

SPECIAL LET'S GET STARTED

REPORT

FIVE SUREFIRE STEPS TO  
ACHIEVING BUSINESS SUCCESS  
WITH YOUR INSPIRATIONAL STORY

Have you seen the movie *Kung Fu Panda*? It was a huge success because it exemplifies great storytelling. Can you tell a good story, an inspirational one about you, your product, or your solution? Trial lawyers tell such stories to win their cases. As a trial lawyer, I have learned firsthand in the highest of courts and in the smallest of cases, that compelling stories must be constructed to win. Let's examine the storytelling techniques employed in *Kung Fu Panda* to learn the skills necessary for you to achieve business success with your story.

**STEP ONE:**

**CONVINCE YOURSELF THAT A STORY MUST  
BE CONSTRUCTED**

Po, the main protagonist in *Kung Fu Panda*, is a fat, clumsy panda bear who works in his father's noodle shop. His dream is to become a kung fu Dragon Warrior. A Dragon Warrior is not just any kung fu warrior but one possessing skills that defy gravity and powers beyond those typically afforded to average people. A Dragon Warrior is the only combatant in the world who can defeat the great Tai Lung, an evil warrior and the primary antagonist in the movie.

*The movie's implausible premise challenges us to believe a big, slow, lazy and cowardly panda with no kung fu training can develop unbelievable warrior skills?*

Think about this question for a minute. How can the movie actually sell that concept, that unbelievable notion? How can someone with an average existence rise to such a lofty status? Reread the question once more, thinking of nothing else. Now answer this question truthfully: If a screenwriter came to you, a movie

executive, with nothing more than the above premise, wouldn't you show him to the door?

What the above premise lacks is the compelling story. As the movie unfolds, we eventually accept the fundamental concept underlying the story. For you to achieve success you must also accept and even believe that a story is necessary. If you consider yourself as average or think that you lack a compelling story, you will not interest your prospects. We meet salespeople everyday—your story must set you apart.

Let me offer a comparison. Often when I am discussing a case with young lawyers, they oversimplify the narrative: "This is a typical rear-ender soft tissue case." The inexperienced lawyer needs to understand that when he starts explaining a case in this manner very few will continue listening, certainly not a busy claims adjuster, a powerful insurance company executive, a jury, or a judge. The attorney must find the story in every case.

Likewise, if you deliver a trite, uninspiring narrative, business prospects may fail to notice. If you want to achieve success, you must construct a compelling story.

Constructing your story will be challenging, but I promise it will lead you to greatness. It must be detailed and entertaining. Fortunately, everyone has a great story, including you.

*You must not only convince yourself but also truly believe that your story is compelling.*

## **STEP TWO: CREATE A DIALOGUE WITH YOURSELF TO DEVELOP YOUR STORY**

Po, like many of us, doubts he can accomplish his dream. In fact, most of the movie is devoted to his lack of confidence in his capabilities. He certainly lacks any of the

requisite skills of a Dragon Warrior. Failure after failure prompts the audience to develop a curiosity. How will Po achieve this seemingly impossible goal?

*Curiosity is a powerful motivator.*

It is Po's master, Shifu, who shows him that passion is necessary to achieve his goal. Unlike the unrealistic narratives so typical of Hollywood, *Kung Fu Panda* employs an axiom with which the audience can relate: people with great passion achieve more than those who are just mastering skills. When you focus on an objective with unbridled enthusiasm, you accomplish it.

*Passion is compelling, triggering in us the internal reality that more is possible and achievable.*

Open a dialogue with yourself. Examine your willingness to achieve. Look beyond fears and insecurities. Define your real passions, your real desires, and your dreams. Do not neglect the details. How much time do you want to work? What will your income be? What can you do extraordinarily well? Who do you want to help? How do you choose to help? Who needs your passionate solution? Articulate this dialogue in writing.

Go beyond describing yourself in this exercise. Spend an hour or two identifying what really excites you. If your sentence starts by explaining who you are, you are not discussing your passion but your character.

Remember not to allow negative thoughts and fears to prevent you from completing this exercise. When you are done, you will feel liberated. Upon reflection, the beginning of your story will have a purpose. We still have much to do, but don't read on until you have spent time on your dialogue. Tap into and express your passion.

How does a simple country lawyer from Kentucky heal a nation after civil war? If you read any autobiography written about Abraham Lincoln, you will understand his unbridled passion. Combine this quality with the question of how to guide a nation out of civil strife and a compelling storyline emerges.

### **STEP THREE: IDENTIFY THE BRIDGE BETWEEN PASSION AND REALITY**

While Po's passion intrigues the audience, it must see more to believe this implausible story. A bridge built between his passion and his ability to achieve his goal must be constructed, one the audience can accept and believe, something universal to us all.

