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How to Win Business with Story Edit

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I'll never forget the first time I lead a pitch for new business. It was back in my agency days.

A \$250,000 public relations contract was at stake, and the agency partners were hot to rekindle the flame with this international brand and former client.

The good news? We had two weeks to prepare.

The bad news? The owners of the company always lead our pitches for new business, and they would be in China on pitch day.

I'd sat in on, and even participated in, several new business presentations but the agency partners ALWAYS lead these presentations. This time, my counterpart and I were in charge.

We'd own the outcome, win or lose.

Truthfully, I went into this opportunity with a lousy mindset. I half expected the client to laugh us out of the room. They knew the partners, not us, and I thought they'd be less than thrilled to be getting the "B team" (I know, I wish I could back and smack myself too).



(<http://thestorystylist.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/I-Won-Biz.jpg>)

by Search Engine People Blog



With little time to spare, we plowed ahead on crafting our presentation. If you stripped all the branding off our “deck” and the decks from the other three agencies courting this client, they would’ve been hard to distinguish.

And yet, we won the business.

But how?

1. **We got to know our audience, their business and their product.** The prospect is a leading manufacturer of headlights and they wanted more publicity and exposure for their high-performance line. I’d never heard of such a thing (have you?) – a headlight is a headlight right? (I can assure you, no.) So one of the very first things I did was purchase a pair of these brighter, whiter headlights for myself.
2. **We were crystal clear about our objective.** We wanted this business. We made sure to ask for the business, but we also knew that we needed to earn that business . . . Even though the decision-makers knew our agency, they didn’t know me and counterpart at all. We had to get them to like us and trust us before our 60 minutes were up.
3. **We included meaty content.** We pulled in data, relevant case studies and a high level overview of how we would tackle their problem and get results. Here’s the kicker though . . . so did everyone else.
4. **We started with a story.** Before we fired up the PowerPoint, I got personal. I told them that before this opportunity, I really didn’t think much about my headlights. But after learning about their product, I left work, drove to Auto Zone and bought a pair for myself to try out. I then shared the story of my experience with their product. Their body language shifted immediately from “I’m judging you” to “Tell me more.” And that – a story – was the secret to our success. I’d bet my bonus on it.

We’ve all heard content is king. One of the best ways to provide value in your business is through content – talks, email, blogs, videos, books . . . **But if content is king, then story is the queen [Tweet This! (<http://ctt.ec/SiODF>)].**

Alison Quirk, executive vice president of State Street Corporation, said this about the “talk of her life” for TED:

“When you move from the abstract to the personal, people become more invested in what you’re saying – and their ability to recall and retain the information is so much greater.”

In other words, when your content (the value) and your story (the emotional trigger) work together, you win.



What stories will you sprinkle into your next talk or presentation? Share this post, then leave me a comment below and tell me how you're going to start (or keep!) using story to grow your business.

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Gary Rush on April 15, 2014 at 8:23 pm

