Excerpts from the new book by Jonah Sachs, CEO of Free Range Studios
Purchase the full-length book,
WINNING THE STORY WARS
on Amazon.com

To see a video and learn more, visit:
WinningTheStoryWars.com
Trying to get your message heard?
Build an iconic brand?

Welcome to the battlefield.

The Story Wars are all around us. They are the struggle to be heard in a world of media noise and clamor. Today, most brand messages and mass appeals for causes are drowned out before they even reach their audiences. But, a few consistently cut through the din using the tool that has always moved minds and changed behavior—great stories.

Our new book, “Winning The Story Wars,” is about how to tell these great stories and break through. This booklet contains excerpts from the full-length book to give you a taste of the powerful story telling methods you’ll learn.
Glenn Beck and Annie Leonard are two master marketers in the Digitoral Era. Find out why they’ve broken through where so many others have failed in Chapter One of Winning the Story Wars.
Why must today’s marketers become master storytellers?

For most of history, humans communicated through Oral Traditions. Ideas competed in a survival-of-the-fittest landscape. Messages passed from mouth to mouth, moving peer-to-peer, changing along the way. If ideas weren’t compelling, they simply died.

For the past hundred years, that tradition has been turned on its head. Marketers thrived in the Broadcast Era — in which audiences were captive and messages were broadcast one to millions. It became survival of the richest.

As the Broadcast Era dies, thanks to new technologies, we are returning to an oral tradition — only this time it’s digitally powered. This is the Digitoral Era.

Audiences increasingly ignore broadcast marketing. They pass ideas virally through social networks. They make ads their own. It’s survival of the fittest again.

How can we survive this wild landscape of the new Oral Tradition? By using the one communication tool that every Oral Tradition society has favored — great stories.
### AN EPOCHAL SHIFT IN COMMUNICATIONS IS UNDERWAY — AND UNSTOPPABLE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THE ORAL TRADITION (NEARLY ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY)</strong></th>
<th><strong>THE BROADCAST ERA (THE PAST 100 YEARS)</strong></th>
<th><strong>THE DIGITORIAL ERA (EMERGING TODAY)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Everyone owns ideas</td>
<td>Ideas are exclusive property of their creator</td>
<td>Everyone owns ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messages move through social networks</td>
<td>Messages broadcast one to many</td>
<td>Messages move through virtual social networks</td>
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<td>Survival of the fittest</td>
<td>Survival of the richest</td>
<td>Survival of the fittest</td>
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<td>Stories dominate</td>
<td>Many ways to speak to captive audiences</td>
<td>Stories dominate</td>
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Stories are a universal human communication tool. They are designed to persuade an audience of a storyteller’s world view. The storyteller does this by placing characters onto a stage and showing what happens to them over a period of time. Each character pursues a goal in accordance with his or her values, facing difficulty along the way, and either succeeds or fails according to the storyteller’s view of how the world works.

We tend to listen to a well-told story because its characters serve as role models. Their fates strongly imply what will befall us if we follow a similar path.

People build their lives around the stories that give them meaning. That’s why they will build their lives around brands and causes that tell meaningful stories. The rest will be forgotten.
Marketing’s Five Deadly Sins: Gimmickry, Puffery, Authority, Vanity and Insincerity. Learn how to confront these story-killing habits in Chapter Two of Winning the Story Wars.
Why do marketers now have to rethink everything?

The Broadcast Era made us marketers lazy. Audiences were guaranteed so we could simply treat them like captive sales targets, not free-thinking partners. Many marketers forgot how to tell enticing stories. We learned to rely on the typical marketing speak that carries on to this day — even though it no longer works.

These bad habits have taken the form of Marketing’s Five Deadly Sins, and they kill our chances to tell stories. They are:

**GIMMICKRY:** Relying on cheap tricks and humor that elicit laughs but undermine your brand.

**PUFFERY:** Ordering audiences to act using the impersonal marketing voice of God.

**AUTHORITY:** Spouting facts and expert opinions then stepping back and waiting for applause.

**VANITY:** Talking about your own fabulousness as if you are the hero of your own brand story.

**INSINCERITY:** Pandering to audiences by trying to speak their language instead of defining your own.
Sinning can be deadly for a brand. McDonald’s faced viral ridicule when it tried to speak in the stereotyped language of its inner-city urban audience. “I’d Hit That” is something their targets would say. It’s just something most of them would never consider doing to a hamburger.
The only way out of sinful marketing is to turn to storytelling. Here are three simple ways to test whether you’ve moved toward a story and away from sin:

**TANGIBLE:** Stories present information that makes concepts visible and human scale. They make people feel that they can “touch” and “see” an idea.

