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Introduction

Most mailing lists suck. They really do. They are built using weak content messaging which lead to weak squeeze pages. Weak squeeze pages produce weak lists. If you want to make money online you need to fix this process. At the very least, you need to tighten up the series of messages that lead to your squeeze page. You also need to take full control of the message you're sending out with your squeeze page. Unfortunately, using standard squeeze pages or templates is not just going to cut it.

You have to set a consistent storyline from the beginning. This is crucial in forming the right expectations and getting the right kind of actions from your list members. Otherwise, you are just going to fall into the same trap that most list marketers fall into. They focus too much on numbers and not enough on quality. They feel entitled to success based solely on the fact that they have a “huge list”. Even with very low conversion percentages, they expect their huge numbers to result in a decent income from their list. Not surprisingly, these marketers make little, if any, money off their mailing lists. What gives?

You have to focus on the right squeeze page and overall messaging you send out to your prospective list members. One of the most effective ways to do this is to use effective storytelling. Effective story telling involves a complete process: it deals with things you do before people get to your squeeze page, while they are on your squeeze page, and after they have entered their email information into your squeeze page.

Effective storytelling-based list building is the most effective way to succeed with email marketing. While you can still get some results using alternative approaches, you will be settling for cents on the dollar. You probably would have to spend a lot more dollars, to get the same amount of results than if you had taken the time to fully incorporate a storytelling-based strategy into your list marketing activities.

This book steps you through the psychological and practical dimensions of building a mailing list around storytelling. By appealing to your marketing materials' readers on a deeply personal level, you make the value proposition you're bringing to the table come to vivid life. Since most other marketers resort to dull, lifeless, or predictably generic marketing strategies in building their lists, your story-driven strategy can give you a powerful competitive advantage. Take the ideas I discuss in this book and let them help you build a powerful, unique, and customized list building strategy that can take your business to the next level.

To Your Success!

Nicole Flothe – JENStarMedia.com

Chapter 1

Why Stories? Why Now?

Human beings navigate the world through stories. That is how we make sense of all the information that our bodies pick up. We can look at things, we can smell things, we can touch things, we can hear things - we can detect all sorts of things. However, our mind is quite selective as to which of these things impact how we feel, think, and act. In fact, we are so good at filtering out external stimuli that we are only conscious of a fraction of the things our bodies detect. Interestingly enough, of all the things that we allow ourselves to be conscious of, we choose to remember only a fraction of those. What gives? Very simple - we think in terms of stories.

We have this existing story in our mind of: who we are, our place in the world, and how we choose to look at the world. Stories enable us to have an identity. They enable us to explain ourselves, not just to other people, but to ourselves as well. If you were to just process information on a random and wholesale basis, you would go crazy. You would have to have a system for storing that information and making sense of that information. New information must fit the overriding story we have of ourselves.

Stories act as emotional gateways to new information. This is why they are crucial to online marketing. It doesn't matter whether you are marketing through banner ads, articles or other types of content, a squeeze page or a series of pages that lead to a squeeze page-you have to tell a story.

Keep the following in mind.

What Does Storytelling Have to Do with Making Money Off a Mailing List?

You have to master the art of story-telling for you to effectively communicate your value proposition. If you want people to join your mailing list, they have to have a clear idea as to what you are offering. They also have to clearly see the need for them to join your mailing list. At the very least, they need to understand these two pieces of information for them to get what you are offering. These involve a lot of data points. These involve a lot of pieces of information. You can just tell people to sign up for your mailing list, but you probably won't go very far. Even if you use fancy fonts or great pictures, chances are your likelihood of success would be pretty mediocre. Why? You might be setting the wrong expectations. You might be sending a confusing message and end up attracting list members who have no intention of buying from you.

If you want to attract highly qualified prospects, you need to use stories. Don't get me wrong, very basic and straightforward squeeze pages can get people to sign up. The problem is, once they have signed up, how do you get them to convert?

Conversion is King

At the end of the day, it is all about conversion. It doesn't really make much sense to get one thousand people to sign up for your mailing list, when only one of them ends up converting. It is much better to get one hundred people to sign up for your mailing list and at the end of the day you have fifty of them convert to your offer. I hope you can see the simple mathematics here.

Story-telling is a very powerful component of a competent mailing list strategy because it helps you filter your prospects. It helps you attract the right prospects. Most importantly, it helps you set the tone of the relationship.

Good Email Lists are Built on Relationships

Getting people to sign up to your mailing list is the beginning of a relationship. When somebody signs up to your mailing list, they are telling you to keep sending them information. Put simply, they are telling you to keep talking to them. They want to have a relationship with your brand.

Using effective story-telling can ensure that you are getting into the right kind of relationship. If you use the typical squeeze page design, you wouldn't have a problem signing up people, but these may be the wrong people. These might be people who are expecting a different kind of relationship. Regardless of how it plays out, at the end of the day, you probably won't make much money. Weaving in effective story-telling elements increases your likelihood of making money off your list. It is crucial for you to understand how stories work, and incorporate as much of storytelling's power of persuasion into your squeeze page as well as the pages that precede your squeeze page. Stories also help boost the effectiveness of information pages.

Human Beings Make Sense of the World through Stories

I have said this already above, but I cannot emphasize this enough: human beings make sense of the world through stories. You may not be aware of it. You might even think this is some crazy talk, but it is true. You have a story. You look at the world as a story. In fact, it happens automatically that you are not aware of it.

Think of it this way. To prove my point, try to think in such a way that there is no beginning, middle, or end. Take chronology out of your memory. Give up? Of course you will. If not, you are going crazy.

Time and memory are interlinked. They define each other, and this is really important because it is at the core of stories. Stories help you make sense of the world because it reduces the world into a sequence of relationships. Moreover, just as time is related to memory, time also help us make sense of the relationships between concepts. There are also relationships between how you perceive yourself and how you perceive the world and your place in the world.

