Let the story tell itself.

## Number 6: Edit, edit, edit

A great storyteller knows that writing is like sculpting a piece of clay; you need to edit away the excess to see the beauty underneath. Once they have their first draft (the un-sculpted piece of clay) they then need to get in editor mode. Great storytellers expect to re-write their story several times before it’s ready to tell. Here are ways you could look to improve your story.

- a) **Include audience benefits.** You need to make it clear when you introduce the story what’s in it for them to listen. Start by making a big list of any possible benefit people could gain from listening to your story. Then put those into a pithy opening statement. Brainstorm on all possible benefits:

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- b) **Use the 5 Senses:** When telling your story you want to create something called "narrative transport". You can accomplish this by using descriptions involving the five senses. For example:

What does the heroine see specifically? \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of sounds does she hear? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of emotional feelings does she experience? \_\_\_\_\_

What are her physical feelings? \_\_\_\_\_

What can she smell? \_\_\_\_\_

What can she taste? \_\_\_\_\_

You may not need to answer all of these, but challenge yourself to add as much sensory specificity as possible to take people there in the moment.

- c) **What's missing?** Where do you have leaps in logic? What could be confusing?  
d) **What needs to be cut?** Where does it go on too long or tangent?

## Number 7: Deliver with Presence

Great storytellers memorize their story so that it comes across in a clear, well-structured, concise fashion. After you inherently understand good story structure you can improvise, but in the beginning memorizing will help you feel more confident.

Great storytellers are present with their listener as much as possible. Even though they are doing most of the talking, they listen while they speak. They are in synch with their listener and change as they change. For example, they pause after a powerful statement. They don't continue until they see that the listener has taken in what they just said.

Great storytellers also often "act out" parts of their story where appropriate. They become another character in the story by changing their voice and posture. For example, they mime the actions a character is taking in the story like shaking a hand or talking on the phone.

Here is a checklist for good story delivery:

- Write in the word "Pause" in places you think you should stop talking for a moment
- Note places to "act out" parts of the story through voice and gestures
- Video yourself telling the story to watch for tone, gestures and facial expressions

Have fun with it! To your success!! **Carla Rieger**