Po has been chosen to be a Dragon Warrior. But he does not believe in himself. We identify with such fears and insecurities, don't we? Weakness comes from self-doubt, a fear of failure, embarrassment, a lack of faith, and even an unwillingness to achieve because of the responsibility. The possibility of succumbing to the evil warrior Tai Lung and jeopardizing the safety of his friends and family petrified Po. The story taps into our own recognition that fear sometimes stops us from achieving our goals. We begin to root for the panda to overcome his fears.

As Po embraces his passion, he discovers kung fu skills he doubted he had. He begins to believe in his ability and to overcome his fear of failure. He builds self-confidence as he continues to train and realize his full potential.

*Overcoming fear and adversity serves as the bridge between passion and reality, rendering the story more plausible and relatable in the eyes of the audience.*

Once he noted the passion of Po, the "master" actually had to recognize his training methods were not working. This admission or growth moment is something everyone can relate to.

*Personal growth can act as a great relatable experience with the audience.*

Consider your growth? Haven't you had events that made you grow or learn important passionate lessons?

If it is not fear or growth, consider success, overcoming difficult obstacles, perseverance, determination, adversity or education. You can use any common denominator to build that bridge as long as it is shared and identified by others and has a positive message.

Emotions express the story. The bridge between passion and reality is more realistic if the audience relates to the emotions experienced while crossing it. The more universal the emotions and experiences expressed by the protagonist, the more the audience will embrace and accept the story.

This is also true of your story. Not only will it allow business prospects to get to know you but also to identify with you. You may even find them sharing their story with you—the ultimate compliment in business.

It is time to construct the bridge in your story. Consider the trials and tribulations that brought you to your chosen career. Did you overcome obstacles? Do you have achievements that others would admire? Do you have strategies to achieve success that could help others in their own business endeavors? Have you stories about others whom you passionately helped?

I have a friend who sells vacation club memberships. He has embraced his passion to provide fun to others, to assist them in investing in their happiness. His story is far richer than a salesman's spiel. He talks about his life locked in corporate America, working too hard, ignoring his family responsibilities, and rarely taking an affordable vacation to relax. His health became important when it was challenged and he needed to slow down, a realization many of us have at some point in our lives. I could elaborate on his story, but you get the idea. He is so good at what he sells, he has been awarded US presidential recognition for his business practices and success. Your story should also tap into experiences others can relate to. Reveal them through the details.

#### **STEP FOUR: PRACTICE YOUR STORY**

A “master” can lead us away from our deep-seated insecurities. He or she can pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of our efforts and show us how to accomplish our goals more efficiently. However, few of us have a “master” to teach us, to train us, or even to identify the passion that drives our success. We must initiate our own steps.

You have identified your passion, created curiosity, and outlined several storylines about overcoming fear and adversity and your accomplishments. You may even have developed a complete story by now, but we are not done.

A complete story must be told. Practice it on yourself first. Tell your story in front of the mirror. Watch your eyes, hands, and facial expressions. Don't forget that the teller can make a story interesting or dull. When delivered without passion, without honesty, without matching nonverbal cues, even the best story will be ruined.

As you practice, try to memorize your story and the tone in which you tell it. Deliver your story in a focused manner, avoiding digressions. When you practice your story enough, it almost tells itself.

Now practice telling your story to a friend or loved one. Sit them down no matter how uncomfortable it may seem, and ask them to hear your story. Take constructive criticism. Consider what they tell you about your story, your passion, your bridges, and your nonverbal communication. Is it too long? Does it lose intensity? Is it eliciting emotions or describing character? Hone your story before delivering it to your business prospects.

### **STEP FIVE: DELIVER YOUR STORY**

Po discovered that he could master kung fu, but he still did not have the “secret” contained in the Dragon Scroll, mounted high above, that would convert him from a skilled kung fu master into a Dragon Warrior. He did, however, start to act like a leader, ultimately accepting his role and delivering his own message. When he finally obtained the Dragon Scroll, he misunderstood its content. The scroll was empty. Only later are we told that the scroll reflects the reader’s image—the secret is already within us.

You must be your own leader. Unlike in *Kung Fu Panda*, no one is calling for the discovery of your passion, skills, or talent. You must call your own name, stand up, and be counted in order to fulfill your dream.

Many people do not deliver their story because they are afraid of rejection, they think no one wants to hear it, or that it is simply not compelling. Like Po, you can see yourself in the scroll as the one who possesses the secret. That secret is the courage to take a risk, put yourself out there, and tell your story to a business prospect. Some people may not accept or want your story; however, the vast majority will not only welcome your story, but they will also embrace it and you. Whom would you rather do business with, someone with whom you identify or a complete stranger who simply wants to sell you something?

You have accomplished more than most if you have constructed a story that sets you and your distinct message apart, much like Po, the Dragon Warrior.