

EMAIL MARKETING

**How to Triple Your Email
Open Rates with The Power...
Of Storytelling!**



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Email Open Rates, The Rise and Fall of Nations, and Morgan Freeman
Every day, hundreds of millions of promotional emails go unopened. I'm not talking about spammy messages about magic or desperate messages from royalty who need help with a little international transaction.

I mean **legitimate, targeted emails**. Emails which were sent to people who had specifically asked for them.

And we're all guilty of doing this. I can almost guarantee that if you have an email address, you have **hundreds of unopened messages** rotting away in the deepest depths of your inbox. People mentally *filter out emails*, with a sort of deliberate blindness that develops over time.

But that's not to say that it's impossible to get attention. Some marketers **enjoy very high open rates**, even from jaded Internet veterans in spam happy markets like SEO. In fact, they *manage to whip their readers up into a frenzy*, to the point where they eagerly anticipate the next email.

They get them to such a state that they hit the refresh button over and over again, feverishly waiting for the next email to arrive. ***How do they do it?*** How do they create this addiction, where the reader can't even sit still until they've read the next installment in what it **basically a sales funnel?**

They use a secret that captures and commands the

reader's imagination. It's an *ancient technique* which has been used since before the dawn of civilization to captivate and transfix human minds. It has shaped our culture and society and has molded the destiny of nations.

Every great leader, every idealist, spiritual leader and dreamer since the dawn of time has used this technique. ***What is it?***

It's the simple power of the story.

No other weapon in all of man's great arsenal has such a **power to persuade** and compel. If there ever was such a thing as an enchantment that a marketer could use to command the attention of their audience, then it's a story.

By way of an example, let us consider the voice of God. Not the literal voice of God, of course. And not in a religious sense, either. No, what *I'm talking about is Morgan Freeman*.

Because if you were to ask any ten strangers what

the voice of God would sound like, the majority would say "Morgan Freeman." Of course, Morgan has famously played the role of God in 2 movies (Bruce Almighty and Evan Almighty.) But people have been identifying his voice as Godlike since before these films were made.

Morgan Freeman has a truly distinctive voice. It combines so many characteristics - *warmth, authority, compassion, gravity, charm and dignity*. It's truly amazing how he is able to express so many qualities indirectly. And, in many ways, this is how people imagine God's voice would sound.

So it should come as no surprise that when National Geographic and Revelations entertainment set out to produce a new series exploring The Story of God, they wanted Morgan Freeman for the narrator. This

series will explore creation and religion, miracles and resurrection, from all dimensions. It will cover articles of faith and historical fact, and air all points of view, from the deeply secular to the profoundly spiritual.

Religion has had a huge effect on western civilization. The world we live in is shaped to a great degree by the stories in the bible, and even non-religious people embrace the ethical principles which the bible brought to the west.

The power of stories is like **an invisible tapestry** that shapes the world we live in. Not all stories are as large and sweeping as the story of western civilization and religion.

But there's a great story behind every great cultural movement, every trend and fashion, and even every Internet meme and viral video.

In short, people love stories! And if a story can change the course of a nation, if it can turn the tide of history, then it can surely open an email.

Think back to the last time you were **spellbound** by something you read, or heard, or saw. Seriously, take a moment to think about it. At that moment, the force which captivated you was the force of a story.

Great artists, politicians and leaders are all people who have mastered the art of the story. And so are great marketers.

As I say, not every story is a sweeping epic. But even the small stories have the power to command. That's why our society is hooked on celebrity gossip. It's

why we listen to rags-to-riches stories, even when we know there's a marketing pitch coming.

And so I tell you, that if you have something to say in an email, and you want people to read it, *then you need to learn to tell a story.*

And you **don't need to be a great writer** or artist to use the power of stories in your marketing. Because there's a secret about stories that you need to know.

It's not your knowledge of words and language that makes the story compelling. It's the story itself.

A good story, told badly, will still captivate. A bad story told with the greatest artistry in the world *will disappoint and annoy.* To get people to listen to your marketing message, you just need to find the compelling story.

Any worthwhile thing has a good story behind it. And that includes any product or service. If there's no good story, then it's not a worthy product or service.

After all, what is a story?

At it's most basic, a story is *usually an account of how a person overcame a problem.* On the other hand, it could be how a person failed to overcome a problem - these are both valid definitions of a story.

Any service, product, idea or thing is valuable to the degree it can be used to overcome problems. So if you really can't think of any kind of story to introduce an idea or product, then it probably doesn't solve problems.

OK, so we've answered the question of what a story IS. But we haven't explained *what makes a GOOD story.* After all, the world is full of stories.