Great stories help you *connect the dots*

A great story resonates with you on a deep personal level. A lot of emotion is involved in this. This is precisely why effective stories drive people to do things. They see themselves in the story. They see their personal narratives at play. They become open and susceptible to being influenced by what would otherwise be a 'foreign' idea. People subconsciously connect the dots between the idea presented to them which trigger emotional hot buttons and their own existing needs and desires.

A great example of this process is a typical Calvin Klein or Guess ad. You look at a billboard and there is a Calvin Klein, Guess, or Ralph Lauren ad. It may just seem like a picture, but that picture is actually selling a story. That story, subconsciously, is selling a lifestyle. You want to be wearing these clothes because they convey a certain lifestyle, a certain enjoyment of life, or a certain attitude.

They all flow into each other, but you only have a picture in front of you. It is that powerful. You read in your hopes and dreams into the picture. Can you imagine how powerful your ads or marketing content would be if your materials told a story which tapped into the minds and emotions of your readers? Can you imagine how amazing your conversion rates would be if all the pages that led to your squeeze page told compelling stories that pushed the readers further and further down the process of signing up to your list?

Stories are crucial, because they enable us to get people to do what we want them to do. Stories are great ways of channeling the power of emotions, so that they lead to where you want them to lead. Normally, you want your messages to lead to people sending you money - by buying your stuff, entering their emails in your CPA forms, or referring your website to their friends on Facebook. Regardless of the specific action, stories play a central role because of their emotional impact.

People Are More Emotional than Rational

The funny thing about human action is that, most of the time, we act on impulse. Most of the time, we read something, hear something, or see something that triggers an emotional response. This then triggers a physical action. After we have done the action, we then try to make sense of what just happened.

We then begin to mentally backtrack, and rationalize what we did. In other words, we try to convince ourselves that our otherwise impulsive action was actually the product of rational deliberation and was purposeful. We tell these stories to ourselves. We tell these stories to other people.

The truth is people are more emotional than rational. This is great news if you are a marketer. This means your job is actually much easier than you realize. If people are rational, chances are they would be buying less stuff. At the very least, chances are they wouldn't be buying your stuff. They would be buying from someone else. Thank goodness, your prospective customers are emotional and impulsive.

This is fantastic news. However, this also means that you need to be a better storyteller. One of the most powerful ways to get people to act on emotional impulse is to tell an engaging story. A well-crafted story gets prospects to buy into the dream you are offering. Stories enable your prospects to step into that picture of the lifestyle your product represents. Best of all, the right story makes your prospects want that lifestyle. Isn't this a better way to promote than simply listing out benefits and asking your prospects to 'enter your email now'?

Effective Stories Pack Concise Meaning and Actions

It is too easy to think that all you need to do is tell a story and your marketing job is done. Wrong! You have to tell a story in such a way that it is short, meaningful, and leads to action quickly. This is what separates writing sales copy from a novel or short story. You need effective sales copy writing skills to boost the effectiveness of a series of pages that lead to a squeeze page. Novel writing and copywriting are two totally different things. With commercial writing, you need to use stories that pack concise meaning, and is unambiguous regarding the action the reader should take.

Be Aware of the Stories You Are Unconsciously Telling

Just as you can tell conscious stories, you can also be telling subconscious or unconscious stories. It is really important to be aware of the stories you are telling, on all

different levels. Obviously, the easiest stories to track are the stories that you are aware of and intentionally try to get out. This is your conscious storytelling.

However, there is also unconscious storytelling. Usually, you figure this out by looking at the things you are leaving out. When you are saying something, there are obviously things you are not saying - things that you are dancing around, things that you are restating, things that you are using euphemisms for. Be very clear as to what these are.

This is important to know because your audience members are never as stupid as you assume. They can read between the lines. They can also fill in the blanks you may have subconsciously left out. If you play fast and loose with the truth, or you tell inconsistent stories, then you are unconsciously telling another kind of story. It is not going to be a very flattering story. Be aware of the stories that you are unconsciously telling about your brand. You might not be currently making as much money as you had hoped because of the unconscious stories that you have been telling your audience. Be aware of these. Fix them so they fit your conscious stories.

Chapter 2

The Anatomy of an Effective Story

Whether you are looking at a print ad, watching TV, or reading a website, they all tell stories. The most effective forms of communication use a storytelling vehicle. The human mind is hardwired to process information most effectively in the form of stories. You can tell crappy advertising from excellent advertising by how seamless the story elements are. In fact, the best ads' story elements are so smoothly woven in, you can't even tell the story it is relating. Moreover, stories are never emotionally neutral. They always carry an emotional payload. This is the spark that drives people to do what you want them to do.

Effective Commercial Story-Telling is all About Manipulation

Make no mistake about it. If you are selling stuff online, you are trying to manipulate people. You are trying to seduce people into doing what they don't normally do. You are trying to convince people of an idea that they may not have. This is what separates effective advertising from not-so-effective advertising.

Become Aware of Key Story-Telling Elements so You Can Use Them Effectively

To become a more effective story-teller, you have to be clear about the key elements of an effective story. You have to understand the different forms these elements take, depending on the form of online advertising, online traffic or signals that you are working with. Online marketers fail because they choose the wrong form of story-telling

at the wrong time, with the wrong traffic or content vehicle. Be aware of the basics of effective story-telling, so you can tweak and modify these elements to maximize your chances of success.

The Character

All stories involve characters. It is very hard to identify, or even recognize, a story that doesn't have characters. There is always, at least, a protagonist in every kind of story. This may sound basic or even commonsensical, but you would be surprised as to how many people screw this up. You would be surprised as to how many advertisers even fail to zero in on a protagonist. You have to have characters. Most importantly, you have to fully develop and identify those characters. It must jump out at the reader.

