



ALL
MARKETERS
ARE LIARS

THE POWER OF
TELLING AUTHENTIC STORIES
IN A LOW-TRUST WORLD

Seth Godin

PORTFOLIO

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ALL
MARKETERS
ARE LIARS

*Don't just tell me the facts,
tell me a story instead.*

*Be remarkable!
Be consistent!
Be authentic!*

Tell your story to people who are inclined to believe it.

Marketing is powerful. Use it wisely.

Live the lie.

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CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS	I
In the Beginning, There Was the Story	I
You're a Liar	2
Georg Riedel Is a Liar	3
Some of My Best Friends Are Liars	5
Wants and Needs	6
Can Pumas Really Change Your Life?	7
Telling a Great Story	8
Telling a Story Badly: The Plight of the Telemarketer	11
Telling a Story Well: Kiehl's Since 1851	12
The Accidental Marketer	14
Marketers Aren't Really Liars	15
This Appears to Be a Book About Lying	15
One Last Thing Before We Get Going: Know Your Power	16

GOT MARKETING?	17
Does Marketing Matter?	17
Before, During and After the Golden Age	18
When You Know the Secret, Things Look Different	21
How Marketing Works (When It Works)	22
You're Not in Charge (People <i>Can't</i> Listen)	23
You're Not in Charge (You Can't Control the Conversation)	24
You're Not in Charge (It Won't Stay Stable!)	25
Make Stuff Up: The New Power Curve	26

**STEP 1: THEIR WORLDVIEW
AND FRAMES GOT THERE BEFORE
YOU DID** 31

We All Want the Same Things	31
Two Definitions and a Strategy	32
All Squirrels Want Nuts	33
They Say There's No Accounting for Taste . . .	34
What Color Are Your Glasses?	35
Who We Are Affects What We See	36
Glimpses of a Worldview	37
1,000 Worldviews	39
The Power of Frames	41
Getting in the Door	42
"None of the Above"	42
Angels and Devils	44
Lucky Charms Is a Health Food?	46
Attention, Bias and Vernacular	47
George Carlin	49
Early Adopters and So On	50

It's Actually Smaller Than the World	52
There Are No Doorbells in New Hampshire	53
Finding the Tooth Fairy	54
A Worldview Is Not a Community	55
Where to Find the Next Killer Worldview	55
The Most Important Worldview	56
Two More Worldviews Worth Mentioning	58
Putting Frames to Work	59

STEP 2: PEOPLE NOTICE ONLY THE NEW AND THEN MAKE A GUESS 61

How Your Brain Works	62
Look for a Difference: The Frog and the Fly	63
Look for Causation: Broken iPods	65
Use Your Prediction Machine: Make a Guess	66
Cognitive Dissonance: Presidents We Hate	67
We Get What We Expect	68

STEP 3: FIRST IMPRESSIONS START THE STORY 69

You Don't Get Much Time to Tell a Story	69
Take a Look at This Picture	70
The First Snapshot	71
The Myth of the First Impression	73
Why You Need to Care About Superstition	75
The Recycling Story	75

STEP 4: GREAT MARKETERS TELL STORIES WE BELIEVE 77

Are You a Marketer?	77
Why Did You Buy This Book?	77
Telling Stories in an Internet World	79
How to Get Elected President	80
Postconsumption Consumers	82

EXAMPLES: STORIES FRAMED AROUND WORLDVIEWS 85

“I Believe a Home-Cooked Meal Is Better for My Family”	85
“I Believe Shopping for Lingerie Makes Me Feel Pretty”	87
“I Don’t Believe Marketers”	88
“I Believe Sushi Tastes Better if the Chef Is Japanese”	90
“I Like Books Seth Godin Writes”	90
“I Like to Beat the System”	91
“Amazon Has the Best Customer Service”	92
“Organic Food Is Better”	92

IMPORTANT ASIDE: FIBS AND FRAUDS 95

Hi, It’s Dave!	97
Fibs Are True	98
Frauds Are Inauthentic	99
I’m Angry	101
Keeping Promises	102
A Lie Won’t Work for Long if It’s Really a Lie	102

Telling the Honest from the Not-So-Honest	103
Truth and Beauty	103
The Cigarette Preferred by Doctors!	104
Why Sophisticated Women Hate Minivans	105
Who's Your Nanny?	107
The Gulf of Tonkin	108
The Emperor Actually Looked Good	110

STEP 5: MARKETERS WITH AUTHENTICITY THRIVE 113

Changing the Story Requires Personal Interaction	113
Before I Tell Someone a Story, I Tell That Story to Myself	114
Every Picture Tells a Story	115
Every Car Tells a Story	115
The Authenticity of the Soy Luck Club	117
Faking It with Ice Cream	118
It's the <i>Combination</i> of Senses That Now Convinces the Skeptical Consumer	120
All Successful Stories Are the Same	121

COMPETING IN THE LYING WORLD 123

One Story per Customer	123
Flip-flop	124
Finding the Right Community	125
Splitting the Community	127
The Other Way to Grow	128

**REMARKABLE? THE COW HAS
NOT LEFT THE BUILDING** 131

Invisible or Remarkable?	131
The Really and Truly Great News	132
In Defense of Extremism	132
Going to the Edges: Getting People to Vote	133
Going to the Edges: The Title of This Book	134
When Storytelling (and the Cow) Doesn't Seem to Work Very Well	134

**BONUS PART 1: MASTER
STORYTELLERS AND THOSE WHO
ARE STILL TRYING** 137

I Want to Demonstrate My Power	137
Jackson Diner	138
The Storytellers at Avalon	139
Creating Fox News	140
Is a Restaurant About Eating?	142
Getting Satellite Radio to Sell	142
Getting People to Travel	145
The End of the Jewelry Store?	145
People with Napster Are a Band's Best Customers	146
The Goodyear Blimp	148

