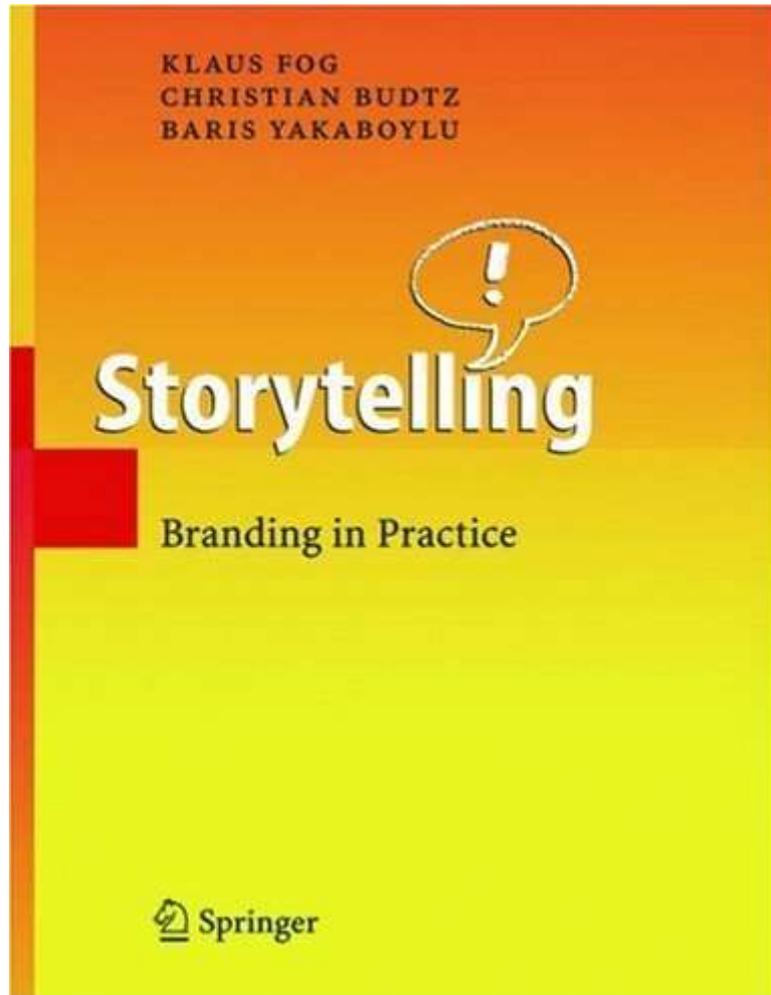


A summary of the book

Storytelling: Branding in practice

By Klaus Fog

Summary by Kim Hartman



This is a summary of what I think is the most important and insightful parts of the book. I can't speak for anyone else and I strongly recommend you to read the book in order to grasp the concepts written here. My notes should only be seen as an addition that can be used to refresh your memory after you've read the book. Use my words as anchors to remember the vitals parts of this extraordinary book. I know I will.

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Description from amazon

Must-read for managers on a powerful branding tool of the future. Up-to-date cases from the business world, plenty of illustrations and easy-to-use tools. Recommended by managers of top international firms. Covers both the internal and external benefits of storytelling for a business company.

Introduction

- Storytelling touches on something familiar but contributes to new consciousness.
- Make the life core of a company visible – expose their heart and unique culture
- Demystifies companies culture and makes it tangible and visible
- Authentic stories are strategic tools – creates a strong brand
- A unique company culture is worth more than money in a world that becomes more alike
- Creates internal value – shows the employees the culture and explains it
- The strategy must be breathed and lived by your employees – make your brand glow in their heart
- Storytelling enemy: silo mentality, people who do nothing but their thing without lifting their head

Chapter 1: Branding through Storytelling

- **In the beginning:** stories were told around the campfire, strengthening and shaping the tribe identity, gave it values and created a reputation towards other tribes.
- Stories define who we are and what we stand for
- Religious stories gave people meaning and guidelines for how to live – think the bible
- Stories bring together and inspire people – think the American dream
- Western economy is driven by emotions and the good life – stories is in higher demand
- Nobody is telling us what to do or think – we have so many choices which let us pick the story that fits our own identity the most
- We signal to the outside through symbols aka brands – the brand tells others who we are and what we stand for. We navigate with brands.
- We vote with our shopping-cart, we express ourselves through consumption
- We are becoming increasingly immaterial and are more influenced by our emotions.
- We want products that provide us with unique experiences. There must be added immaterial value to the product.
- Solid values must be built into a brand
- Storytelling builds a bridge between company and consumer
- The brand story gradually becomes synonymous with how we define ourselves as individuals, products becomes symbols we use to tell stories.
- Tell a story about how your company makes a difference! Concussion writing__
- A strong brand is a combination of facts and emotions. We buy with our hearts.
- First create a product that the customer can rationalize about, and then add value with your brand
- A brand is the perceived value that a company or product represents.
- The difference lies in the story
- Human seeks stories and experiences on our quest for a meaningful life
- Brand must differentiate based on values
- Make a story that the customer and employees can identify with
- Storytelling and branding = emotions and values
- A strong brand build on clearly defines values, a good story communicates those values in an understandable language
- A good story creates bonds

Chapter 2: The four elements of storytelling

1. Message
2. Conflict
3. Characters
4. Plot

We do not always have a shared understanding.

