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## Pool As Canvas





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WHAT'S  
YOUR  
STORY?

# Winning Clients' Hearts and Minds With a Compelling Story

## Differentiate yourself from the competition

**T**HE AGE-OLD ADMONITION to “differentiate yourself from your competitors” is what most of us marketing guys consider “Marketing 101.” Tell us why you are the superior choice, and then maybe I will buy from you.

No news there, right? By now, everyone knows you have to have some sort of “unique selling proposition” to be successful — especially if you expect to get a premium for your product or services. So we’re not going to talk about “differentiation” today. Instead, I want to focus on HOW you tell your story to the world.

In a dry, business environment, you might create a PowerPoint presentation with a bulleted list of your advantages. You might even go so far as to compare your capabilities to competitor A and competitor B. Nice and scientific; a sensible analysis to help people make a solid decision.

The problem here is there’s not much passion in PowerPoint. And with no passion, there’s no loyalty. To create loyal, raving fans, you need to make your clients feel like they are part of

something. Like members of a tribe.

Look at Apple, Tesla, Starbucks or Patagonia, for example. These brands all have intensely loyal followings because their buyers believe in the greater philosophy of the companies. They weren’t persuaded by PowerPoint. They were persuaded by the STORY behind the brand. The reason WHY you should love them.

For example, Apple told us to “think differently.” Buck the establishment. Be unique and buy products from a company that really cares about people.

Tesla wants the world to give up those dirty gasoline-powered cars (and trucks) without sacrificing style, comfort or performance. Because who doesn’t love the planet?

Starbucks wants your daily joe to be a great experience, served by people and a company who are hip and part of your tribe.

Patagonia is a master at taking storytelling to a whole new level. Just about every product you look at has an interesting back-story from an individual (often an employee) who had some sort of camping challenge,

and realized the world needed a better product to serve the needs of fellow campers. The result is stylish, high-quality products that non-campers and camper wannabes love as much as real mountain climbers.

Tell a great story, and the world will beat a path to your door.

I’ll give you a perfect example of storytelling in the pool industry AFTER I tell you about this product/company story that grabbed me hook, line and sinker.

They started with the annoyance of mosquitoes, which of course everyone hates. And my wife in particular is especially sensitive to them. Their story started with this young bright college student who was actually highly allergic to mosquito bites. Rather than just getting an itchy bump, he would get major swelling that would take days to go away.

He went to a specialist to find out how to deal with this problem, and the doctor simply said “just don’t go out at night in the summer.” A young, smart and good-looking college student who is not allowed to go out at night during

the summer? What kind of life is that? He knew there had to be a better way.

Naturally, he was compelled and inspired to use his superior intelligence to reverse-engineer all the existing mosquito zappers out there, to find out why they didn't work so well. And guess what? He found a fatal flaw. Apparently all the bug zappers use a wide spectrum of light when they should be using the exact frequency that specifically attracts the biting mosquitoes.

So he designed and built his own version using that unique light frequency. It killed 29 mosquitoes in six minutes. Many skeptics tested it and found it to be overwhelmingly successful, unlike any other product they'd ever seen before.

Are you intrigued? I was. I ordered two of them! On the list of bulleted features, it is fully portable, can be used inside and out, is USB rechargeable, it doubles as a flashlight, and of course, it's totally safe (unless you are a mosquito). But let's be clear — it wasn't the bulleted list of features that got me. It was the cool story about the tragic college student who overcame adversity to invent this breakthrough product. I was sold and wanted to join his tribe of people who are going to protect our loved ones, and help eradicate those annoying mosquitoes from the planet.

Now let's get over to the swimming pool industry. One of my favorite back-stories is the person who was renovating pools in a local town for 20 years, and then decided to start building new pools themselves. After seeing all the problems and deficiencies of all the other pool builders in town, they now had the unique "secret insight" to build pools that overcame all the problems they've had to fix over the last 20 years. And they decided "this town deserves a better pool!"

Great story, right? Truth is, that story probably applies to at least one "renovator-turned-new-pool-builder" in just about every major city in the country. But from a local standpoint, it's still an interesting and compelling story, and it builds a loyal following because their clients feel like they got "the inside track" that they wouldn't have gotten from any of the older, established pool builders.

Now, obviously, if you're one of the older, established pool builders (or if you're brand new in the swimming pool industry), you need a different story. But you already knew that when you tried to come up with your unique selling proposition. What I'm encouraging you to do is take your so-called bullet-point-list of advantages, and tell us an interesting back-story that explains how and why you got here in the first place.

Tell us what you believe in, so we have a chance to believe in you. ~

Brett Lloyd Abbott is the founder and CEO of Pool Builder Marketing LLC ([www.PoolBuilderMarketing.com](http://www.PoolBuilderMarketing.com)), a marketing consulting agency that works exclusively with swimming pool builders, pool service companies, and high-end landscape professionals throughout the world. He is a frequent keynote speaker and leader of workshops and seminars.

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