You have to be very careful how you craft your characters because you need to make sure the reader identifies with the protagonist. The protagonist's role is crucial because the protagonist “takes the reader by the hand” and leads the reader through the conflict, need, and solution in the story. You need someone who is approachable. You need someone the reader can relate to on a deep, fundamental human level.

One of the most effective characters to use in squeeze pages as well as the information pages leading to the squeeze page is yourself, that's right-use the word "I" a lot and tell your story.

Conflict or Problems

Stories don't exist in a vacuum. Stories develop because there is some sort of problem. There is some sort of issue that arises, and the characters respond to that issue. This is how you draw people in. Why? Everyone has problems and needs.

When you describe a problem, people can identify with that problem. In most cases, they don't identify with the problem per se, but they identify with the people who are experiencing that problem. Why? We are all human beings. We all have problems. We all have wounds. We all have shortcomings. We also have the power of empathy—we can relate to what others are going through.

Great stories flush out their characters in such a way that it is very easy to emotionally identify with them. The closer the fit between the reader and the character; the stronger the emotional bond. The stronger the emotional bond; the easier it is to manipulate the reader to think what you want the reader to think.

Great ad and squeeze page stories use a first person perspective and the magical phrase “just like you”. Repeat this enough and give enough concrete examples and you will have the reader identifying closely with you. The more closely they sympathize with you, the easier it is for them to absorb your view of your situation—including your solution for the crisis you encounter.

The Crisis

A lot of people confuse having problems with having a crisis. They are two totally different things. While it is true that all crises are problems, not all problems are crisis. Crises are completely contained within problems, but not all problems can be reduced to crises.

There are many ways to define a crisis, but my favorite definition for it is that it is a boiling point. It is a presentation of the problem in such a stark way, that there is really

very little wiggle room to come up with an alternative reading. This is how you can tell whether a piece of advertising material is well-written or not. Badly written materials give you an out. They are fuzzy. They can be read many different ways. Worst of all, it is fairly easy to read alternative solutions into them. Badly written materials are easy to sidestep and ignore.

Well-written ad materials lead you to only one conclusion. When you are trying to communicate pain, the viewer only receives pain. When you are trying to communicate opportunity, the viewer only perceives opportunity. The 'boiling point' of emotions and information only lead to one conclusion. This level of clarity is crucial for effective advertising based on story-telling. It is this clarity of communication that separates good story-telling from bad story-telling; by extension, great ads from crappy ads.

Crisis Distills Options

Presenting crises in clear and unambiguous ways is great but if you want your storytelling-based advertising materials to truly be effective, the crisis must distill options. This means alternative solutions must be identified and knocked down and dismissed using logic. That's right-you have to give compelling reasons why the solution to problem X is not products A, B, or C. Focus on the core of the problem. Why is it a problem? Next, shift to how the alternatives fall apart in terms of a certain quality. Make sure your product is the strongest option regarding that quality.

It's all About Emotional Urgency

You have to introduce that sense of crisis. A sense of crisis triggers a sense of emotional urgency. Emotional urgency pushes the reader to action. This is what separates great calls to action from calls to action that fall flat.

Resolution

Whether you are talking about Bible stories, Greek mythology, or modern plays and TV shows, they all have resolutions. Great stories resolve. Human beings are always looking for an ending. While we know - as mature human beings - that there is not always a happy ending, we are still looking for an ending. We are looking for that sense of closure. Well-written stories have a sense of closure.

Your ad must be crafted in such a way that there is a resolution. The resolution is often different from how you resolve a story. With a story, you are basically just walking the reader through point A, to point B, to point C. You are walking the reader from the way things were, the problem, the crisis, and then the resolution. This is the typical story arc found in stories and novels. Often, the resolution involves an important change in the characters. At the very least, the protagonist comes out changed.

With a story-based ad, you go through an arc, but the conclusion is: they see the product, they see the solution to their needs, and they see the need to whip out their credit card and buy that product. That is the big difference. Regardless, you need to focus on the resolution. Otherwise, you drop the ball. You run the risk of creating a situation where people looking at your ad can't make heads or tails regarding what you are trying to accomplish.

Chapter 3

Restating the Story in Advertising Terms

If you are an experienced marketer, you would realize that the description of the story elements outlined in Chapter 2, actually, is quite familiar. If you can't avoid feeling a sense of familiarity, then you should pat yourself on the back. This means that you are a competent marketer. Effective storytelling-based advertising maintains key advertising elements. In fact, you can restate these story elements in advertising terms.

Here are the key elements you need to hone in your storytelling. These elements ensure that you maximize the impact of the story elements in your ads. Keep in mind that not all stories are ads, but all ads have to have a story element. If you want to be successful making money online through blogging, online promotions, or affiliate marketing, you have to wrap your mind around this concept and the elements below.

Get Their Attention

Effective ads are only effective because they get the prospect's attention. At this stage, you don't really know who your reader is. You are just trying to make your message stand out from the rest of the background noise on the internet. You have to figure out a way to effectively call people to attention. Get their eyeballs in front of your message. If you fail to do this, then you fail to make money. Everything else flows from this.

However, don't fool yourself into thinking that effective advertising is all about gaining attention. There are tons of advertising campaigns that focus primarily on disruption,

and most of them fail to make any money. Most of them fail to hit return-on-investment targets. Why? The emphasis is primarily on attention, and the other elements aren't present.

Getting your prospects' attention gets you to first base. It only opens the opportunity. You need the other elements to take you all the way to closing and conversion. Great opening elements don't put money in your wallet. They increase the chance of you making money, but they don't guarantee it. You need to make sure the other elements below are present in your ad text.

Filter Based on Interest

A lot of the people who will be attracted to your ad may not even be members of your target audience. Be aware of this. Understand that, at this point, you are still filtering. At this point, you are putting people into different buckets. There are people who are sure to buy your product, there are people who might buy your product, there are people who could be persuaded to buy your product, and there are people who are completely out of the picture. Get these buckets wrong and you will end up wasting your time. You will end up barking up the wrong tree.

