



POINT OF VIEW

# Building the digital storytelling arsenal



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**Bettina Papirio**  
VP, Engagement  
Strategy

**“People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it,”**  
as writer Simon Sinek so famously put it.

*Storytelling* has become almost as big of a buzzword as *disruption*. It has become one of the most successful ways to break through to consumers in an incredibly cluttered and noisy world—especially now, when minds and hearts are occupied by matters of economic uncertainty, global health crises, and equality movements. But stories play an important role in more than just attracting attention; they can also build trust and engagement.

With ever-tightening regulations on brand promotion and vast competition across drug classes, brands within healthcare, in particular, need to **own the narrative to make an impact**—one that transcends the features and benefits of the product and shows how the product will influence the patient’s whole treatment experience.

In the past, healthcare and pharma advertising introduced elements of storytelling through the use of personalization and patient profiles in sales materials, campaigns, websites, and face-to-face interactions. And some have done rather well in doing so. However, there is a greater opportunity to engage with storytelling.

To break away from the known and arm themselves against competition, brands should lean into the emotion of the most precious and essential *product*—good health—and explore the flexibility that new digital channels and media can provide. The digital environment affords endless experimentation to tell evocative stories in various creative formats, at minimal cost. **Our top 5 considerations include:**

## **1** VIDEO draws people into the story

We live in the age of screens and images. And animated images have an impact beyond words. Of all areas of communication, video consumption beyond broadcast has grown the most rapidly; it is used to entertain, inform, educate, persuade, challenge, convince, and more. As a storytelling medium, video transports people to places and increases the realism and credibility of the unknown or abstract. On top of that, audiences have learned how to *read* film as a language from a very young age, making it easy to create deep connections. **For pharma, this provides a crucial advantage when using video to connect with audiences: when audiences are distanced from an issue and are unlikely to take action, video can draw them in and help them understand and care.**



## Building the digital storytelling arsenal

### 2 SOCIAL MEDIA puts you where stories are shared

Social media's rise over the last decade has caused the rate at which people document and share their lives with an almost infinite audience to skyrocket. Traditional advertising practices no longer work as well in today's media-saturated world, and the most effective marketing campaigns succeed by telling compelling stories. Studies have shown that social media storytelling directly impacts purchasing behavior, showing a conversion increase of almost 60% and an almost 90% increase in click-throughs for some brands. Due to its inherently fast-paced, memetic nature, the biggest challenge in social media is creating a clear, authentic narrative that consistently communicates your intention. **To be successful, choose a simple, relatable, and coherent message, and thoughtfully match the platform and format that will open a dialogue with your audience—your brand doesn't have to be everywhere at once, it just needs to meet your target with the right delivery. Be creative in how the message is conveyed: use words, images, sound bites, and videos.**

### 3 NATIVE ADVERTISING meets customers along their journey

Native advertising is storytelling put into context. The main idea here is to seamlessly integrate the existing story with the right context in order to capture the right audience. What makes native advertising a successful storytelling vehicle is that it does not look like advertising at all—it is unobtrusive and appears as content the audience might enjoy. **We can map the sales funnel and meet target audiences along their path by matching the story in the ad with the context of the site. This creates greater relevancy for your brand and prepares the audience to take a specific next step on their journey.**

### 4 INTERACTIVE CONTENT drives audience engagement

When we create interactive content that tells a story, the experience takes center stage for powerful, positive and lasting impressions on target audiences. An interactive experience is designed to pull the audience in, prompt action and participation, and provide something valuable in return. Think of this nonlinear approach as a two-way engagement, like a real conversation. No two interactive experiences look the same. **With a little creative flair, interactive experiences provide the opportunity to co-create stories authentically and in a way that is unique. It can deepen the personality of your brand story by drawing attention to key points, asking questions, and revealing insights.**

### 5 SEQUENTIAL MESSAGING builds outcomes

Sequential messaging is an advertising technique that deploys ads across devices and platforms (eg, display, social, video) without losing the story along the way. Because sequential messaging requires the chopping up and reassembling of the story in smaller, unique messages, it is important to pay close attention to the flow to keep the story intact. In this process, you tailor your story to achieve a specific outcome, such as brand awareness or increased sales. While that sounds very clinical and removed from the storytelling we set out to achieve, it should incorporate the entire arc of the hero's journey to achieve the desired outcome. **Every step needs to be connected with a consistent story to follow. When aspirations, emotions, challenges, and resolutions play a central role in moving the audience through this multistep journey, this approach can improve reach, engagement, and conversions.**

In the end, it is important to remember that every brand has a story to tell. And if that story is engaging and authentic, it will not only stand out from the competition but gain passionate customers for life. If you need help in thinking about how to implement these approaches for your brand, or would just like to learn more, please reach out to [business@evokegroup.com](mailto:business@evokegroup.com). Evoke's customer experience strategists can help you through the process, from research to technology implementation.