*Does your communication provide a who, what, where and when?*

**RELATABLE:** Stories matter to us because their characters carry values that we want to see either rewarded or punished.

*Do you find that you can identify with—or are in emotional opposition to—the characters in your communication because you understand what motivates them?*

**EMOTIONAL:** Stories elevate emotional engagement to the level of, and often beyond, intellectual understanding.

*Does your communication make you feel something rather than just think something?*
The 20th century exploded our cultural meaning of many traditional stories and the best marketers stepped in to fill the holes left behind. Discover the Myth Gap in Chapter Three of Winning the Story Wars.
The stakes of the Story Wars are higher than you think.

A society’s most important stories — its myths — act as cultural DNA. They are the tiny packets of information that contain the values, intentions and shared identity of a people.

But the traditional myths of our global society are fraying fast. Tectonic shifts in technology, politics and the environment have pushed old myths to the fringes. Beginning in the mid-20th Century, a Myth Gap opened and we’ve since teetered on the edge of becoming a people without stories to guide us.

That is, until marketers stepped in to provide new myths that universally worked. They revolutionized society, providing explanations, meaning and rituals with their stories. These new myths reprogrammed our cultural DNA. In the United States, within a single generation, the nation went from a thrift-based society to one based on ever-growing consumerism and identity through brands.

As marketers have become mythmakers, a new power and responsibility has been conferred upon us. How we choose to use this power will determine much of our planet’s future.
THE INGREDIENTS OF A WORKING MYTH AND HOW MARKETERS PROVIDE THEM:

- **Explanation**: Myths give us explanations of how life works. *Marketers provide new explanations of how to best live with each product they launch.*

- **Meaning**: These explanations shape our identities and sense of purpose. *Marketers teach us to build our identities around the products we love.*

- **Story**: Myths take place not in the here and now but long ago and far away. *We know marketing stories are fictional, but we deeply believe them anyway.*

- **Ritual**: Myths suggest actions through which we bring them to our world. *Every brand offers a simple ritual — its purchase and use or membership in its cause.*
The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street are the two most sensational political marketing successes of the last several years. They transformed public anger into major movements by identifying a myth in jeopardy — the American Dream — and offering new myths to replace it. They simplified a dizzyingly complex situation into simple stories anyone can be a part of. Here are some of the key story elements they employ:

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<th>THE TEA PARTY</th>
<th>OCCUPY WALL STREET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MORAL OF THE STORY</td>
<td>Elites are stealing the Dream; regular people can take it back.</td>
<td>Elites are stealing the Dream; regular people can take it back.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEROES</td>
<td>True Patriots</td>
<td>The 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VILLAINS</td>
<td>Elites in government</td>
<td>Elite corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFLICT</td>
<td>Ritual actions evoking ideas from the American Revolution</td>
<td>Dramatic takeover of public spaces</td>
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Beginning in the 1920s, men like Edward Bernays created a marketing language to pacify and quell man’s “violent nature.” Discover Marketing’s Dark Art in Chapter Four of Winning the Story Wars.
Marketers as mythmakers. What’s wrong with that?

Nothing. As long as marketers do what mythmakers have always done — point their audiences to their higher potential and citizenship. Joseph Campbell, who studied myths across cultures and millennia, said that this has always been the role of myth.

But our advertising forefathers had a very different path for audiences. Inspired by Freud, they believed humans were dangerous, selfish and driven by fear. To dampen these drives — which they blamed for two horrific world wars — and to keep the American post-war economy going, they developed Inadequacy Marketing. Where Campbell saw a hero’s journey of self-sacrifice, courage and community-mindedness, these men told stories that encouraged fear, self-centeredness, status-seeking and greed. Instead of creating a generation of citizens, they spawned a world of insecure and dissatisfied consumers — and a society in crisis.

Captive audiences in the Broadcast Era had little choice but to accept these depressing and frightening stories. But in the survival-of-the-fittest Digitoral Age, people are rejecting and ridiculing Marketing’s Dark Art. Marketers who haven’t realized this yet are now being crushed in the Story Wars.
INADEQUACY MARKETING STORIES FOLLOW A SIMPLE FORMULA.

1. CREATE ANXIETY

2. INTRODUCE THE BRAND’S MAGIC SOLUTION

In the early days, the formula was bold-faced and obvious, as above. As audiences became more sophisticated (and anxious), inadequacy ads began to focus more on the second step only — the magic solution — social status in the body of a car, sex appeal from a label on a pair of jeans, popularity from an MP3 player.
KENNETH COLE LEARNED THE HARD WAY THAT AUDIENCES WON’T STAND FOR IT ANYMORE.

The Tweet:

“Millions are in uproar in #Cairo. Rumor is they heard our new spring collection is now available online ...—KC.”