Get Non-Buyers Out of the Way as Quickly as Possible

I am sorry to break this to you, but a large percentage of the people who would be attracted to your ad actually don't fall into your target market. The good news is that this is perfectly OK. The better you filter, the higher the likelihood you would end up with dollars at the end of the process. This is the key.

Too many rookie marketers focus on getting a ton of people through all the stages of the buying cycle. At the end of that process, they end up failing to make the sale. Why? They didn't filter their readers properly. It is really important to make sure that, at this stage, you clearly communicate that your ad is only targeted towards people who are interested. This means you have to be very clear as to what the problem is - what the need is.

Your story has to be clear as to what the problem is. This usually does a good job of filtering readers. The fuzzier your description of the problem or the weaker your set-up of the problem is, the higher the likelihood your filter won't work. You might be appealing to people who will eventually fail to convert.

Different people who look at your ads have different needs. Only a fraction of them actually need your product. Only a fraction of them have that problem. Appeal directly to those people, and filter everybody else out by being clear about the problem your product solves. Don't beat around the bush. Don't be coy. Stop wasting your time on people who don't fit the needs profile of your product.

Fan the Flames of Your Prospects' Desire

Now that you have laid out the problem, you should also lay out solutions. The interesting thing about marketing is that there are two ways to do this. There is the proactive way, and then there is the reactive method. The most effective is not proactive. A lot of marketing books would tell you, "You just need to lay out the bright spots of your product and people would be drawn to it like moths to a flame." This is not true. Why? This flies against the face of human nature.

People are not proactive. Most people are lazy. Most people need to have their backs against the wall for them to lift a finger about the bad situation they are in. This is just

the reality of human nature. If you are going to appeal to the better angels of human beings, you are going to be waiting a long time and wasting a lot of time and money. It just doesn't work that way.

It is much better to look at how reactive people are. Appeal to fear. Appeal to the seemingly negative aspects of human nature. What is a key negative aspect of human nature? We are always looking to compare. One of the easiest ways to become miserable is to compare your-self with others. This is how the human mind works. Accordingly, when you are positioning your product, compare other solutions first and knock them down. Don't just say they suck. That's not going to fly. Identify the quality or factor your product is strongest in and knock down the other products based on that factor or group of factors. Your prospects' minds will then logically *connect the dots* between the failings of the “bad” products and the product that you are promoting.

This appeals to how people normally make a decision. They operate from a negative aspect. They don't look at the positive aspect. They don't look at, "What do I have to gain?" But more like, "How does this solution stack up to the rest?" Put another way, people ask “What do I lose if I go with this option instead of another?”

What you Need to Lay Out in Your Story-Based Squeeze Page or Info Page

First, introduce a character the reader can identify with, identify a clear problem to filter the reader, then set up a crisis and introduce a lot of emotional triggers that really turn up the emotional temperature. Next, roll out existing solutions and knock them down. Show how they are too expensive, how they are not very convenient or could be possibly harmful, so on and so forth. Then, at the end, position your product. When you do this, you emotionally manipulate the reader to conclude that your solution is the only way. The way you do this is because you emotionally primed the reader to be skeptical of other alternative arguments.

This is not much different from a lawyer laying out alternative scenarios, and then knocking them down to make his/her case more compelling. An objective reading of the case would actually lead to the conclusion that there are many alternative paths to the same conclusion. But that would make for a lousy legal brief. Instead, great lawyers make it seem like their argument is the best thing since sliced bread. Your ad should use the same manipulative strategies. Otherwise, you are not doing your job.

Call Them to Action

You would be surprised as to how many well-crafted ads - that employ great compelling stories - fall flat when it comes to making money. You are not going to make money when: you get excited about your product but they are clueless as to how to put those dollars in your pocket. A lot of marketers completely drop the ball when it comes to call to action. They think that simply putting a "Buy Now" or "Click Here" button is enough.

That is not a call to action. If that is how you define a call to action, you are sadly mistaken. In fact, this is one mistake that may mean the difference between you making several thousand dollars a month or barely getting by.

What is an appropriate call to action? An appropriate call to action ties in the product with the problem. So, instead of saying, "Click Here," say, "Click Here to Change Your Life Forever", or, "Click Here to Finally Say Goodbye to Those Unwanted Pounds." Do you see the difference? Do you see the emotional urgency? Do you see the focus on the problem and how it fits into the solution that you are championing?



Effective calls to action are never flat. Effective calls to action remind the reader regarding the solution and center the reader's attention to the action he/she needs to take - to benefit from that solution.

Chapter 4

What Does All This Have to Do with a Mailing List?

Now that I have stepped you through the process of effective story-telling and story-telling elements, I am going to put everything into perspective, as far as your mailing list is concerned. Your mailing list has to have a context. Otherwise, you are not going to make much money off your mailing list. Your mailing list would be just a random collection of list squatters. That is what most email marketers have. There are people who squat on their mailing lists.

This may seem innocent enough, but for every month those people hang out on your list, the more money you lose. You have to understand that your mailing list service, charges you a monthly fee. Whether you are paying \$10 or \$100 a month that is still money out of your pocket.

The Key is to Eliminate as Many Mailing List Squatters as Possible. The only effective way to do this is to incorporate a lot of story-telling elements to the stages: before people sign up to your list, before people get to your squeeze page, during the time they are reading your squeeze page, and after they sign up to your squeeze page.

Effective Story-Telling Techniques before Your Squeeze Page

A lot of list marketers have this mistaken idea that their job is to simply drive traffic to their squeeze page. It doesn't matter what it takes or how long it takes. Their job is to drive traffic to the squeeze page. If this is your attitude, you are setting yourself up for failure.

