

COLUMNS

## How to evolve storytelling into storybuilding

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By [Joe Gillespie](#)

Good brand storytelling, like all good storytelling, is rooted in authenticity and originality. It results in qualities that resonate with audiences entertainment, intrigue and engagement and is not going anywhere any time soon.

Storytelling platforms, however, are evolving at the same speed as technology and consumer habits. And nowhere is this evolution more apparent than in the mobile theatre. Exeunt "The Age of Storytelling," enter "The Age of Storybuilding" a highly personalized form of storytelling that uses knowledge about consumer trends to create a series of complementary experiences across channels.

Storytelling across channels has traditionally been achieved by altering one story so that it fits the outlet or channel at hand.

There is the 30-second television spot version of the story, then the Facebook version, the Twitter version, the billboard version, and so on. The result is a single story, fashioned into multiple shapes and sizes that offers consumers a consistent brand experience. Unfortunately, it is also a redundant one.

Storybuilding, on the other hand, is achieved by assigning each channel a different role in the telling of a larger story. This approach can appear daunting, as it seemingly leaves to chance whether consumers will come into contact with each piece of the narrative.

But storybuilding is not a matter of crossing your fingers and hoping for the best. It is the effect of developing your strategy to ensure that the audience engages with each distinct experience at the proper time and in the proper place.

So how does one do that? To get started, there are three main ingredients you must have for your upcoming storybuilding efforts.

Ensure all roads lead to mobile

In other words, when mapping out your campaign, build it around mobile, rather than just including mobile as one of many components. Reason being, mobile is the linchpin between awareness and action.

Whereas most components of your campaign will go toward creating awareness, mobile can be used to amplify other platforms and seal the deal.

No matter where you use it throughout your campaign, just make sure that mobile ultimately comes into play when it is time for the consumer to take action.

Disney has been following this rule closely with the promotion of its theme parks.

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By banking dedicated mobile applications for its phone pads and delivering those apps to users' phones via prompts on television and in print ads they are both tying together disparate facets of their marketing strategies and ensuring they can control, and develop both the story and user engagement from beginning to end.

Give your audience a starring role in the story

This may go without saying, but if you are looking for an attentive audience you had better provide an easy way for them to engage.

Gone are the days of piping your ads into the ether with no way for viewers or listeners to respond or interact.

Today's mobile technology activates your audience immediately because everyone now has the ability to respond to ads with their mobile devices, in the exact moment you want them to.

One company doing a particularly great job of this is Dove.

Since 2004, Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" has been groundbreaking in both its message and how it has successfully used new technologies and content delivery channels as the campaign evolved.

As part of this effort, Dove ran an advertisement on an interactive billboard in New York's Times Square that allowed people passing by to connect with the live ad via their social media profiles and watch their profile pictures instantaneously appear on the digital display in real time.

This all happened with the push of a button on a mobile phone, and resulted in engaged and active consumers. The social media chatter that resulted from there only continued the organic progression of this story.

Use audience usage data to trigger mobile content at the right time and place

One benefit of today's technology is that content can be specifically tailored for and delivered to people in precise locations.

Using geofencing a way to set up location perimeters based on the user's GPS location targeted messaging and content can be used to ensure that your audience will always receive information that is relevant and compelling.

In the case of consumer brands, this could be anything from coupons that drive traffic into nearby stores to app downloads that coincide a local campaign.

Ford is using this technology to great effect to promote a new and improved car model.

Strategizing around the famous Bonaroo Music and Arts Festival, the automaker was able to geo-fence the perimeter of the grounds. Anyone who responded to various prompts placed throughout the site then received a customized message and content that only people calling from within that specific area could view. Now that is precision.

LONG STORYSHORT, successful storybuilding campaigns contain all the qualities of a good story, but they also take into account the various content delivery mechanisms, users' expectations and mobile capabilities.

Further, they maximize the potential and measurement of traditionally passive channels such as video, radio, print or outdoor advertising.

As time goes on, the companies and brands that tell the strongest stories are not the ones who simply tell them well, but rather the ones that bring them to life with interactive technology.

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