Tell Me a Story: A Simple But Powerful Tool to Build Your Business

By Caroline Jordan, MBA

Everyone loves a good story. Whether it's the story of your vacation to an exotic place, the story of how you met your spouse, or the story of your small business, people get drawn in and feel involved. Storytelling is as old as civilization itself.

I participated in a seminar a couple of weeks ago and met Rob Nicoll the owner of a Meadery. "A Meatery?" I asked. No, a Meadery where Rob makes mead, honey wine, and cordials. The name of his newly developing business is Fiddler's Reach and it's located on the coast of Maine.

One thing I've found in talking to people all over the country is that the very mention of the word "Maine" evokes an immediate positive response and adding "coast of" in front of it increases that positive response. It calls to mind rugged granite, crashing waves, soaring seabirds, sturdy lighthouses, wild sea roses, and a feeling of peace and ease.

As I talked with Rob about his business, he spoke of tying his business story into the mystique of the coast of Maine. The name of his company, Fiddler's Reach, comes from the name of a sharp turn in the river that ships have to navigate to finish their sea journey.

In days of old, once a ship came safely through Fiddler's Reach, the journey was nearly done, the work slowed down, and the sailors had time to relax and anticipate the joy of homecoming after long months at sea. And that is when the fiddler would reach for his fiddle and the sailors would dance, sing, and laugh.

What an appropriate story for a business specializing in an old fashioned beverage designed for enjoyment during times of relaxation. Envision how Rob can use all those images in his marketing—package design, sales letters, advertising, letterhead, etc. Ships and waves and fiddles and joyous homecomings on the coast of Maine. It ties into the longing we all have for a little rest and relaxation. It transports us to another time when life seemed simpler and less hectic. A magical time when the plaintive sound of a fiddle expressed our homesickness and a joyful tune spoke of coming home to a well loved place. I'll take a case of that!

Engaging your customers through story telling makes them feel as though they are a part of something greater than themselves. It lessens the loneliness of an uncaring world and provides a momentary escape from reality. What stories can you tell about your business that make people say, "I'll take some of that!"

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