To command attention, a story has to stand out.

People are drawn to stories they can identify with. They like to hear about people who are like them in some way.

People are interested in *drama and problems*. They like to read about how other people overcame these difficulties. And the bigger the problems, and the greater the odds, the better the story.

If you take a critical look at popular stories, the hero never has an easy time. As the audience, the story is highly entertaining. But the best stories, full of drama and intrigue, really put the hero through the wrangler.

In a sense, a good author is an expert in torture, putting their characters in painful situations and peril for the entertainment of the reader. *The trick is to do it without losing empathy with the character.*

The same is true when writing about real people, even when writing about yourself. Cast your mind back to the last time you read an inspirational story, or a rags to riches marketing story.

When the marketer describes the difficulties they struggled with, did they gloss over their mistakes and failings in order to spare their own pride?

Or were they brutal, exposing every agonizing detail of their failures, to the point where you could taste the bitterness of their defeat?

Telling stories is all about **evoking an emotional**

reaction, and in order to get that, you have to give. You need to emote at the reader to get them to emote back again.

If you can make the readers feel the pain, then you can make them feel the hope too.

To sell, you must also inspire.

And to inspire, you need to be able to show your readers despair and suffering. You have to be able to take them to the edge of hell, and then show them deliverance.

All of these elements are present, in large or in small, in any good story. In any story about anything. Quitting smoking, building a website, booking a cheap hotel room, selling old furniture. Anything worthwhile has a story, either hidden or in plain sight.

It may be your own personal story or the story of a customer. It could be a cautionary tale, maybe a

failure that inspired a new invention. The tragic and pointless loss of life that led to the invention of a cure.

Whenever he's hired to write a sales letter, John Carlton interviews everyone even remotely related to the product. The product inventor, customers, the CEO, even the janitor and retired employees. *What he's looking for is the great untold story.*

And he always finds an untold story.

For instance, take the golf training course he was hired to sell. It had enjoyed poor sales, despite being a great product with an army of loyal and happy customers.

The problem was the marketing. Just like all the competitors, it was an uninspiring parade of promises and benefits.

It didn't stand out, and it wasn't interesting. John spends days interviewing people associated with the project, until the day he made an amazing discovery.

He learned that the course was 100% based on the methods used by a remarkable golf champion. A golf champion *with a significant physical disability* (he had one leg), who had developed a method that let him beat the big names of the golf world again and again.

John drafted a new letter that put this story front and center. And it opened like an oddball story in the national enquirer.

The company executives hated it but agreed to run it as a test - and the sales exploded. What's more, that same advert continued to sell and sell for over 3 decades.

All on the back of an amazing story

All stories are *inspired by truth, even fiction*. In marketing, your stories gain an immense power when they are verifiable - when they are based on real people and real events which can be confirmed.

And so we see another power of storytelling, and it's an unexpected one. *Stories give your marketing message a massive injection of credibility.*

The best stories combine the lows with the highs.

The story is not the entirety of your marketing message. It's your foot in the door. It's the charm that puts the reader under your spell, and makes them forget your sales resistance.

It's the invitation to **drop their defenses** and admit their weaknesses and fears. It's the offer of hope that makes them cling to your words and take your advice. And buy when you tell them to.

It's the force that makes them **open your email**, read it to the end and then click on the link. And tell their friends about it, too.

In short, if you've ever *worried about conversions and open rates*, a story is everything you're marketing is missing and desperately needs.

Stories are not words, *they're ideas*. Sometimes a picture can tell a story more compellingly than a

thousand pages of florid prose. We've known that long enough for it to become a cliché.

With the passage of time, our ability to use stories has improved, in imagery and in words. Infographics are a fine example of this.

What could be drier and more lacking in drama than a dusty collection of facts and figures? Yet a good infographic can turn these facts and figures into a simple visual communication that projects emotion.

Infographics can entertain. They can inspire and uplift. They can persuade and compel. And they can terrify and offer hope, maybe even at the same time.

And what is even more amazing, they can often achieve these goals at a single glance. In this sense, they are one of the most powerful communication tools our species has ever possessed. They are the “living embodiment” of storytelling and marketing.

The key to becoming a master marketer is learning to use each of the weapons in your arsenal, both individually and together.

In truth, it's a lifelong challenge.

But it gets a little easier each time you try. Simply by reading this and understanding the power of stories and infographics, you are already ahead of many of your competitors.

If you were able to call upon **the power of storytelling and infographics**, how much more persuasive would your marketing messages be? How much more effective would your email campaigns be?

How much more money would you be making?

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