

# Talkin' Story

## *By Joe Sugarman*

There's an expression in Hawaii that I've heard a lot from my many friends there. When they have to talk to you about something, whether it be serious or just conversation, they say, "Joe, we gotta talk story."

People love stories and one of the really good ways to relate to your prospect is to tell a story. Just as a picture is worth a thousand words, a story can be invaluable and often creates an emotional relationship that keeps your prospect riveted and listening. Stories create human interest. In childhood, stories read to us by our parents were the way we fantasized or even saw the world. In short, we've been primed for stories ever since we were very young.

Think of the public speaker who starts his speech with a story or uses stories throughout his or her presentation. It makes for an interesting presentation and often holds the interest of the audience. In fact, very often, after I've been listening to a boring speaker and I start to doze, I wake up when I know a story is about to be told.

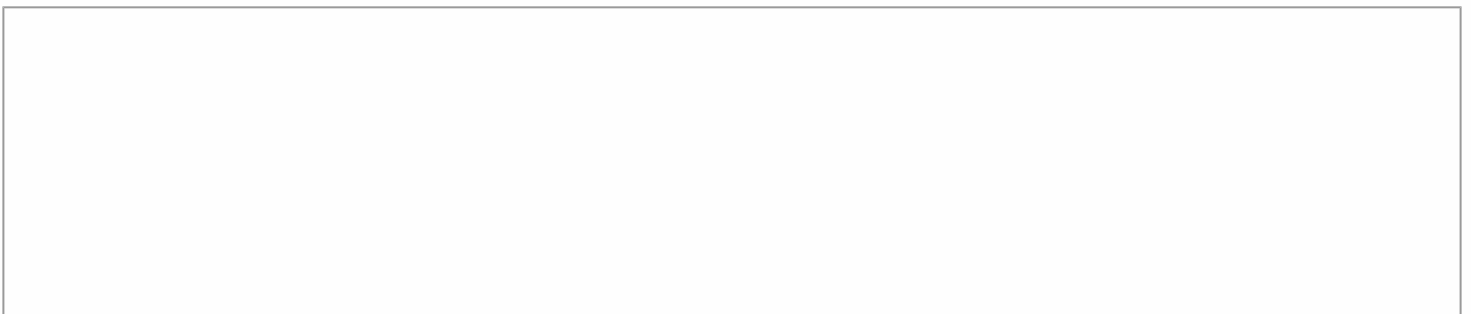
Stories usually have lessons to teach or experiences to share or even endings that can excite and surprise. And so it is with selling. If you tell a story in your sales presentation that is relevant either to selling your product, creating the environment for selling your product, or getting the prospect involved with your sales presentation, you are using this wonderful and powerful trigger in a very effective way to sell your product or service.

Finally, some stories add a unique human element that allows you to relate to and bond very closely with your prospects.

Kathy Levine, one of the best television home shopping show hosts, wrote in her book *It's Better to Laugh*, "I realized early on that selling is a matter of capturing people's attention and holding it with a good story."

The most interesting salespeople I know always have a story to tell. It is their way of relating to their customers and entertaining them as well. One in particular has a repertoire of a thousand jokes—each targeted to his prospect, to the selling environment, and to what he has to sell. As you can imagine, he is very effective.

My most successful advertising campaigns all used stories as the basis for my presentation. Let me present one example of this technique from one of my ads. The following paragraphs from an ad I wrote for BluBlocker sunglasses will give you a flavor of how a story can be very helpful in creating human interest that will cause your prospects to read your entire message.



**Headline:** Vision Breakthrough

**Subheadline:** When I put on the pair of glasses, what I saw I could not believe. Nor will you.

**Byline:** By Joseph Sugarman

**Copy:** I am about to tell you a true story. If you believe me, you will be well rewarded. If you don't believe me, I will make it worth your while to change your mind. Let me explain.

Len is a friend of mine who knows good products. One day he called excited about a pair of sunglasses he owned. "It's so incredible," he said, "when you first look through a pair, you won't believe it."

"What will I see?" I asked. "What could be so incredible?"

Len continued, "When you put on these glasses, your vision improves. Objects appear sharper, more defined. Everything takes on an enhanced 3-D effect. And it's not my imagination. I just want you to see for yourself."

The story continues as I personally look through the sunglasses and learn more about them from Len. It uses a conversational tone but still covers all the important points about the sunglasses, the danger from the sun, and the danger caused by blue light.

A story is used very effectively to build curiosity and cause the reader to read all the copy, and eventually to read the final sales pitch. That ad for BluBlocker sunglasses launched a multimillion-dollar company that eventually sold 20 million pairs of sunglasses.

When selling your prospect, think about using a few stories that might be of interest to your prospect and assist in the sale of your product. Stories about some of the other people in the industry, stories about a new development and how you discovered it—stories not necessarily about yourself but about subjects that would be of interest to your prospects.

Timing is also important in the storytelling process. It is nice to start with a story because it holds attention and gets the prospect into the listening mode. Or use stories throughout the presentation to add variety and rhythm to the presentation.

Telling stories is an art form and using it effectively in a sales presentation grows with experience. Simply being aware of its potential and its effectiveness is a good start. You'll be surprised at how many stories you'll be able to come up with once you put your mind to it.

A good story should capture a person's attention, relate the product or service to the sales message, and help you bond with the prospect. And you'll live happily ever after.

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