



Al's guide to:

Telling **company and customer stories**
that **bring your brand to life**



How to tell compelling business stories

This short guide will show you how to create two different kinds of story about your business:

- What your business does – your Company Story
- Why your clients need you – your Customer Story

Telling a clear Company Story is very important because it helps people understand what your company achieves for its clients and why that matters so much.

Telling a strong Client Story matters because that's how you explain exactly what you can do for people and why they need you to get started as soon as possible.

Before I show you how to tell those two specific kinds of stories, I'm going to explain how stories work in general. And once you know how to tell compelling business stories, I'll point out something else that's very important to think about.



How to structure a story

Most stories share the same basic structure. It breaks each story down into three acts, each of which describes a specific stage in the hero's journey. It works like this:

- Hero wants to do something
- Hero can't do something
- Hero does something

Some examples

If you're a science fiction fan, you might think of 'Star Wars', in which:

- Luke Skywalker wants to rescue Princess Leia
- Luke Skywalker can't rescue Princess Leia
- Luke Skywalker rescues Princess Leia

If you're a literary fiction fan, you could look at 'Pride and Prejudice', where:

- Elizabeth Bennett wants to choose a husband she loves and respects
- Elizabeth Bennett can't choose a husband she loves and respects
- Elizabeth Bennett chooses a husband she loves and respects

It's pretty simple. Take a moment to apply it to some of your favourite stories. That'll help you see how universal it is.

Story section lengths

Each stage of the story also tends to have a fairly specific length. As a rule, 'Hero wants to...' takes up the first 20% of the story, 'Hero can't...' the next 40% and then 'Hero does...' the last 20% of it. Those lengths could be useful to bear in mind when you're writing your own business stories.



How to tell a Company Story

Your company is the hero of its Company Story. This is how you structure that story:

Hero wants to do something

- We wanted to [create a specific change in your marketplace]
- Which really matters because [why the marketplace really needs it]

Hero can't do something

- It was challenging because [all of the obstacles]
- So we created [all of your solutions]

Hero does something

- That means we've [what you've achieved for your clients]
- And it's helped us [what you've achieved for yourselves]

Telling Slack's Company Story

Here's how Stuart Butterfield uses that structure when he tells the story of Slack:

Hero wants to do something

- We wanted to help people come together online in fun, constructive ways
- Which really matters because we want to bring out the best of the digital world

Hero can't do something

- It was challenging because we started off wrong – we tried to create an online game
- But to help us do that we built ourselves a fun, simple, practical collaboration tool – Slack!

Hero does something

- That means we've helped x million clients work together more efficiently than ever before
- And it's helped us become the fastest growing start-up ever

Why's this useful?

It will help you create a simple, powerful, memorable story to tell when you're describing (or even pitching) your company to possible customers, investors, new hires or anyone else who wants to hear about it. And it will help people who already know you get a clearer, stronger sense of what your company's for and why it matters.



How to tell a Customer Story

Your customer is the hero of your Customer Story. Here's how you structure that story:

Hero wants to do something

- Our customer needs to [create a specific change in their business or life]
- That's really important because [why they really need it to happen]

Hero can't do something

- They're finding it difficult because [all of their obstacles]
- We can help them by [all of your solutions]

Hero does something

- Which means they'll achieve [concrete short term results]
- That'll help them [most likely long term results]

Telling the iPhone's Customer Story

Here's how Steve Jobs told a Customer Story when he launched the very first iPhone back in 2007.

Hero wants to do something

- People need to get so much more out of all their mobile devices (phone, music, internet)
- That's really important because it'll revolutionise their digital lives

Hero can't do something

- They're finding that difficult because existing devices
 - At best only do some of that
 - Are so horribly clunky to use
- We've helped them by inventing the iPhone, with its:
 - Wide-ranging comms / media / internet capabilities
 - Revolutionary touch screen
 - Fantastic software capabilities

Hero does something

- Which means they'll find it much easier to stay online, in touch and entertained
- That'll help them transform their relationships with family, friends and the whole world

Why's this useful?

It will help you create a simple, powerful, benefits-led pitch for the products and services you need to sell. And it'll give you a clear, flexible script to help you make sure that everyone in your organisation who talks about them does so in the same way.



What else to think about

This guide shows you how to structure your Company and Customer Stories. But it won't help you choose the right words to tell them. So it might be worth thinking about how your writing style and process.

You can download my 'How to write much more effective documents with much less stress and hassle' from the resources page on my website.

And of course I'm always happy to chat about any of this. My contact details are below.