Effective List Marketing is All About Quality, Not Quantity. Unfortunately, the mindset I have just described is all about quantity. You don't really care where the traffic is coming from. You don't really care about context. You don't really care about perceived value. All you really care about is hitting some sort of quota to feel that you are doing your job. This is a recipe for disaster.

Instead, you should apply story-telling elements to things you do which get people to your squeeze page. These are things that happen before people get to your squeeze page. Effective story-telling elements impact the following.

Blog Posts

Your blog post has to tell a story. Your blog post has to get your reader excited about resolving a particular problem. An effective story-driven blog post opens the mind of the reader regarding a problem, a solution, and why your solution is the best. Of course, you shouldn't do these all in one sitting. Otherwise, your blog post will look like spam. However, you must string your blog posts together so that you walk your reader through the buying cycle.

What is the buying cycle? For people to buy from you, they must first trust you. For people to trust you, they must first like you. Finally, for people to like you, they must first feel that they know you. All these are interrelated. You have to go through these steps before you make a sale.

You can't simply jump from square one all the way to square four. It doesn't happen that way. That is how spammers try to do it, and this is why most spam doesn't work. Spam

only works based on sheer numbers. However, in terms of marketing effectiveness, it doesn't work at all.

You have to weave in story-telling elements into all your blog posts. All your blog posts should first get people familiarized with your information. Secondly, they should get them to feel that your blog is a superior source of information regarding a particular niche topic. Finally, they should trust your information enough that they would want to join your mailing list.

These may seem like they are completely separate from each other. But they actually flow in to each other. Simply ignoring this relationship is setting your-self up for eventual failure. Be aware of how they link to each other.

Make sure that your blog posts are interlinked so that - regardless of where the reader is on the buying cycle - this person is easily one click away from the blog post that is directly related to their state of mind. For example, you are driving traffic to your blog, and most of your traffic blend is composed of people who are in the *Know Stage*. There should be enough blog posts in your blog that appeal to these people's needs and most importantly, push them to the *Like Stage*.

How do you push people to the *Like Stage*? Very simple: you include a link in all your blog posts, so that these links act as filters. A person who is in the *Know Stage*, and ends up landing in the Trust blog post, can easily click to a link that would speak to the needs of a person in the *Know Stage*.

Similarly, when somebody is on the *Like Stage*, they can easily click on a link that goes to information devoted to people on the *Like Stage*. Once they develop enough trust and

you have enough credibility, they can quickly click on a *Trust Link*. This link goes to a post dedicated to people who already have trust in your content.

The whole point, of course, is to drive all these people to your squeeze page. But that is like putting the cart before the horse. You have to walk people through whatever stage of the buying cycle they are in, for you to effectively and efficiently convert them into list members.

Articles

The same analysis that played out in the blog post discussion above plays out in articles. The big difference is that your articles have to be brand-oriented. Most people who do article marketing publish their articles on other people's websites. It is really important to create a well-tailored article, flexible enough that it appeals to a wide range of readers.

Even if the reader is at the most basic level of the *Know Stage*, they should still find enough elements in your article - to want to click through and find more information. This can get quite tricky, because you are like walking a tightrope with one article. You have only one bite at the apple.

You should probably already know that when you try to be many things to all people, you are setting yourself up for a potential disaster down the road. This is definitely what is at play. This is what makes article marketing tricky.

You have probably read a lot of ads saying somebody would write an article for you and that article would make money. Nine times out of ten, those articles are worthless. A well-crafted story-driven article must effectively identify the reader's state of mind, in regards to the buying cycle. It must push that person to visit your website, and from your website, you can filter that person further. That is the job of the article.

The job of the article is not to convert. The job of the article is not to suck up traffic from a source, and dump them to your squeeze page. While you still have to suck visitors out of the places where your article appears, you also have to filter them. This is why writing a very good story-driven article is like walking a tightrope. On the one hand, you can fall into the trap of just simply trying to get that person to click on a link, so you can have traffic. On the other hand, you can fall into the trap of positioning the article towards a stage of the buying cycle that the vast majority of your article's probable readers may not be on. This is a very tough position to be in.

Thankfully, with the decline of article submission websites and changing reader preferences, this may be one problem that you can avoid - because it is no longer a viable traffic option. However, there is still a large number of article websites out there and they still do get some traffic. So you definitely need to keep this in mind. This discussion also applies to guest posts or contributed content in blogs that specialize in your niche.

Social Media Posts and Forum Posts

How do you incorporate story-telling into social media and forum posts? With forum posts, it is pretty straightforward. You only need to break up the discussion into different posts.

Some of your posts can be targeted to people who are looking to know a particular subject matter. Some of your discussions can be directed to people who already know about a particular topic, but are trying to make a decision as to which category of information to go with. These people are just trying to fine-tune their understanding regarding a particular niche. Then, of course, there are posts that you can make for people who already trust a particular solution, and just need a push to make a decision.

Forums are actually quite easy to market to. In fact, it is so easy that it is very tempting to just drop a link and leave. If you conduct yourself that way, you are basically spamming. Not only will your account get banned, but your brand might get tarnished. You should focus instead on effective story-telling.

Tell a story. Lay out an emotional story of why the particular niche you are in matters, and what are the common issues that come out. Write stories based on those common issues. For example, if you are in the weight loss niche - and you are posting on a forum or a Facebook group that specializes on diets or weight loss - you can tell a story of how you lost weight. You can preface the story with anecdotes of how hard it was to lose weight with your old lifestyle. You can then walk the reader through the different alternative solutions you tried in the past and how you felt.

When you introduce an element of emotion into a story, it makes the story more vibrant. Human-beings are not robots. We are not driven primarily by logic and reason. We are driven by emotions. The more emotional elements you put into your story, the more human you look and the easier it would be for people to identify with you.

This is really important because forums can get quite heated. This is how forum arguments break out. So there has to be a healthy dose of emotionalism in your story, to

ensure that you can properly inject that intellectual payload right into the mental vein of your targets.

