

The Master or The Hero[®]

by Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

Your company is over 100 years old. Its founders started the company on the belief that their knowledge and systems could help others be more effective. They grew the company by seeking out information and knowledge, becoming self-reflective enough to understand the thinking process, then gave their gift of wisdom and intelligence to the world.

Or...

Perhaps you were going along in your everyday world, had an idea and were urged by events or advice to heed the call. You started your own company and have now entered a special world where you encounter tests, discover allies and enemies and have risen above it all to improve the world with your product or service.

All of the great stories of our lifetime occur again and again. We see them in movies and read them in books. Cinderella, Star Wars, Star Trek, Forrest Gump, The Wizard of Oz, It's A Wonderful Life, etc.

The packaging varies but the essence of the individual stories remain. Using these stories as a guideline you can create the story of your company and in so doing, you will be creating a cohesive message for your clients, your employees and your shareholders.

Searching For Your Story: Go back in time and investigate your company from the very beginning. Answer questions such as: Who created your company and why? How would you describe the founders? What was the culture like at the time your company was created? If they made a movie about your company, what would be the title and who would be the actors?

Tip From The Business Lab: Approach your investigation as if you were creating a documentary about your company. Reach for the emotion and folklore of your company. With your team, create chapters about your company and have each team member research, report, reenact, etc. the various chapters so that you could literally write a book about your company.

Reality Check: Take all the information you have learned about your company and compare this history to the truth about your product or service today. For example, the banking and health care industries of today are far from their origins as helpers, healers, caregivers.

Tip From The Business Lab: If your past and present are incongruent then it may be time to create a new differentiating message. Still begin by searching for your story but in this case you will be creating a new "you" based on the current business climate and your organization's persona. As the leader of your company, your story

starts with you and what you believe about your product or service, about the talent of your organization, about your clients, about the climate of your industry, etc.

Model Your Story: In the two examples provided at the beginning of this article, we can easily conjure up images and stories for each. In the first, we can almost see the Guide, The Master, The Sage, Our Grandfather, Merlin advising Arthur, Obi-Wan Kenobi mentoring Luke Skywalker, Oprah helping everyone, MIT, Harvard, Yale, etc. In the second story a clear sense of heroism comes to mind. Here the founders are Arthur leading his Knights, Luke Skywalker setting things right, FedEx, The Marines, etc.

Use the tried-and-true stories that have guided us for centuries to guide you in creating your image, your story, your identity. There are several story types that can be identified: Master/Guide, Hero, Rebel, Explorer, Mystic, All American, Cinderella, etc.

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, determine the best story type to guide you and your company, then research the story and how it has been used throughout history. By reading these stories over and over you can create a general outline of your story. *Use this outline as a framework for all of your marketing, advertising, training and communications.* Be passionate about sticking to your framework and strengthening your identity by using your story over and over. Avoid mismatches or changing the underlying theme: i.e., Mentors are not Rebels, Heroes should not be rescued, etc.

By creating a story type around you and your company you will help your employees understand their role and you will also provide your clients and prospects with a way to differentiate you as well as identify with you...A key step in branding your company.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic or would like to receive our FREE Service Ideas Booklet, please send an E-mail to kathy@thebusinesslab.com, visit our Web site at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-517-0789.

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