One of the thousands of angry viral responses:

“WTF is wrong with you?”

One of the most common forms of humor in Inadequacy Marketing is to declare that there are no human values higher than shopping. But when Kenneth Cole tried it on Twitter during the Arab Spring, the world learned how flat this joke now rings.
THE DIGITORAL ERA DEMANDS THAT WE LEAVE BEHIND THE BROKEN MARKETING LANGUAGE OF THE PAST. BUT WHAT’S NEXT?
The way forward can be found in three commandments offered in 1895 by marketing’s first great storyteller, John Powers.

Tell the truth.

Be interesting.

Live the truth.
Abraham Maslow identified universal human values that went beyond greed, fear and vanity. Learn how his theories lay the foundation for Empowerment Marketing in Chapter Five of Winning the Story Wars.
The great stories that survived in the Oral Tradition were about maturation and contribution to society. They pointed the way toward fulfilling higher human potential. They initiated the adolescent mind and built functional citizens.

Our marketing myths can do the same when we begin to tell a simple truth about human nature: Fear, greed and status-seeking are not the only universal human values. All humans seek far more — community, self-expression, justice. In fact, for decades, marketing strategies that have placed transcendent human values like these at their core have been dominating the Story Wars. They practice the art of Empowerment Marketing and they will only grow in power as audiences take control of our marketing landscape. After all, who wants to pass a depressing, fear-based message to their social networks?

Iconic brands like Nike, Apple, Obama’s “Yes We Can”, Dove, VW, and the Story of Stuff have brilliantly called people to their higher values and have consistently broken through the media din, forming armies of evangelists. We can all do the same.
There are nine transcendent values that all humans pursue.

**WHOLENESS:** The need to feel sufficient as an individual and connected to others

**PERFECTION:** The need to seek mastery of skill or vocation, often through hard work or struggle

**JUSTICE:** The need to live by high moral values and to see the world ordered by morality

**RICHNESS:** The need to examine life in all of its complexity and diversity, to seek new experience and overcome prejudice

**SIMPLICITY:** The need to understand the underlying essence of things

**BEAUTY:** The need to experience and create aesthetic pleasure

**TRUTH:** The need to experience and express reality without distortion

**UNIQUENESS:** The need to express personal gifts, creativity and nonconformity

**PLAYFULNESS:** They need for joyful experience
EXPOSE THE LIES OF INADEQUACY MARKETING
Audiences love to see traditional marketing undone. It appeals to their “Truth” value. VW’s legendary Think Small campaign mocked Cadlillac’s crass attempt to make people feel they needed a car to express their status — and car buyers rejoiced.

SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE AS HEROES
Rather than cast your customers as damsels in distress who need your product to provide a quick solution, show them their own heroic potential. Nike’s Just Do It campaign never said the gear would make achievement easy. Instead the brand stressed hard work and even failure before breakthrough, appealing to audience’s “Perfection” value.

CALL ON THE CITIZEN NOT THE CONSUMER
Obama’s “Yes We Can” was so resonant because it called voters to participate in fixing our country by working hard together. Obama told us the work was up to us and our communities, appealing to the universal “Wholeness” value. Audiences responded with enormous passion leading to his unlikely election.
The Hero’s Journey — the myth formula behind great stories like that of Moses — provides breakthrough insights for marketers. Read about it in Chapter Six of Winning the Story Wars.
So how do you build a story-based brand?

Choosing transcendent values is the starting place. Next, we need to fill our brand stories out with main characters, settings, plot and magic. To do this, we need look no further than The Hero’s Journey. This is the myth template discovered by Joseph Campbell — the single story all societies have told throughout time. It’s the story of Moses, King Arthur, Dorothy, Luke Skywalker, the Lion King and Neo.

In this story, an unlikely hero is found in a broken world. She is invited by a mentor on a dangerous journey of self-discovery in a magic land. The hero reluctantly accepts, must face down her worst fears and then return to her world with a treasure. The treasure doesn’t make her rich or famous. Rather, it is a gift that heals her community, making the world a better place.

People thrill to hear this story again and again and they love brands built upon it. Using simple insights from this myth formula we can find our own unique brand voice, our magic differentiator and a true place in our audience’s hearts.
LEVERAGE THE HERO’S JOURNEY IN YOUR BRAND STRATEGY.

THE HERO: The hero of the story is always the unlikely outsider—not the insider who knows it all. So, your brand is not the hero of your brand story. Your audiences are. Stop talking about you and start talking about them.

THE MENTOR: That’s your brand. You’re the character who empowers your hero to pursue her higher level values — never by force, but by enticement and true compelling partnership.

THE BRAND GIFT: The Hero’s Journey is difficult, and the Hero tries to refuse. But the Mentor offers a magic item that makes the journey possible. Think of the ruby red slippers or the light saber. The best story brands know what their magic wildcard is and never stop using it to differentiate themselves.
THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE.

