

How to Tell Compelling Stories that Get Attention

with Mike DaRe, Managing Director of Smarts Agency



- Define your audience.
 - We talk about this being the place to start, yet many people skip this. Why? Because they want to tell the story they want to tell versus telling the story the audience they care about wants to hear.
 - It's important to understand not just the demographics of the audience but the psychographics. This helps you uncover opportunities for engagement that transcends a demographic stat. For example, Tide focused much of their branding on women, 22-44, had a family with multiple younger kids, primary shopper and laundry doer. This gets to a big part of the population and is a place to start.
 - In trying to tell a story, it isn't specific enough to figure out how to relate to them in a compelling way. This is where you have to dig deeper and where insights like "busy moms" started to arise. Busy moms don't have time to spend doing laundry, so they want to make sure the stains come out the first time and are willing to pay more for that. Then it was about busy moms who really care about how their kids look and didn't want them showing up at school or practice with stains. Then it became about busy parents in general and dads joined in. Tide saved the day versus just doing a very mechanical function of removing stains.
- Know your category.
 - It is so important to be grounded within your category. This doesn't mean you can't be creative, this is where the challenge arises. Differentiation is what helps you to rise above the commodity trap and become a brand. So what is important to know about your category?
 - How does your audience become aware of you?
 - How and where do they engage?
 - What are their expectations?
 - What are their frustrations?
 - Where can the category stretch? What are the opportunities?
 - Why do people leave the category or opt-out and where are they going? Think hotels to AirBnB, taxis to Uber.
 - Be careful not to try and reinvent the wheel. There needs to be some familiarity to anchor people back.
- Connect to culture.
 - This is about being in-touch and creating relevancy. There are two sides of this but it all stems from knowing and understanding what is important to your audience. One one side, if you can tap into an angle that is authentic to the brand AND your audience, you create the coveted Brand-Love. Equally important is making sure you aren't tone-deaf to the positioning and feelings of your audience.
 - Tapping into culture is more an art than a science. It takes an intuitive person that can empathize and provide candid feedback. Which means, you should have a person on your team that can authentically relate if you want to authentically connect.
- Find the intersection of audience, category and culture to glean your powerful insight.
 - Think of it as a Venn diagram where you are trying to find the intersection of the three in order to find the ideal place to play in order to anchor your story. At this point, a lot of business and brands have given up for the easier rout of just telling a story versus a compelling story. If you made it this far, you already have a leg up on your competition.
 - This insight becomes the hook for which you anchor your story. This is the intersection point where you can create an authentic place of connection that helps you foster Brand-Love. It becomes the place you build the foundation of your brand and the way you differentiate and create tangible value.
 - Build your Brand Story, Message Track and Comms/Marketing Strategy from this anchor point. This ensures your brand has cohesiveness around the story and that the story becomes ownable to you. Recall from all the conversations we have talked about stunts, it creating connection, it is imperative that you capture attention AND for that attention to be attributed to you. One without the other is wasted effort.