The message

- A clearly defined message must be articulated. Is a central moral or ideological statement.
- The story itself becomes proof of the central message – makes the audience understands and internalizes the message.
- Stick to one central message per story

The conflict

- Conflict is the driving story of a good story.
- Human seeks harmony and tries to restore it if disrupted.
- Change and fear forms the basis of the conflict.
- The conflict forces action to be taken in order to restore harmony
- Stories bring order to chaos by addressing our emotional needs
- The story comes to life in the transition from the onset of the change until the conflict have been resolved
- A story always centers on the struggle to attain, defend or regain harmony
- A tension between two poles
- A storyteller gets the message across through conflict and its resolution
- In storytelling, conflict is not negative – it is where you communicate the perception of right and wrong
- An open end is a powerful tool that let the customer think afterwards
- Avoid chaos – disrupts harmony

The characters

- In order for the conflict to play out, a cast of interacting and compelling characters are needed.
- Often start with one main character that pursuit a goal
- Have one or more arms of support
- Have certain special skills
- There is always an opponent that fights the main character and establishes the conflict
- The opponent can be many things, both psychological and physical
- The resolution of the central conflict is proof of the story's message as the hero attains or fails to attain is goal
- The reader must be able to identify with the characters – both the hero and the problems
- The story must seem likely
- Use the fairy tale model

The plot

- The flow of the story and its events are vital to the user's experience
- The sequence of events needs careful consideration. Must have a precise structure to maintain the audience interest

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A traditional story consists of a beginning, middle and an end.

1. The scene is set
 2. The progression of change creates conflict and sets the parameters of the rest of the story
 3. The conflict escalates
 4. The hero have to make a choice that influence the outcome
 5. A climax is building up
 6. The hero confronts the opposition
 7. The conflict is finally resolved – The end
- A good lead will grab our attention and give us a taste of what is to come

Chapter 3: Storytelling in business

- The story reflects the brand values
- The core story is closely tied into a corporate brand
- A core story should act as a compass directing all company communication, both internal and external.
- All companies live in an open environment – a genuine story that is communicated both internal and external gives the brand a more united and honest look.
- A company must offer brands that help the consumer navigate and make choices
- On a strategic level (branding concept): a core story creates consistency in all companies' communications
- On an operational level communication tool): stories can be used to communicate the company's message internally and externally. Individual stories become blocks in the brand building process
- Use a holistic approach with both approaches in ways that support the central brand message
- The brand tree – represents the core story, ensuring consistency in all company communication and thus differentiating it from its competitors
- The more stories that are told about the company that supports its values, the more they will nourish the company's core story.

Chapter 4: The core story

- Work with the brand as if it is a continually unfolding story
- The core story raises motivation; it gives the effort of the employees a deeper meaning and makes them aware of that their effort means something
- The first step in developing the company's core story is to create a shared mental image of the company's reason for being.
- Must address both heart and head and clearly define the path the company is going. Must enable employees to feel that they make a difference – create a driving passion
- A strong brand always starts with its employees
- A shared challenge or enemy create a stronger sense of togetherness, it reinforces the spirit and culture of the company and sends a clear message about the company's values to its surroundings. Storytelling can be used to paint this challenge and create togetherness and belonging.
- A story lets the environment know how the company makes a difference
- A core story cannot last forever
- We are moving from perceiving a brand as a set of brand values to working with the brand as a living core story.
- Why? Values are just words ripped out of their context. They speak to the mind and not to the heart. Tell a story, and your values will be place in a more dynamic context. With a story, it is easier to put the values into context and understand the meaning of them. Give the user something that he a apply in his own life and he will understand more easily.
- Catch people's imaginations and make them imagine your brand themselves based on the core values that you have integrated within your story
- Bran values speak to reason – a story puts those values into a hu8man content and context. Speaks to both reason and emotions. Use the emotions to back up reason, that way the emotions will act as a confirmation to the hard facts.

The laboratory model – developing the company's core story

A) The obituary test

It is only when we've lost what we really cared about that we realize how special it was. What would be missed if your company died? How would people react? What would they miss?

Think about Coke when they changed their formula – coke is an institution. A strong brand is all about making a difference.

B) Screening of basic data

In order to find the core story a company must gain a solid understanding of its situation and it is perceived, both internally and externally.

B1) Internal basic data

Find out what makes your company culture ticks internally:

1. What are your company vision, mission and values? How do those values manifest in the company activities and how are they communicated?

2. Company milestones. Important events throughout the company history. What anecdotes are still being talked about within the company walls?
3. Employer's story.
 - Which stories do your employees talk about your workplace and share on coffee breaks?
 - Which stories do they use to describe the company?
 - Where do the employees feel that the company makes a difference?
 - What do your employees think makes the workplace special to work in?