BONUS PART 2: ADVANCED RIFFS 149

Fertility	149
Worldviews Change	151
The Complex Life of Simple Things	152
Old Stories	153

Explaining Failure	154
The Four Failures	155
The Key Addition to Purple Cow Thinking	157
Some Problems Are Hard	158
Google Adwords and Finding the Right Worldview	158
Oxymorons	159
Friend or Faux?	160
Protect Me	161
Are You Marketing a Camel?	162
On the Other Hand . . .	164

GOOD STUFF TO READ 167

Further Reading from Seth Godin	167
Other Books Worth Reading!	169

SO, WHAT TO DO NOW? 171

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 175

INDEX 179

WHAT'S YOUR STORY? 185

HIGHLIGHTS

I have no intention of telling you the truth.

Instead I'm going to tell you a story. This is a story about why marketers must forsake any attempt to communicate nothing but the facts, and must instead focus on what people believe and then work to tell them stories that add to their worldview.

Make no mistake. This is not about tactics or spin or little things that *might* matter. This is a whole new way of doing business. It's a fundamental shift in the paradigm of how ideas spread. **Either you're going to tell stories that spread, or you will become irrelevant.**

In the first few pages, I'll explain what the whole book is about, and then we'll take it apart, bit by bit, from the beginning, so you can learn how to tell stories too.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS THE STORY

Before marketing, before shopping carts and long before infomercials, people started telling themselves stories.

We noticed things. We noticed that the sun rose every morning and we invented a story about Helios and his chariot. People got sick and we made up stories about humors and bloodletting and we sent them to the barber to get well.

Stories make it easier to understand the world. Stories are the only way we know to spread an idea.

Marketers didn't invent storytelling. They just perfected it.

YOU'RE A LIAR

So am I.

Everyone is a liar. We tell ourselves stories because we're superstitious. Stories are shortcuts we use because we're too overwhelmed by data to discover all the details. The stories we tell ourselves are lies that make it far easier to live in a very complicated world. We tell stories about products, services, friends, job seekers, the New York Yankees and sometimes even the weather.

We tell ourselves stories that can't possibly be true, but believing those stories allows us to function. We know we're not telling ourselves the whole truth, but it works, so we embrace it.

We tell stories to our spouses, our friends, our bosses, our employees and our customers. Most of all, we tell stories to ourselves.

Marketers are a special kind of liar. Marketers lie to consumers because consumers demand it. Marketers tell the stories, and consumers believe them. Some marketers do it well. Others are pretty bad at it. Sometimes the stories help people get more done, enjoy life more and even live longer. Other

times, when the story isn't authentic, it can have significant side effects and consumers pay the price.

The reason all successful marketers tell stories is that consumers insist on it. Consumers are used to telling stories to themselves and telling stories to each other, and it's just natural to buy stuff from someone who's telling us a story. People can't handle the truth.

GEORG RIEDEL IS A LIAR

Georg is a tenth-generation glassblower, an artisan pursuing an age-old craft. I'm told he's a very nice guy. And he's very good at telling stories.

His company makes wine glasses (and scotch glasses, whiskey glasses, espresso glasses and even water glasses). He and his staff fervently believe that there is a perfect (and different) shape for every beverage.

According to Riedel's Web site: "The delivery of a wine's 'message,' its bouquet and taste, depends on the form of the glass. It is the responsibility of a glass to convey the wine's messages in the best manner to the human senses."

Thomas Matthews, the executive editor of *Wine Spectator* magazine, said, "Everybody who ventures into a Riedel tasting starts as a skeptic. I did."

The skepticism doesn't last long. Robert Parker, Jr., the king of wine reviewers, said, "The finest glasses for both technical and hedonistic purposes are those made by Riedel. The effect of these glasses on fine wine is profound. I cannot emphasize enough what a difference they make."

Parker and Matthews and hundreds of other wine luminaries are now believers (and as a result, they are Riedel's best

word-of-mouth marketers). Millions of wine drinkers around the world have been persuaded that a \$200 bottle of wine (or a cheap bottle of Two-Buck Chuck) tastes better when served in the proper Riedel glass.

Tests done in Europe and the United States have shown that wine experts have no trouble discovering just how much better wine tastes in the correct glass. Presented with the same wine in both an ordinary kitchen glass and the proper Riedel glass, they rarely fail to find that the expensive glass delivers a far better experience.

This is a breakthrough. A \$5 or a \$20 or a \$500 bottle of wine can be radically improved by using a relatively inexpensive (and reusable!) wine glass.

And yet when the *proper* tests are done *scientifically*—double-blind tests that eliminate any chance that the subject would know the shape of the glass—there is absolutely zero detectible difference between glasses. A \$1 glass and a \$20 glass deliver *precisely* the same impact on the wine: none.

So what's going on? Why do wine experts insist that the wine tastes better in a Riedel glass at the same time that scientists can easily prove it doesn't? The flaw in the experiment, as outlined by Daniel Zwedling in *Gourmet* magazine, is that the reason the wine tastes better is that *people believe it should*. This makes sense, of course. Taste is subjective. If you think the pancakes at the IHOP taste better, then they do. Because you want them to.

Riedel sells millions of dollars' worth of glasses every year. He sells glasses to intelligent, well-off wine lovers who then proceed to enjoy their wine more than they did before.

Marketing, apparently, makes wine taste better.

Marketing, in the form of an expensive glass and the story that goes with it, has more impact on the taste of wine than