Be Manipulative. People are very easy to manipulate, seriously. You just need to tell the right story at the right time, and you have them eating off the palm of your hands. This is very easy to do with forums. One of the best ways to do this is not start a thread. Go into an existing discussion when people are already talking about a particular subject, and drop an anecdote. The anecdote should lead to a conclusion that you want people to have about the particular subject matter.

For example, in a diet forum, people might be talking about how hard it is to get up every single day to go to the gym and work out. You can drop a story of how a person used to be very lazy and very fat - and as a result, was very miserable and really wasted a lot of money on gym membership fees. You can then insert an emotional element of a moment of truth, where this person developed type 2 diabetes or got some sort of scary medical diagnosis. This would glue the readers' attention to the emotional crisis. And then from there, you can walk them through how this person bought an e-book or bought a diet supplement that started to turn things around.

Do you see how this plays out? It is all about setting up the crisis. It is all about setting up the problem so your solution can save the day. This is very easy to do with forums because of the way they are set up. The more emotional the forum members are, the easier they are to manipulate.

To a large extent, the same analysis applies to social media. Facebook groups can act like forums. The same dynamics can play out. The same goes with Google Plus communities.

What is important here is to wrap your mind around the general concept of: looking at the layout of the discussion, and figuring out weak spots where you can throw in an emotional story. With this, you can manipulate the emotions of the people reading the discussion as it progresses. Instead of the discussion leading to a natural destination, you can - with an emotional story or anecdote - divert that to where you want the conversation to be. Obviously, you want the conversation to be about the particular product or solution you are pushing.

That is the way you post on forums. You don't simply just drop a link and leave. That is spamming. That is not going to change anybody's mind. By tugging at their heart's strings, manipulating them - with some rational arguments so that it is not completely emotional - you increase your likelihood of getting people to sign up to your squeeze page, and taking the next step so you can convert them.

Chapter 5

Massaging Story Elements into Your Squeeze Page

If you have been in the email marketing game for even a little bit of time, you would notice that the typical squeeze page is actually pretty bare or minimal. In most cases, it is just a simple field for an email address, maybe a field for a name, and a heading with some text and a submit button - pretty straightforward, pretty simple. Unfortunately, if this is the kind of squeeze page you are going to be promoting, you are going to get pretty much the same results as most other list marketers. In short, you are going to be settling for mediocrity.

You have to understand that, for you to maximize the amount of people signing up to your squeeze page, you have to introduce story elements. As I have outlined in Chapter 4, you can massage story elements into your blog posts, articles, forum posts and social media engagement. You shouldn't stop there. The story-telling has to inform - the things that you do before people get to your squeeze page, the things that they are doing on your squeeze page, and the things that they will be doing after you collect their emails.

In this chapter, I am going to spell out how you can incorporate story elements into your squeeze page.

Sell Them the Dream

I don't care what kind of product or service you are trying to sell. People often have a pre-conceived notion of what that product or service is, or the benefits they get from that service or product. In other words, they have an ideal. The best marketers are

people who can convincingly communicate their offer in the guise and form of that ideal. This is where effective story-telling comes in.

You are essentially trying to talk them into buying in to the dream. Of course, the specific forum and positioning of the story has to be closely related to the nature of the product. For example, you are selling a money-making program or trying to convince the reader to join an affiliate marketing network. You should base your story on the typical dream of the person who is looking for that particular type of program or who typically buys that kind of product.

The most common - if not cheesy or outright corny - example is the idea of making money automatically, while you are asleep or lounging around the house in your pajamas. There are many effective squeeze page stories that highlight pictures of exotic tropical vacation spots, and a person typing at a computer while enjoying a martini by a tropical beach. Other squeeze pages tell a story paired with pictures of a person working only a few hours a month, while generating several thousands of dollars in income on an automatic basis.

All these different narratives point to an overarching story, that the best online money-making systems all involve a passive income. This means you only work once, and then you reap the benefits of your hard work many times over. Your story must proceed from there. There are so many ways you can present this story. You can lay out a typical "workday" that involves the protagonist of your story waking up at two o'clock in the afternoon, having a long lunch, checking emails, checking the huge amount of money he/she made at PayPal, and then going shopping either online or to the local mall. You get the point. The point is to de-emphasize work and emphasize the rewards.

Of course, the most effective way to sell a dream is to still make sure it is anchored somewhat to reality. People can smell fantasy a mile away. If you make your story so fantastic that it is almost unbelievable, you are sabotaging yourself. You are making it harder for people to buy in to the dream. The dream has to be positioned right. It has to have enough realistic elements: so people can still identify with it, while at the same time, play up the advantages and benefits, so that their aspirations and wishes are engaged.

Again, it is a tightrope that you are walking on. On the one hand, you don't want to be so realistic that the story actually turns people off. It is so different from how they conceptualize your product or solution that it gives them pause. It discourages them from buying whatever it is you are pushing. On the other hand, you don't want things to be so fantastic and so amazing that it is obvious, from a mile away, that you are peddling fantasy. At best, people would look at your squeeze page as unrealistic. At worst, it might come off as an outright scam.

You have to walk this tightrope skillfully. The best way to do this is to pay attention to your conversion rate. If your squeeze page is not getting enough sign-ups, you might want to either dial down or step up the intensity of certain elements of your story, so that you can get people to buy in to the dream.

Keep in mind that you are not manufacturing a dream. People already have a dream. What you are doing with your story is simply relating to that dream. You are simply trying to speak the concepts that they already have regarding the product or service you are promoting.

Building Effective Conversations

The typical squeeze page is just one page. You dump traffic to that page. Whether you get that traffic through blog posts, articles, or Facebook Ad buys, the end result is the same: you generate traffic and then you lead it to a squeeze page. This is pretty straightforward. This is how most people build a list. In a typical case, they would offer a freebie, like a free e-book, in exchange for an email. People are offered an e-book for their email.

