

Why You Need a Signature Story

By Laura Morton

Every company has a story to tell, but your *signature story* is the one you share that takes your audience where YOU want them to go. It's the equivalent of putting forward your corporate DNA—the story of who you are, what you stand for and how you want others to see you.

Your signature story is extraordinarily powerful in shaping your brand, culture and future. It's the defining story that helps to set you apart from everyone else in your field. Why your vanilla ice cream is better than theirs. Think of it as your “WHY...” Why you're different, better, more effective at what you do. If meritoriously told, it can transform your customer's experience, re- envision your products and services and engage new business relationships and opportunities.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF A *SIGNATURE STORY*?

Two great examples of strong signature stories in real estate include:

Coldwell Banker mission is the same as it was when it was founded over 100 years ago—“to ethically and honestly serve its clients so they can achieve their dream home.”

When you think about it, what better way is there to emotionally connect with a client making the biggest financial decision of their lives than sharing a story that forever joins you to them?

And look at ReMax--.Dave and Gail Liniger founded the company in 1973 with the simple idea to give the very best real estate brokers in the business one hundred percent of the commission

they earn instead of the commonplace fifty-fifty split usual at the time. Every leader in the industry told him his business platform could never survive—that the financial structure simply wasn't how things were done. More than 40 years later, RE/MAX has become and remains one of the world's most productive real estate sales forces in the business. And it all started with a story that Dave could tell to agents that separated him from everyone else.

WHAT'S YOUR *SIGNATURE STORY*?

To help you get started writing your signature story, I've put together some questions to think about and then answer. Companies can't be all things to all people, so *what is it that makes your company special?* Is it really that cool app, product or better commission structure? Or is it the people—the heart, the soul of your company and the culture?

Your answer to what makes *you* special is your first step to creating *a signature story*.

3 Vital Questions:

1. How would you describe your company in one or two sentences?

2. And how would your agents describe it to you? (*if you don't know the answer, ask them!)

3. How do you think other brokerages would describe your company if you weren't listening? (*See #2)

5 RULES FOR CREATING YOUR *SIGNATURE STORY*:

#1 *Know the Message You Want to Leave Your Audience with Before You Start Writing...* I call this identifying the key point or overall takeaway and then work backward to fill in the content. If there's no takeaway, there's no validity or point to the story. *My takeaway for you today is that you understand the value in creating your signature story.*

#2 *Your story must contain a HERO (protagonist),* you, your company, your team members, clients, customers, a product or service you offer or even a particular strategy that sets you apart.

#3 *Write What You Know---*it's much easier to arrive at this message by using *believable* and *authentic* stories which draw from your own experiences—and then tell it from a point of view that you believe so deeply that it becomes vividly real. Find a way to pull at the heartstrings of your audience so they will emotionally connect and become invested in the hero, who is dealing with real life situations, conflicts or challenges that will be resolved. Your ultimate goal is to recreate that excitement, fear, frustration, bewilderment or elation of the moment you're sharing, whether it was the time you didn't think you were going to make payroll or if that big capital raise was going to close.

#4 *To tell a truly believable story, it must be grounded in reality.* Be truthful about what your company is and is not, who you are as the CEO or team leader, how much you really sold that property for and what is really going on within your organization in terms of vision. I always remind my clients that we live in a world where the division between fact and fiction is too easy to divulge these days—especially in the world of celebrity and social media. There's someone out there who knows the other side of your story, so you may as well write your story from an

authentic point of view and therefore own your narrative—flaws and all. If you don't, someone else will, and usually it's your competition who isn't spinning things in your favor.

#5 More Show, Less Tell... When you read a great novel, you don't want people telling you things, you want to be transported in time or space. You want to see and hear it, touch and feel it, taste and smell it...this advice holds true and is just as relevant for business leaders and companies looking to share their stories. Don't tell an audience how innovative you are—what makes you different or how you put your company values into practice.

Show them.

How?

Through your signature story—a genuine story which vividly demonstrates who you are, why you're different, what makes you the best, why others should care, why someone should exclusively work with you, why an agent should leave their current agency and come to yours, etc....

Remember: your signature story isn't about you. It's about engaging with the people you are sharing it with—your audience. Make it about them. Show them you care about their needs and desires and you will connect with your audience faster and on a deeper, more emotional level.

SIGNATURE STORY WORKSHEET

1. What's your message/takeaway:

2. Who is your hero? What details can you share?

3. What is the conflict/challenge your hero is facing? What/who were the obstacles preventing your hero from reaching their goal?

4. How will that conflict be resolved? What actions were taken to help the hero face the conflict/challenge?

5. What was the final outcome for your hero, as told through your own authentic (real) experiences? What *stories* can you share in the narrative to back up your *message*? (This is the SHOW)

Laura Morton is a 20-time *New York Times* bestselling author and has written more than 50 books. She has been involved in the entertainment industry for more than 25 years as a writer, producer, speaker and entrepreneur. Laura frequently speaks to organizations on a variety of topics, mixing humor and emotional storytelling in her dazzling and memorable presentations.

Want to know more about creating *your* signature story and the value that fearless storytelling can have on your company? Check out www.lauramortonmanagement.com to see how we can help positively impact your business.