



7 KILLER MOVES TO NAIL STORYTELLING ON YOUR WEBSITE

What's different about you? What sets you apart from everyone else?
Your products and services, right?

Are you sure?

We both know when it comes to the travel and extreme sports industries, things change on the regular. Innovation and market demands constantly stretch and push products and services into a revolving door of evolution. Meaning relying entirely on these elements to drive home your individuality leaves you wide open.

What can't be copied or stolen, however, are your stories. The pieces that, when fitted together, define your unique offering to and perspective in this world. A completely underrated advantage, considering your stories are yours alone. By default, storytelling proves itself a more reliable method to stake your flag.

Sharing who you are and what matters to you gives your brand substance. As human beings, we're weirdly affected by stories. They do something to us. They get inside and flip some unseen switch. We're hardwired to respond because of their unbelievable power to unleash and stoke emotion. This is what draws people to your company and inspires loyalty. As Seth Godin writes, "The way people *feel* when they buy *is* your product."

That's all well and good, but how do you infuse stories into your marketing comms—particularly your website?

Let's see.

HOME AND ABOUT US PAGES

All the stories on your website should share a common thread: Your why.

This tells people what gets you out of bed. Why do you do what you do? Why does it matter?

This goes well beyond your mission statement. In fact, discussing your motivations takes such a high priority, marketing consultant Simon Sinek dedicated an entire book to the topic: *Start With Why*.

That in itself is enough to reconsider what people first see when visiting your site. The Home and About Us pages tend to explain what we do. That matters, of course, but somehow the whats and hows don't throw around as much weight as the whys.

You're missing a great opportunity here.

Basically, your motives need to have their moment. From the second that URL opens, visitors should know what you're all about.

Check out how adventure travel company **G Adventures** makes this happen on its home page, just below the fold:

Making the world a better place is easy. All you have to do is have the time of your life.

G Adventures has defined (and redefined) small group travel for 25 years. Travelling with us is the very best way to get up close and personal with your planet in a way you'd never manage on your own. And when you travel with us, you support local communities and help make the world a little bit better for everyone. Welcome to a World of Good.

The industry leader goes beyond your standard guided travel tours. Instead, it focuses on supporting local communities and improving the world. Tell me reading this doesn't win you over, even just a little bit.

And I don't know about you, but it also leads me to ask those other very important discovery questions—what and how. What are they doing to change the world? How are they supporting communities? And the clinchers...What can I do? How can I get involved? (There it is.)

Once you've conveyed your why, you can use this as the theme reinforcing all your messaging. (Added bonus: not only will this create vastly more cohesive content, on the whole, generating future stories will be far easier, because now you have a touchstone to guide your efforts.

2 .

PRODUCT AND SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

This is not about differentiation per se. Rather, we're looking at how we can bolster your descriptions with backstories that invite readers to stick around for a drink.

You can do this by thinking about why your company developed a particular product or service. How did it come about? What gets you excited about it? What does your description convey about you and your overall focus?

Look how outdoor recreation retailer **Moosejaw** nails its storytelling about this women's pullover:

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Item No. 10193861

The Re-tool Snap-T Pullover is bound to be your newest cold weather go-to. Its lightweight, compressible deep-pile fleece (51% recycled) and extra-long fibers provide warmth retention without bulk, and make it a great jacket to wear with a t-shirt or a few other layers. The Re-Tool Snap-T is super-soft and even has side-entry kangaroo pockets and an envelope-style chest pocket. You will for sure feel self-assured while wearing this, even if you run into your ex while on a ski vacation at an all-inclusive resort. I just wanted to see how many hyphenated words I could use. Please don't tell my boss.

Moosejaw Staff Pick - JKatz, Moosejaw Secret Headquarters

This not only describes the pullover and its features, but uses humor and personality to describe how wearing it will make a woman feel.

Something also to note: how the last two sentences bring us further behind the scenes. The actual copywriter pulls up a chair to his desk by making a joke about his writing process. Instantly, the brand is human.

3 . F A Q S

You could give straightforward responses. You could be that guy. Or, you could see this section for what it really is: a chance to have an actual conversation. (Or at least sound like you are.) You are answering questions, after all. What better place to show your personality. FAQs are prime for slipping in a few nuggets about who you are.

Women's snow gear company **Coalition Snow** isn't afraid to do its own thing when responding to delivery questions.

How long will it take to get my goods?

You can't rush perfection. All of our athletic wear -- crop tops, shorts, hot shorts, capris, and leggings -- are made to order. Please allow up to two weeks for delivery. Skis and snowboards will ship within three business days of your order. Need things faster? Please [contact us](#).

The confident "You can't rush perfection" might as well read, "Tranquila chica, the wait is absolutely worth it." The tone definitively continues the company's story of radical individuality. It also conveys the ladies' refusal to sacrifice quality to speed up delivery.

They could have been generic and just answered the question. Instead, they further cemented their voice in the reader's mind. Every little bit counts.

4 .

PROCESS DESCRIPTIONS

How do you do that voodoo that you do so well? Inquisitive minds would like to know what you're up to and why it's the way to go. Especially when your process separates you from everyone else. How do you approach things like product testing and development? Product warranties? Community engagement?

Such things are telling.

For example, **Sterling Rope** is clear about its process.

This formula is what makes us tick:

***Engineers design. Craftsmen build.
Climbers climb, workers work and
provide real world feedback to R&D
and production. The process repeats
itself, and there's no end in sight.***

Understanding this fosters trust for potential customers. Readers know the company continuously tests and improves products based on the feedback from people like them. Ultimately, this means quality is of the upmost importance... something they'll probably appreciate when hanging hundreds, if not thousands, of feet in the air.

