



# Inside Every Boring Client There's A Great Story Waiting To Get Out

People love stories. Before civilization created social studies, history was passed down from one generation to the next through an oral tradition involving the telling of stories. Why? Because people love stories.

Need proof? If a co-worker starts a conversation by saying, "Let me tell you about my vacation," it could only get worse if there's a slide projector involved. But if that same colleague says, "I've got a great story about my weekend in Las Vegas," you're all ears.

Every client on the radio has a story to tell. It's the job of the account executive and creative services team to discern what that story is and to present it in a way that breaks through the clutter.

Let me tell you a story: Ralph started as a client and became a good friend. The owner of a group of appliance stores, Ralph is a very smart guy. When it comes to advertising, he gets it. He's very fussy about his radio copy, and his constant lament when perusing my copy is, "We've almost got it, but we're not quite there yet."

This was an ongoing struggle, sometimes taking four or five iterations. I sensed his desire to make every word count. One day, we stood in the back of his store, toiling over his spot amid washer/dryer/refrigerator parts and bins of wiry, shiny things that made me glad I write copy for a living. I had my laptop with me, and I'd take a stab at it, then show him the result. He'd say something like, "Hmmm." This was not a good sign. Finally, I said, "Ralph, if you were at a party and met a drop-dead-gorgeous woman and she said, tell me about your business, what would you say?"

"I'm married," he told me.

"Work with me Ralph," I implored. "I'm trying to find out how you'd make it interesting."

A light bulb went off over Ralph's head. We were in an appliance store, so he probably knew its stock number and wattage. "Ohhhhhh," he said, smiling. "You mean my elevator speech."

He explained that he'd taken a self-improvement course for small business owners, and one exercise was to prepare a

concise description of your company that lasts about as long as an elevator ride.

He recited his elevator speech. "If you call us, we'll be right over, giving you a guaranteed two-hour window of when we'll arrive so you won't lose a day's work and then either fix your appliance or replace it within 24 hours. And every appliance we sell comes with a free, three-year warranty

backed by the only factory-certified technicians in our area. Since we belong to a national buying service, we do all this at prices that are the same or better than you'll find at the so-called discount stores, which don't offer any of these services."

I blinked. "Ralph, that's it! Every one of your spots will include that information in some fashion, even if it's talking about a scratch 'n dent sale or National Dryer Safety Month. And every spot will fea-

ture you, saying, "Call us. We'll be right over."

Thus was born a benefit-driven campaign that tells a story people want to hear. It answers a need and allays the fear, uncertainty, and doubt regarding the repair or purchase of a major appliance. Ralph still uses this campaign after two years because it's his story and it works.

It's important to cut through the "we do, we have, we think, we believe, we know," blah-blah that clients throw at you when you do a needs analysis — the stuff advertising legend Norm Grey calls "Corporate Wee-Wee." You have to get to the core of the story.

It's not easy. You'll hear hackneyed phrases like "experience is our big difference," or "we guarantee satisfaction after the sale," or the ever-popular riff about knowledgeable, friendly salespeople.

But if you dig and dig, you'll get to the real story. Then, tell it and sell it.

Because people love stories. 📺



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