



The SocialTalent Guide to...

Selling a Role with Storytelling

According to author **Philip Pullman**, “after nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.” One of the oldest art forms, storytelling is an integral component of the human condition; it creates connections among people and ideas, disseminates culture and values and has the ability to inspire across generations. We share an intuitive comprehension that stories are a universal common ground and can be employed to great effect to expand meaning and knowledge.

This understanding also rings true in the business world. Words are a powerful tool, we know this, so learning how to best use storytelling within companies in order to enact growth and authentically communicate identity and purpose is becoming of paramount importance. We crave a real connection in everything we do, so why should our work be any different?

Storytelling is experiencing a corporate renaissance, especially within recruitment. Finding unique ways to entice the best candidates to positions has become a mandatory component within the trade. Storytelling in particular gives recruiters an opportunity to sell, and our guide will detail how you can incorporate this art into tangible, actionable results.

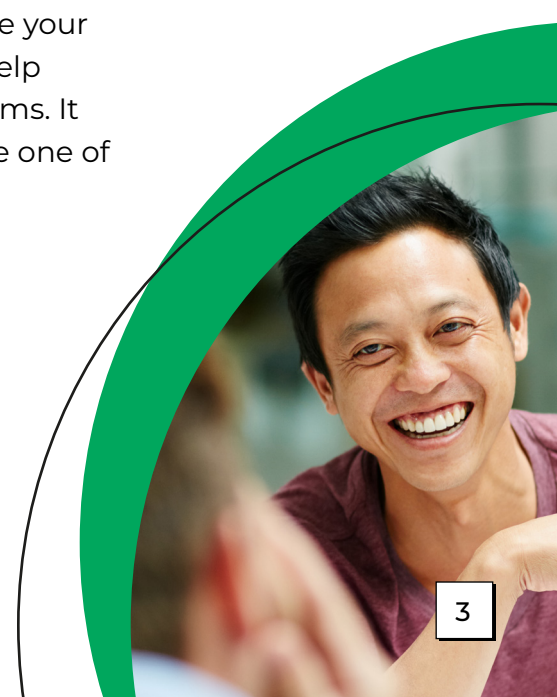
What is storytelling in the context of business?

There feels like an immediate disconnect between the concepts of storytelling and business. One deals with the caprice of emotion and feeling, while the other conjures connotations of bottom lines and statistical figures. But in reality, storytelling within the construct of a business can work as a persuasive tool to illustrate who a company is and what they are offering, both to employees and customers. Essentially, it can help focus in on the human aspect of work.

Business storytelling can be used for a variety of purposes. Whether it's in the form of internal communications to employees or marketing narratives and investment pitches, the story can help you transcend the traditional confines of what a business represents. Rather than explaining things with facts and austere PowerPoint presentations, weaving a compelling and engaging narrative to get an issue or concept across will yield far better outcomes, especially in terms of emotional responses and the retention of information. As George Lucas says, "a special effect without a story is a pretty boring thing!"

According to **Nick Morgan**, stories can create "sticky memories" by attaching emotions to things that happen. They bind facts and ideas in a coherent and digestible way, allowing you to effectively drive your audience to take a desired action. Storytelling in business can help you form solid foundations of communication across all spectrums. It exploits our natural curiosity and when used successfully, can be one of the most powerful instruments of success.

But what about storytelling in recruitment specifically? How can this methodology be deployed by hiring professionals in order to entice potential candidates to a role?



Pitching a role through storytelling

Simply put by [HRMagazine](#), authentic storytelling “can drive new talent to organisations.” So much of what modern recruitment is about concerns data and metrics and people analytics, and while behind the scenes this kind of information is invaluable, it does little to make potential employees weak at the knees for a role. Recruitment strategies from the outside have to be concerned with selling. What can you do to make sure that, through every step of the staffing process, you are engaging and enticing the candidate? This is where storytelling comes in.