5 . CREW DETAILS

Many businesses give only cursory information about their employees. Usually something in the line of: “Megan loves brainstorming rad marketing ideas. When she’s not training for an adventure race, you can find her at Tomas’ Tacos every Tuesday.” But these kinds of descriptions hardly scratch the surface.

Longer-form stories about your crew give potential customers a better sense of who you are. Not everyone will take the time to read them, of course. But some will. And they can have a big impact on how people perceive you. (And don’t forget all the SEO benefits of long pieces.)

People want to do business with people they like. So tell us who you are. Who’s behind the logo? What kind of people are you?

Grain Surfboards gets personal in the “stories” section of its website. Here’s a portion of a post about a recent company move:

IRREVOCABLY GRAIN.



BY MIKE

Moving sucks. Everyone knows it... the end of familiar, the beginning of unknown, all the grunt-work of packing and unpacking and a thousand decisions to make. And while most of our stuff fit nicely into boxes, crates and shipping containers, I still worried that the one thing we couldn’t pack up was the “soul” of the place; that special feeling that you get when you walk through the doors and have your senses filled with the sights, sounds and smells of Grain.

But with each board that finds a home in the racks, with each sharp, well-used tool pulled from a box, and with each piece of familiar art that makes its way onto our walls, this place is coming to life. And - with our first class at the new location just wrapping up - we’re reminded too that all the great people in and around Grain contribute immeasurably to what we are as well. Which is all to say that we’re feeling at home here already, and that makes us think James Baldwin was right when he supposed that “Perhaps home is not a place, but simply an irrevocable condition.”

Even with a mountain of work still ahead of us, we can’t help but feel energized by this change. The new shop, while smaller than our old place, feels completely right, and we’re open for business! Come join us for a [summer workshop](#), get your hands on some [Grain schwag](#) or start your own [DIY project](#) at home. We’re here.



Not only do you learn about their experience, but you get a sense of who they are by what they choose to focus on and talk about. In this case, the guy legitimately cares about the soul of the office. That's awesome. Not only is this a beautiful idea worth pondering, but you get proof that sentimentality means something here. You can tell what it'd be like to paddle out with these guys. And that's definitely someone I'd want to carve my next stick.

This blog is clearly a labor of love. You can see it in the number (and length) of its carefully crafted posts—which reflects the same loving approach the company takes with its handcrafted boards.

6 . PEOPLE ANECDOTES

Your most compelling stories are playing out right now, in real time, by your customers. But you'll probably never hear them. Unless, of course, you ask.

Here's where you should spend more of your time: in conversation with people who care about what you do. The ones who share your passion. The first ones geared up and ready to get out the door, and the last ones in.

This means going beyond simply just sharing Instagram photos on your site. (FYI, everyone is doing it, so the magic isn't really what it used to be.)

Instead, connect with your people, dish out props when warranted, and highlight news from the peanut gallery. You'll build rapport and create a sense of unity. Because community stories are brand stories.

Intrepid Travel knows the best way to encourage us to travel is to share stories of those who already have. Its website is full of first-person accounts, lived, written, and shared from the inside.

Here's an article by Annapurna Mellor, a photographer and writer who traveled through Mongolia—a place where the company runs a number of tours:

Home > Photography > Road tripping Mongolia

PHOTOGRAPHY < STORIES

ROAD TRIPPING MONGOLIA

written by *Annapurna Mellor* | November 24, 2017



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Light floods the green expanse and glides through the rooftops of the surrounding Gers, perfectly reflecting on the hind of the goat in front of me.

A woman in her 50s, wearing a soft purple gown, her hair tied up in a spotty scarf crouches next to me and pulls on one of

You can't get through more than a few stories before you're scanning flights and considering possible dates. Plus, yeah, you know they're a reputable operator, but they share your travel style. That makes all the difference.

7. MINI STORIES

More commonly known as micro copy, but I'm changing it so we can see them for what they really are. Opportunities to continue the journey into your world. Poco a poco.

Your stories don't have to fill pages or even paragraphs. They also can exist as little bits of micro copy sprinkled throughout your site. They add little details that help to communicate your brand.

Think error messages, labels, calls to action, contact form explanations, and ecommerce hints, to mention a few.

For example, this is what **Nike** has on its checkout page:

“TAKE THEM FOR A TRIAL RUN
Return your shoes for any reason up to 30 days.”

The company could have just said, “Return your shoes for any reason up to 30 days.” But it didn't. The writer added “Take them for a trial run” because part of Nike's story is performance, not just good looks. This copy emphasizes that these shoes are made for running.

HOW CAN YOU INFUSE YOUR STORY INTO YOUR SITE?

Well, now you know the possibilities are many.

The best place to start is with your why. Once you've got that all figured out, target a specific area we discussed. When you're happy with it, move on to the next project.

Soon, who you are and why it matters will become more evident. You'll carve out your own corner of the world that attracts like-minded people.

NEED HELP?

Need help brainstorming ideas? Or need someone who can take your stories and turn them into powerful copy and marketing communications? Give me a ring. My specialty is working with extreme sports, travel, and adventure companies to tell their stories in creative and engaging ways. Let's discuss your situation and see how I can put my expertise to work for you. Email Jaylyn@jaylyncarlyle.com or call 757.646.7623 so we can find a time to chat.