

## **The Art of Storytelling**

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In my humble 23 years on this earth, I have become a student of life.

As I have aged and made my way into the advertising world, I have found just how important authenticity is in an industry that is plagued with a capitalistic mindset and nature. Money, profit and image are nowhere near the purpose of why I do what I do.

My purpose is the backbone of not only my work but who I am and who I choose to be each day. I want to tell stories that change lives for the better. Advertising gave me an outlet to do that by using a brand's platform and telling a wide array of different stories with various perspectives and themes.

There is an Arnold Bennett quote I refer to every chance I get:

“There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. To the cognition of the brain must be added the experience of the soul.”

A story can either be the truth or the force. It can either be the message or the experience. It is not for us, however, to decide. It solely depends on us acting as the messenger, the mouthpiece, and the way in which our recipient interacts to our own truth.

This message hit me as a painful truth when I realized its words rang true. I often try to convince others of my truth in an effort to spare them pain that refined me as a person. What I realized is that this pain, this emotion, this experience, is necessary. The pedestal that I put storytelling on isn't able to stand without experience and the empathy that I inject into it. All of this comes from going through it and who am I to stray others from doing the same? Simply put, it's a character builder. Nevertheless, it is excruciating for someone like me to cheer from the sidelines and risk someone else's "failure", but it is necessary.

This is when I realized the true art of storytelling. Awareness flows into interpretation which translates into perspective. As long as you are both authentic and vulnerable in the way you recall and communicate your own experiences, you are empathetic. You are bound to get through to someone and its power to mean something is inevitable.

Acting as a mouthpiece to a truth is an incredible gift. It is a direction, not a choice. I think of it as the light in a dark wood. Some may make their way to it. Some may decide to build shelter with their resources thinking it's their way to escape the dark or the dangers that may be lurking. Some may brave the darkness in an effort to preserve ego and pride. What matters here is that they are aware. They have a choice.

Growth and cooperation has to be consensual. It is someone else's choice to listen, not just hear. Odds are, if you allow that space for them to listen and not feel like you're forcing them to, they will. Your grip doesn't get better the tighter you hold. Give others grace as they explore and navigate their own journeys. This doesn't mean you don't give subtle integrity-checks or challenge them to be the best version of themselves, just allow them to fall and cheer them on and help them up regardless. I no longer believe

neither grace nor love have to be unconditional. It is okay to set boundaries and hold strong to those and elevate the company you keep as well as yourself. Never settle and certainly don't ever tolerate anything.

Storytelling provides an option and a choice, of sorts. It is an experience in itself but it is not *the* experience. It is a way to bring one full circle on *their* own time— we are just showing them the way, whether they choose to follow it or not.

The art of storytelling and the power of empathy will always come full circle. It is human nature to experience the truth and an incredible gift to be able to share it.

For myself, advertising goes hand-in-hand with the way I lead my life and conduct myself. It is all about connection, empathization and storytelling. I think that's a privilege I cannot begin to put into words but if I must choose one it would be grateful.