You’ll never move anybody to action with that tired old corporate speak. If you want to play the role of the mentor, you need to sound like a human being. Identify your Brand Archetype, your core character, to get on your way to story success.
Our brains haven’t changed much since caveman days. They’re still pro-
grammed to take notice of three prehistoric things — Freaks, Cheats and
Familiars. Meet them in Chapter Seven of Winning the Story Wars.
Next, go from story strategy to viral sensation.

Once you’re *Telling the Truth*, you’re ready to take the next step — heeding the commandment to *Be Interesting*. This is where your story strategy leaps to life.

To find the tools we need, we must go back to the earliest days of the Oral Tradition — our first human ancestors. You see, we share the exact same brain structures as our ancestors of 70,000 years ago. For them it was life or death to sort out the useless input from the information that mattered. And they used stories to do it.

They filled those stories with **FREAKS** — Characters who were human-like but totally different than humans they’d met before. Living in small tribes, outsiders meant huge threats and huge opportunities.

They favored **CHEATS** — Characters who broke social norms and either got punished or changed the rules.

And **FAMILIARS** — Inside winks and nods that let them know the story they were hearing was designed for their tribe.

These markers are at the heart of viral breakthroughs across the Digitoral landscape and can supercharge your next communication.
Brands that tell iconic stories must engage in iconically inspiring behavior. Your story strategy helps point the way in Chapter Eight of Winning the Story Wars.
In the end, your success depends on authenticity — that means living the truth you tell.

The Digitoral Age is not only survival of the fittest — it’s radically transparent. Yes, it will drive all brands to tell higher-value stories. But brands that tell such stories while refusing to live the values at their core will wish they never stepped into the Story Wars. Audiences are becoming too savvy to be fooled, and they’re too vocal to be ignored.

Brands like BP, Pepsi and Conservation International have learned the dangers of mismatching the stories they tell with those they live, and we can learn from their mistakes. Though acting virtuously in a transparent world may seem like a hopelessly broad mandate for a brand, your story strategy can help. Knowing the values you stand for means knowing the values your audiences will expect you to live — and that means knowing where to direct your efforts to change.

By calling in outside authenticity agents, values-driven advisors who exemplify your core values, you will gain valuable insights on how to deepen your values commitments. And your journey to live your values will yield yet more powerful stories to share. Living their truth will empower tomorrow’s iconic brands to win the Story Wars.
About the Author

As the cofounder and CEO of Free Range Studios, Jonah Sachs has helped hundreds of major brands and causes break through the media noise with unforgettable campaigns. His work on renowned viral videos including The Meatrix and The Story of Stuff have brought key social issues to the attention of more than sixty-five million people online. A constant innovator, his studio’s websites and stories have taken top honors three times at the South by Southwest Interactive Festival. Sachs’s work and opinions have been featured in a variety of media including the New York Times, NPR and Fast Company magazine, which named him one of its fifty most influential social innovators.

www.freerange.com

About the Illustrator

Drew Beam is the Innovation Director at Free Range Studios, where he helps clients see the future and leap into it. After earning his BFA at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Beam built a successful career creating visuals and innovation strategies for dozens of Fortune 500 companies. His illustrations have been published by Time Warner Books, Penguin Books, and Rolling Stone magazine, to name just a few.
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PRAISE FOR WINNING THE STORY WARS

“Jonah Sachs knows stories. He’s responsible for some of the most popular and respected viral messages of all time: The Story of Stuff, The Meatrix, Grocery Store Wars, and others. This book is a storytelling call to arms, an appeal to tell the stories that matter. So read Winning the Story Wars—and join the fray.”

—DAN HEATH, COAUTHOR, SWITCH AND MADE TO STICK

“History is written by the winners. And as Jonah Sachs makes abundantly clear, it is now being written by the marketers, the new mythmakers of our time. Whatever your product or your cause, if you want it to succeed, read this wise and enlightening book.”

—NICK COE, CEO, BATH & BODY WORKS; FORMER PRESIDENT, LAND’S END

“Great leaders transform the world through stories that inspire hope, stability, trust, compassion, and authenticity. This important and thought-provoking book shows that leadership in marketing will require the living and telling of such stories as well.”

—DEEPAK CHOPRA, FOUNDER, THE CHOPRA FOUNDATION

“We know about who we are both individually and as a society through stories. In this brilliant book, Jonah Sachs tells us how we lost our storytelling capacity and how we must regain it, constructing our own myths and living the truth of the stories we tell.”

—BILL BRADLEY, FORMER US SENATOR; MANAGING DIRECTOR, ALLEN & COMPANY

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