B2) External basic data

Maps the company's position in the market and identifies your strategic opportunities and challenges. Its primary purpose is to define the image your company has in the heart and minds of your customers.

1. Market trends
How are the current market trends and how about the future?
2. Customers and key decision makers
What stories are your most and least loyal customers telling about you and what does your competitors customers say?
3. Partners
What are your key partners saying about your company?
4. Opinion leaders
Who are your markets opinion leaders and what do they say?

C) Distilling the basic data

- The goal of the core story is to establish a consistent image of your company brand both internally and externally. You streamline the company's identity with the external perception of the company.
- You must define the gap between the company's identity and its public image. Here it's important to identify the differences and similarities between internal and external data.
- The gap may exist due to communication problems. If so, you should distill your basic data and pull your image and identity together.
- Are there common factors that employees, customers, partners and opinion leaders consider to be relevant in relation to the company?
- Identify and list 3 criteria's that flows like a red thread through the groups and you have built a foundation of your core story.

D) Formulating the core story

- The core story must entail the company's reason for existing. What added value, experiences and dreams do your customers buy?
- How does your company make a difference? Sum up your company's core story in one sentence.

D1) The message

- The message in the company's core story is the moral of the story – a company's sense of right and wrong.
- Your message needs to mirror either your cause or the experience you try to sell.
- Other company's core stories:
 - Harley Davidson – freedom
 - Apple – creativity
 - Lego – learning through play
 - Volvo – safety

D2) The conflict (the level of conflict within the message)

- The conflict creates the dynamics of the story – the sharper definition of the conflict, the more dynamic story.
- Throughout the conflict the company makes its stand while expressing its core values at the same time. Build contrast like good and evil, sweet and sour, etc.
- Other company's conflicts
 - IKEA – making quality design for everyone VS design for the few elite
 - Nike – the will to win VS loose
- You feel a bit better – the typical message of a me-to company that has not taken stand
- Which longing or desire does your company provide customers with the opportunity to pursue? Outline the cause of the dream.
- Trying to please everybody makes nobody really happy – make a choice and stick with it
- Each hero has a strong set of personal skills and character traits. Each represents a set of values and is driven by his passion.

E) The acid test

- *We have now created a clear formulation with a strong message, conflict and a clear cast of characters.*
- Only communicate a story that is similar to competitors if you have a better and more credible way of communicating that story.
- All the competitors' core stories must be included in the acid test comparison

Chapter 5: authentic raw material for storytelling

- Even the smallest story should support the core story
- Use real stories
- **Internal raw material:**
 - Employees
 - The CEO
 - The company's founder
 - Milestones - successes and crises
- **External raw material:**
 - Opinion leaders in and around the business
 - Working partners
 - Customers
 - The product
- Considering employees, a good story can be found anywhere no matter rank or position.
- Start with those employees that like to tell stories
- Ask them what they tell others about the company and what their colleagues are telling them
- Look for astounding accomplishment, both private and pro.
- Be open to new leads during the process and follow them up
- What do the stories say about the company value?

Where to dig:

- The CEO – the frontman's action may be something that symbolizes the whole company. He is often driven by passion, which contributes to a genuine brand.
- The founding of the company – takes the company to its roots.
- Milestones – what events have shaped their company? Big efforts are made in deep crisis. Find emotional material.
- Product stories - how was the product developed and how did its idea come up?

Stories as inspiration:

- **JFK and the cigars.** The cigars wanted the cigars so much that he had to have them before he put in a blockade against Cuba. The importance of the cigars is emphasized by the context; not many people would have thought about cigars in that situation...
- **The coffee "Illy" and the young Barista.** The Barista showed in a genuine way that Illy has integrity and character. If they cannot provide the customer with perfection they rather not sell.
- **MasterCard.** Saved the landing when a passenger agreed to let his car be charged for the landing fee. Shows how much the passenger trusts MasterCard.

What to look for:

- A good example – make people tell stories about specific events
- The more concrete the better – put faces and feelings on your characters
- A good story speaks in images – get the visual details
- Numbers are boring – must be placed in a context
- Storytelling and history are not the same – history may be a seed for story, but not the story itself

Chapter 6: Storytelling as a management tool

Two purposes:

- To strengthen the culture: translating the company's values in tangible ways that employees can easily understand
- To show the way: showing employees how they should behave in certain situations in order to uphold company values
- By explaining company values through stories, the abstract become tangible and the complex become concrete.

A story shows:

- Where we come from
- What we stand for
- Where we're going

- Stories help employees understand and activate the cultural values of the organization

- Stories can give the employee a holistic view of the company; it can make him see his own part and its importance as a part of the bigger picture.

- By exchanging stories we also share knowledge

- Stories can be used to mediate knowledge within the company – a story puts the knowledge in a context and are therefore easier to understand and remember

- A story helps us identify the moral and the meaning, and thus it gives us a better basis for making the right decisions.

- Collect stories in a database and structure the value that is inside them

Circulation:

- Searching
- Sorting
- Shaping
- Showing
- Sharing

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Chapter 7 to 10

Chapter 7 to 10 is a lot of case studies and is therefore more rewarding to read in the book directly.

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