

# Why our stories matter

Building community on a deeper level

THE WORKBOOK

*Harness the power of stories to build community,  
gain trust, and help you stand out in a crowded market.*



with Sasha A. Martin

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## Small Businesses cannot survive without stories.

In Tulsa alone, Google Maps reveals:

- 11+ youth theater programs
- 16+ Yoga studios (not counting big gyms that offer yoga)
- 60+ hardware stores (half of which are chains)
- 100+ pizza places (7 pages)
- 160+ local web design companies (9 pages)

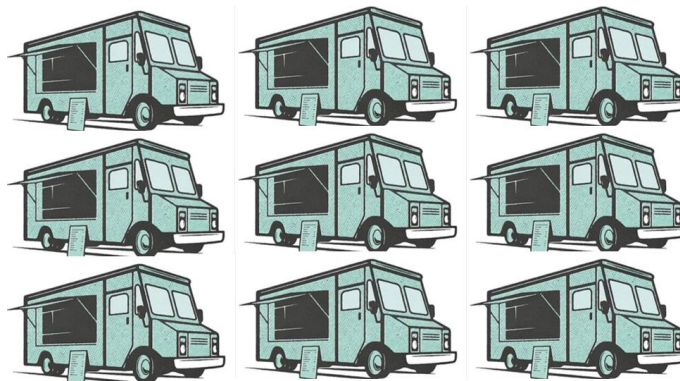
Search for your business on Google Maps. How many results are there?



## 5 reasons we resist sharing our stories:

1. We don't think our stories matter
2. We're trying to blend in – maybe we're afraid of success
3. We want broad market share – we want *all* the customers
4. Pressure to “sell lots of widgets” – no time to consider stories.
5. Fear & shame

## Conquering Fear & Shame



When we make our stories about ourselves, fear dominates. If you don't own your story, people can't connect – you're just like every other food truck out there, selling the same fritter.

## Your stories AREN'T ABOUT YOU. Not entirely.

**EMPATHY** The Greek root for the word Empathy is twofold: EM and PATHOS which is What happens INSIDE EXPERIENCE / INSIDE GRIEF / INSIDE EMOTION. Empathy is the antithesis of a “poster child.” It is about a shared narrative.

**POSTER CHILD** A child afflicted by some disease or deformity whose picture is used on posters or other media to raise money or enlist volunteers for a cause or organization.



Brainstorm the people you want to serve – the people your story speaks to.

*Example: A yoga studio might be tempted to server “everyone,” but what would happen if they decided their heart was to put extra attention on making it easier for single parents to practice yoga? How would this affect everything from services offered to studio design and scheduling?*

## Turn your business into a home.

We story tellers are here to say “me, too.” No matter whether we’re yoga instructors, or have a garden center, or design web sites, we all have the same work: To add OUR STORIES to conversations that are already happening... We’re not selling WIDGETS, we’re creating a HOME, a place of refuge for people with needs or experiences aligned with our own.



“Brand is a person’s gut feeling about a product, service, or organization.”  
- *Marty Neueier*

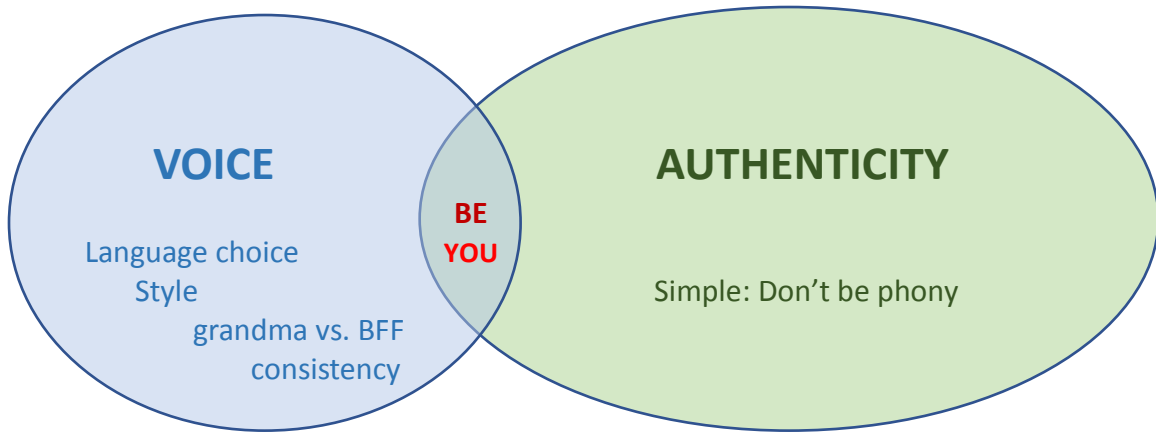
A **BRAND** can give me a good feeling or a bad feeling, but it doesn’t necessarily form attachment. According to Forbes, **STORIES** are the difference between having a house or a home. I can drive by any old house but I am attached to my home. Stories – baby’s first steps, family gatherings – are why we go back home day after day.



Draw your community (a.k.a. customers) at “home.” What are some memories or stories they might make with your business that keep them coming back?

A large empty rectangular box for drawing.

## Components of a story



What is your voice? Are you talking to grandmas or teachers or some other group?



What feels authentic to you? Are you nerdy, or funny, or zen, or something else? Own it!



## The Food Truck Game



Brainstorm: Where are you in your business? What is your story?  
How does your story inform your business?



Try completing this sentence:

“We aren’t them because \_\_\_\_\_”

And simply tell a story. Be unapologetically YOU.

*Work on paper or in conversation until the team understands and can own the story.*

## Feedback from your community

Who is going to DISLIKE your story?



*If you’re a natural people pleaser, don’t list all the people you hope will appreciate your story – it can be more effective to describe those who’d hate what you’re doing.*

Disdain from a few outliers  
is a small cost to build  
**love & connection in**  
*real community.*



Don’t be afraid to incite passion!