

Tell great stories

By [Samantha Page](#)

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In the 21st century, the biggest business opportunities are no longer in the brand alone, but in everything around the brand. The narratives we craft must sell the brand experience, the brand's mission and values and create "content moments," which are shareable.



As a fledgling editor, I had the rare opportunity to have an audience with the original fun, fearless, female and legendary *Cosmopolitan* magazine editor Helen Gurley-Brown. Already in her late 80s at the time, she quickly dispensed with the pleasantries and motioned for me to sit beside her on the elaborately upholstered chaise in the corner of her office.

When she leaned in, I knew she was about to say something important and I should pay close attention. "Tell me, pussycat, are you telling great stories? You know a great story will stay with your reader longer than any trend you'll ever cover."

I've never forgotten those words and I've used them as my yardstick to measure everything I created and curated during my tenure as editor and every project I've worked on since that seminal meeting.

You need only look at John Lewis' 2015 Christmas ad, *Man on the Moon*, which recorded 23,000 online mentions in just two hours of its release to see how powerful a good narrative can be.

And let's not forget how TED talks have garnered millions of views and consistently keep online audiences riveted, inspired and informed.

Stories open the door, they create emotional hooks, spark empathy, connect people and create experiences people want to share and share and keep on sharing.

Content moments

"If you're not using storytelling, you're missing out on the power to tap into your client's emotions, which is what drives all business decisions," says Raf Stevens, author of *No Story, No Fans*.

Good stories help consumers make sense of the world and understand their deeper truth. The world has become freer and more fluid, and the personal narrative has become more prevalent and urgent because we are our stories. They help us define our purpose and we feel obligated in our quest for happiness to make our story authentic and it's that authenticity that we crave that has become "our most urgent purchasing criterion," says sociologist John Clammer.

The art of storytelling

Storytelling and the art of storytelling play a major role in content marketing today. Brands are differentiating themselves with unique content narratives that are building trust and motivating loyal advocates. These powerful stories rest in the heart not the mind and allow us to dream, make us feel and give us hope.

As content marketers we need to understand how the brand we represent resonates with the consumer and then position that brand's message in the right place to tell the right story at the right time.

"We are living in the conceptual age," says author Daniel Pink, "which is ruled by artistry, empathy and emotion." This is why Steve Jobs sold millions of iPods, not with technical specs, but with the promise that you could carry 1,000 of your favourite songs in your pocket.

Stories are not just for bedtime, they are for business and now is exactly the right time to start telling yours.

ABOUT SAMANTHA PAGE

Samantha Page, the former editor of Oprah's *O* magazine, works as a media consultant, writing for a number of publications and working on projects in the content marketing space. She was with *O* magazine for 12 years, six of them as editor. Prior to that, the former English teacher was a copy editor at Condé Nast *House & Garden* magazine. She was the book editor on *'From Me to Me: Letters to My 16 ½-year-old Self'*, published by Jacana Media; and has a course in Leadership Strategies in Magazine and Digital Publishing from Yale University in the U.S.

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