Photo credit: Reyner Media (Creative Commons License)

Five Keys To A Strong B2B Technology Brand Story

Technology requires a strong brand story. Everything is in a constant state of flux: your product or service (and those of your competitors); technologies; and the perspective and attitudes of customers, analysts, and investors.

As a result, **the best solutions do not always win**.

A great solution with a poor or confusing story can fail. A solution that is not yet great can become the market leader if its story is right.

Prospects are not software engineers. They need a clear story about your value. What's more, they need a compelling story they can sell up the line within their company with confidence. Arm your best advocate at the prospect company with the right tools to build enthusiasm, and your odds of making the sale increase dramatically.

Building a strong tech brand story helps close sales faster, improve pricing power, and make your company one that others will fear competing against.

1. Make your value obvious
We live in a TL;DR (too long; didn't read) world. Few people will wade through jargon trying to decipher what you sell. A recent study shows that business buyers don't contact suppliers directly until 57 percent of the purchase process is complete.

(<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/b2b-digital-evolution.html
The story you tell online has to be clear and compelling. If it isn't, your salespeople won't get in the arena for a chance to win the business.

What does your product or service do? How is it different? What does it create – or defend against – that makes it worth the price you are asking?

Try this exercise. Remove all the jargon and buzzwords from your elevator pitch. Is there anything left? Is it clear what problem your technology solves? Is there any real reason to solve that problem urgently?

A good brand story goes something like this:

- About to skydive today?
- Without a parachute to slow your descent, you will plummet to your death.
- Our parachute has a unique triple-redundant design: the highest rated by insurance companies

Make sure the prospect knows exactly what you offer, and why it's important to buy now.

2. Don't over-explain

There's an expression in politics: if you're explaining, you're losing. In technology this could be expressed as: "if you're trying to differentiate on the details, you are dragging the sale into the weeds to die."

Yes, your PowerPoint deck and sales materials probably have to include a deep-dive into how the technology works and how implementation happens.
But these need to be their own section – and those conversations are the most productive when they happen with a smaller, more technical audience. CEOs and management generally don't care precisely what happens inside an internal combustion engine: they just want to know that when they step on the gas they will have power to spare.

3. Who or what is the Boogeyman?

A weak technology brand story focuses on you and your technology.

A strong technology story focuses on your customer's story. What is their unique situation? Who or what is the chief obstacle to your prospect's success? What keeps them up at night? How does your technology fit their specific story and address their specific needs?

You will need both a strong general brand story ("here's exactly what this technology

does") and a specific use story ("here's how it will crush the obstacle in your specific company's path") if you want to win.

Think of your prospect as the hero in an adventure story.

If the hero is facing an army of dragons, a sword is better than nothing. A sword uniquely made for fighting an army of dragons is essential.

Do your homework. Be essential.

(P.S. If your tech doesn't work well against dragons, don't annoy people. Stay quiet, or point your prospect to somebody who sells a kick-ass dragon-fighting sword.)

4. What's your memory peg?
Nearly everyone in business now has a bad case of ADHD. They're running from one meeting to the next, fighting one fire after another. If your value isn't obvious, you won't get remembered at all. You can't remember something if you don't even know what it is. If it isn't urgent, how can you get remembered so they buy when the time is right?

A strong technology brand story should contain a single image/mental model that is an easy "memory peg". Do prospects need your solution when they hit a certain revenue point? When they expand to a new geography?

Give your prospects a concrete reason to remember you, and a mental image so that you're the one they call when they're in need.

5. What does winning look like?
How does the customer win with your technology? How is their company's world with your solution better than it would have been without it?

The single toughest competitor every technology company faces is exactly the same: it's inertia.

"Now really isn't the right time."
"We have other priorities."
"We can muddle through."
"My team can knock something together in-house"

Don't count on your prospect to figure out why buying you now makes sense. That's your job, not theirs.

Can you save them enough money where buying today is a no-brainer? Show them.

BRANDEVIDENT

Can you prove what delaying a decision will cost? Show them.

Can you show that implementation is easy? Show them. If it's really easy, offer to do it for free. If it's kind of easy, offer to do it as a for-pay service.

Notice that above we didn't say, "tell them". We said, "show them". Smart customers are immune to tall tales and wild claims.

Everybody claims they can walk on water, but the only thing that impresses the crowd is when someone gets up and actually does it.

If your solution enables your clients to walk on water, don't waste your breath telling them. Show them.

The five keys to great tech brand stories

1. Make your value obvious.
2. Don't over-explain
3. Be clear about who or what is the enemy
4. Provide an easy memory peg
5. Show what winning looks like

It's a TL;DR (too long; didn't read) world.

Push for a tech brand story that makes you the obvious choice.

#   #   #

About the authors

Tom Cunniff is a brand strategist expert in translating complex technologies into clear language that any stakeholder can easily understand. Client work has included Ad Tech DMPs and DSPs (with experience in AI-driven solutions), monetization tools, ad networks, mobile ad companies, video ad companies, social media companies, SaaS and more. Tom has worked at J. Walter Thompson, founded and sold a successful digital agency with clients including Unilever, and spent 10 years leading global digital marketing as a client-side marketer. He has also served as Chairman of the Digital Committee for the Association of National Advertisers.

Mike Cucka is a brand strategy consultant who clarifies complex brands and technologies. He has worked at Siegel & Gale, then founded a successful brand strategy agency with clients including Microsoft and Gartner. Twenty-five years experience bringing clarity and impact to B2B services and technology brands. MBA Fuqua School of Business.

BRANDEVIDENT