Freebies are quite effective. They can lead people to sign up to your list. Unfortunately, if you are building your list through freebies, you are only succeeding on one thing: filling up your list with squatters. That is right. When you give out freebies - whether it is a digital product, free software or an app - you are essentially bribing people.

Nine times out of ten, the only reason they joined your mailing list is because they are interested in what you are giving away. They are only interested in the prize. Once they get it, they either unsubscribe or they don't open your emails. In fact, from my experience, it is worse when people don't bother to unsubscribe.

You have to remember that most email services charge you a monthly fee, based on the amount of subscribers you have. If your list is populated mostly by email list squatters, this can be a big problem. You might think you have a nice asset because you have all these people on your list. But, if they don't open your emails, much less click on your links, you are not really making money off these people. These people are just squatting on your list. They are worthless. Worst of all, you are paying for them on a monthly basis.

One of the best ways to avoid this problem is to not offer digital bribes. That is right. Get away from offering free e-books, free software, or any kind of digital goody. Instead, use your squeeze page as the final page of a multi-page conversation. I am going to outline how this works out below.

A Story-Driven Multi-Page Conversation

As I have mentioned earlier, the secret to effective online sales is to understand the buying cycle. For people to buy from you, they must first trust you. To get people's trust, you must first get them to like you. Finally, for people to feel that they like you, they must first reach a stage where they think they know you. This is the standard **Know-Like-Trust-Buy** stage.

This multi-stage process doesn't just apply to consumers buying stuff from you. It also applies to consumers signing up for your squeeze page. You have to engineer your opt-in process so that this multi-stage strategy uses story elements. The end of the funnel is your squeeze page. By selling a lifestyle, reminding them of the dream and playing up the dream, these different pages talk to your target audience members at many different levels. However, they all lead to the same place. They all lead to the dream or the idea that you are selling.

Of course, the different stories of these different pages must be geared towards key stages of the Know-Like-Trust-Buy process. The early pages should be focused on getting the reader to feel that he/she knows you. The next stage is to tell stories that get them to like you. Finally, this should be followed by pages that build on the previous levels and establish a high level of trust. Once you have established trust, then you increase the likelihood that people will sign up to your squeeze page.



Converting Subscribers Into Customers

I have phrased this in broad terms because you have to flesh this out yourself. The specific forms that these pages take must mirror the actual service or product that you are pushing. Different pages require different stories. They take different forms. You need to fine-tune and fill in the different pages, based on the specifics of the product or service that you are promoting.

Chapter 6

Story-telling after Opt-In

The whole point of a squeeze page is to; of course, get people to opt-in to your list. They are giving you permission to send them emails. They are giving you permission to continue communicating with them after they have visited your website; pretty straightforward and simple. This is where effective story-telling really makes a big impact.

You might think that your job is done once you get people on your list. If you think this way, you are thinking precisely like 99.9% of other email marketers. In short, you are thinking like an email marketing failure. Most of these people don't make any money with their mailing list because this is how they think.

Your job actually just begins when people sign up to your list. This is just the beginning of the battle. The real heavy lifting - and the moment of truth - is based on what takes place after people sign up to your list. Keep the following information in mind, so you can craft a meaningful post-opt-in experience for your list members.

Again, we are going to be using effective storytelling to highlight value, and develop a sense of emotional urgency that can lead people to do what you want them to do. Obviously, you want people to buy stuff, fill out a CPA form, or click on a paid ad. Regardless of the specifics of what you want your list members to do, you must not forget to use effective story-telling. This increases the likelihood that they will engage in the kind of behavior that you get paid for.

Use Headlines That Quickly Communicate a Solved Problem

All products solve a range of problems. There wouldn't be any point in promoting these products if they don't solve problems. In fact, they wouldn't be on the market if they couldn't solve at least one problem. With this in mind, be clear as to the Number One problem typical buyers of the product you're pushing have. Communicate the problem in a short one line sentence. Now, keep working on reducing the number of the words in the sentence. Next, use emotional wording for the short sentence. Finally, phrase the sentence in such a way that you solved the problem.

For example, instead of saying "This great food supplement helped me get the energy I needed to boost my energy levels to lose fat and lose weight". Use something shorter, more emotionally packed, and phrased into a resolved problem. Use something like "I finally burned my belly fat off with this WEIRD solution." See what I did there? I am the protagonist so there is a direct emotional connection. I used the word 'finally.' This isn't a small detail. It shows I tried other solutions in the past and they didn't work. Next, I identified the problem early on. This way, I filter off list members who may not be interested in belly fat burning solutions. Finally, I used 'WEIRD solution' to appeal to the reader's sense of curiosity. Put together the headline pushes the right emotional buttons enough to encourage the reader to click.

The more you get the reader to click your email headlines, the higher the chance you'll make money. If they don't even bother to click your headlines, they won't read your emails and you won't make any money. It's that simple. Keep it that way by focusing on writing effective story-driven headlines.

The Body of Your Email Must Quickly Draw the Reader into the Problem

The first thing your reader should get after they click on your email subject title or headline is a quick summation of the problem. Your first sentence must sum up the problem. You have to make a quick emotional impact to draw the reader in.

Next, lead the reader to a crisis. Obviously, if they are still reading at this point of the email, they have the problem you're addressing. Don't go on and on about the problem. They already know. Get to the meat! Build up the crisis and quickly mention failed solutions. Don't mention the competition's name. Instead, focus on the main factor your product has and keep hammering how those other products fail because they don't have that element or factor. Next, introduce the solution and bait them. Use something like, "I kept failing until I figured out this one weird thing..." Keep them in suspense. I know this sounds gimmicky but you have to have a *hook*. Besides suspense, there's curiosity, fear, a sense of duty to family, and others. Use your imagination and do split tests of your story-based email to figure out which specific email body story works best with your list members.