According to [Glassdoor](#), by telling a brand story well, companies have the power to increase the value of a product or service by over twenty times. The same is true for job positions. Stories can capture the attention of candidates and sell the opportunity in ways that just listing information cannot. It can be incorporated every step of the way:



Job description

“No, no! The adventures first...explanations take such a dreadful time.” **This quote** from Lewis Carroll’s “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” perfectly sums up the goal of a captivating job description. It is your first opportunity to pique the interest of your prospective audience. Of course the vital information is always paramount but by using a more conversational tone, capturing an expressive picture of the company and positioning the reader at the centre of it all, you stand a much greater chance of distinguishing yourself in amongst the deluge of other job descriptions. As **Sourcecon** puts it, while a standard listing may attract the attention of those simply looking for a job, it may not draw the talent you actually desire.

Employer brand

The story you will most likely be telling as a recruiter is that of your company and how it relates to an applicant. But it is always important to remember that businesses can’t be protagonists. People care about people, so lower that corporate veil in favour of a more human approach. This starts with adjusting your employer brand to be as communal, authentic and light as possible. Engage your audience by illustrating intangible aspects of the company experience that simply can’t be expressed quantitatively. Your brand story tells candidates what it means to be part of your organisation. Using actual employee stories, for example, can be of great benefit for this. According to **Lauryn Sargent**, candidates that consume these stories will envision themselves having that very experience.

Candidate experience

Traditional recruitment methods consist mainly of a one-sided relationship, focusing almost entirely on the needs of the company and how best to satisfy them. But a candidate who feels disconnected during the hiring process can often feel alienated from a role or simply undervalued. Through the use of storytelling however, you can reverse this narrative. Whether it’s during the interview

According to Paul Zak, the effective use of storytelling in recruitment can result in 20% more immersion from candidates compared to hiring through careers sites alone. It is an underutilised secret weapon, but it must be done with authenticity and empathy in order to exact legitimate results. Tall tales won’t do.



How to build empathy through storytelling

The **Harvard Business Review** argues that every story needs to start by asking: Who is my audience and what is the message I want to share with them? It is fundamental to make this the bedrock of how you deliver your message; if you don't put yourself in the other person's shoes, it becomes an increasingly difficult proposition to build an emotional connection and trigger the appropriate response. Empathy gives recruiters an opportunity to take their candidates on a journey by humanising what they are trying to sell. But what is this best way to foster this?

1. Keep it simple

Clear and concise – it should almost be a cliché at this point, considering it's good advice in almost every walk of life. Not every story needs to be edge-of-your-seat epic; follow simple arcs that present the challenge, the overcoming of said challenge and a conclusion that drives home the core moral you're trying to extol. You want to immerse rather than alienate, so complicated narratives should be avoided.

2. Be authentic

Stories that resonate come from a place of truth. As **Forbes** details, "transparency celebrates your uniqueness and acknowledges the human aspect of your brand." A genuine approach is more likely to connect; candidates will know if you're trying to pull a fast one or oversell a position. Focus on building trust rather than dazzling with hyperbole.

3. The personal touch

When a personal story is being shared, we unconsciously create an emotional connection with the storyteller and empathise with their message. Delve into your own experiences and use anecdotes to illustrate points or bolster information, making it more human and accessible. Anchor your stories through real people and events and show potential candidates that they are more than a cog in a machine.

Storytelling has the power to reach inside people and stir emotion. Just take a look at Hubspot's infographic. It illustrates how storytelling activates seven regions of the brain, while data alone only activates two. Stories set fire to our imaginations, creating a sense of empathy between the recruiter and candidate, while also making pitches significantly more engaging.



The Final Word

Storytelling is inherently appealing to the human condition. At their core, stories help us manage the chaos of the world and turn it into something we can understand. From the perspective of recruitment, this art form can be effectively utilised to sell roles to potential employees. It gives you an opportunity to set the scene and guide candidates through a narrative that hooks their interest and engages an emotional response without obstructing the real message. It's a bestseller strategy and will ensure you're standing out from the crowd!

Additional Reading

For more information on the use of storytelling in recruitment, check out this [blog post](#) or watch our own Holly Fawcett give you a brief promo about our dedicated course right [here!](#)

And before you go – don't forget to subscribe to our newsletter and keep up-to-date with all things SocialTalent.