

7 Questions Your Ministry's Social Media Must be Answering

The leader who shapes culture understands that not all stories are created equal.

The use of social media continues to rise at at a rapid rate into our world.

The combination of social media and storytelling, the term **social media storytelling** could be the holy grail of buzzwords. Half emerging technology that everyone said would either rule the world or totally fail, half proven method of transferring emotion and knowledge since the dawn of humanity, social media storytelling is a relatively new and an oft-misunderstood term. Nearly every digital agency claims that they're "storytellers," and if the client is interested in a social media activation, then they've magically become "social media storytellers" as well.

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My mom and dad are clueless about what "social media storytelling" means, and that's okay. But I fear there are other agencies and brands that are misunderstood, and that can be dangerous for audiences.

Effective social media storytelling starts at the beginning as does all brand storytelling on any platform or in any medium, and that's the difference. An effective social media campaign rooted in storytelling will be united by one aspect—the brand's Story Platform.

THE STORY PLATFORM

At its core, the Story Platform serves as the emotional heart of the brand—the enduring idea that will serve as the consistent basis for the many stories that a successful brand must tell over time. It's developed by deeply understanding a number of elements including audience, brand and category, as well as the goals and objectives of both the brand and the business.

Not just a tagline (though sometimes it can end up being the tagline), the Story Platform is a central thought around which all communications can be built. In the case of social media, it gives direction and coherence to all subsequent marketing work.

It's the single thought that should be apparent in everything your brand does and says—the core narrative of every story that is told about your brand.

SOCIAL MEDIA STORYTELLING FROM THE HEART

Without unearthing the brand's core story, it's difficult (if not impossible) for a brand to effectively tell its story across social platforms. But having done it, the brand has a starting point—something it can use to ensure that every single post, tweet and video is on-brand.

From there a brand's social media presence has a heartbeat. That heartbeat fuels the executions while offering inherent weights and measures. It helps answer these 7 questions:

1. Who is the audience, and how do they interact with our brand?
2. How are they innovating our brand? What are they saying?
3. How do we differ from similar brands, and how can we use stories to persuade customers to choose our brand over a competitor's?
4. How quickly should we respond to social comments (positive and negative)?
5. Which pop-culture events should we be ready to respond to in real time?
6. What user-generated content should we encourage? Which contributions should we share?
7. Does this app make sense to our brand? Will our audience use it, and more important, can it add value to their lives?

HOW CAN YOU FIND YOUR STORY PLATFORM?

It's not simple or done overnight. If you have time to spend with your brand's stakeholders, you can take a giant step toward understanding your brand's core story (and continue to do this every few years as things change). Start by investigating your audience, your brand and your category. Try to ensure that you're working with some sort of core story for your brand, and map all executions back to that story. Develop a content plan with that core story in mind.

Social media storytelling isn't telling a number of stories about a brand. **It's unearthing the core story at the heart of your brand and telling it in meaningful ways that people enjoy, appreciate and share.**

Read more from Jon [here](#).