Chapter 7

Unleash the Power of Case Studies

One of the hottest trends in email marketing lately has been to use case studies. Case studies are quite different from traditional email marketing messages.

Traditional email messages use the standard formula. How does the “standard formula” work? First, the email attracts the attention of the reader with a nice headline. They filter the reader based on interest, and try to speak to the needs that the reader has. Once they have made rapport with the reader's needs, they try to present the product or service as the solution. Normally, the way they do this is to list down the features. The email then lays out how each of these features meets the needs of the reader.

More effective marketers would try to go the extra mile, and compare the proposed solution with existing solutions. This comparison, of course, ends up with the proposed solution coming out on top. Still, there will be a lot of facts and data in the comparison. The whole point of this exercise is to build credibility, up to the point where you can call the prospect to action.

The problem with most email marketing messages is that they assume credibility. They assume, just because the reader is on your list, that the reader is ready to buy. This is a serious problem. This opens a credibility gap. There is a hole in your credibility and authority.

Not surprisingly, a lot of marketing emails, or emails that contain ads, don't make much money. How can they? You just send out an ad and you expect somebody to buy immediately? Sure, from a numbers game perspective, there would be some people who would buy. But you are actually leaving a lot of money on the table. If you had gone through extra steps in seducing your reader, chances are you would get more buyers.

Instead of settling for the typical pattern of trying to get a list as big as possible - so that only a small fraction of that huge list would actually end up buying - there is a better approach. The better approach would be to get more targeted people on your list and use a case study. Even though your marketing message is getting in front of fewer sets of eyeballs, you enjoy a higher chance of conversion because of your case study.

Why do Case Studies Work?

Case studies lay out before and after scenarios. This is effective story-telling right here. You tell the story before the problem, you tell the story during the problem, and you tell the reader what happens after the solution is introduced - pretty straightforward. This is how our minds are hardwired to process information.

The great thing about the case study is that there is a distinct protagonist. There is distinct drama: because this person tried one product after another, one solution after another, and they all failed. There is emotional connection: when you are writing out the case study, each failure should get the reader to identify with the frustration of the person in the story. This emotional identification is rooted in the fact that you are using the actual experiences of people in your case study.

This is not theoretical. We have gone way past theory. We are now in the concrete land of reality. People who read your case study can't help but identify with the protagonist in the case study.

Also, case studies are numbers driven. Usually, you would lay out solid numbers to highlight results. This is more emotionally urgent than the typical email ad. An email ad may seem distant, impersonal, or too theoretical. It might even seem like you are just making things up or writing straight out fantasy. When you mention numbers, the reader's attention is riveted to results. When they use your solution, they are going to get results.

Also, these results are tied in to a timeline. They are not just floating out there. They are not just saying that they could happen. They are actually tied to something that happens in the sequence. They actually come about at a certain point in time. This makes your offer more credible because it is easier for the mind to wrap around it.

Moreover, the reader is less skeptical or suspicious. By filling him/her in on the details - of what happened, how it happened, who it happened to, what happened before, what happened now, what issues were at play, and what issues are present now - you make something, that is otherwise theoretical, very real.

People are drawn to real life examples. If there are enough emotional triggers in your case study, they would want to be that person in the story. They would want to be that person who went from rags to riches. They would want to be that person who went from scaring females away to being a chick magnet. Whatever product or service you are selling, make sure that you leave the reader with an emotional state - where they would want to be identified with the protagonist of your story.

Beware of Income Claims

One of the cheesiest ways to promote using an email list is to mention the amount of money your system will make, or the results that they would get. Unless you can guarantee that the person would actually make that amount of money, or get certain results within a certain period of time, you would probably be better off leaving that kind of information out. I know that this may make me look like the odd man out, but I would rather sound weird to you than steer you wrongly.

Obviously, lying to people or misleading them is wrong. One of the most common ways email marketers mislead is when they take an income that - somebody using specific methods and operating with a special set of circumstances - produces extraordinary results. This is going to be a problem, because most people don't have access to those resources, or aren't in the same situation as the person who generated those results. There is an undertone of lying here, because you are not showing the full picture. You are hiding the ball.

You cannot write your squeeze page marketing stories this way. You have to be transparent with people. If there is going to be work involved, tell them. If the chances of success are not 100%, say it. Be straightforward. Be clear. The more transparent you are, the more credibility you build, the more people would think you are authoritative.

However, if you try to hide the ball, you are bound to disappoint people. If you disappoint enough people, your brand will suffer. It really is that simple. It is important, when you are sending out emails to your list members, that you work to build your brand. You build your brand by being honest, being accountable, and calling a spade a

spade. Don't be afraid to tell the truth. In fact, when you tell the truth, you stand out from your competition.

Of course, there are many ways to tell the truth. You can't just tell the truth - in the worst and harshest way possible - that it destroys your brand. You also have to tell the truth in the proper context. Again, truth and success are not anti-theatrical. Truth and success in email marketing are not mutually exclusive and are not anti-theatrical to each other.

Conclusion

Thank you for downloading and reading my book. The good news about effective list building is that you can engineer success into how you build your list. This is also precisely what's so challenging about list building. Too many list marketers go about building their lists offering freebies so they can build a massive list. Then they cry about why nobody seems to be reading their emails. If you are tired of doing things the same way everybody else does, use the power of effective story-telling. Weave it into all the aspects of your email marketing business. This means incorporating story elements in the pages that lead to your squeeze page as well as on your squeeze page itself. You must also apply story-telling elements in your emails. Your whole interaction with your list members; from beginning to conversion; must involve effective story-telling elements. The higher your awareness of these elements, the higher the likelihood you'll be successful in your list marketing initiatives. Get on that road to success today and implement the ideas I discussed above. You'll only have yourself to thank!

All the best!

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