

# Marketing is about telling a story.

Can you tell a good story if you don't know who the audience is?

Can you tell a good story if you don't know what the plot is?

Who will listen to and share your story if it's not interesting to them?

So how can you tell a story unless you know who the audience is?

And how can you tell a story unless you know what the plot is?

And how can keep your story interesting enough that people not only want to listen to it, they will share it with others too?

# Our Story

- We're designers who bought a Shopbot.
- We're kinda geeky and rather creative.
- We started making things for friends.
- Lots of our friends work for software and video game companies.
- Those companies wanted creative, better interiors, offices, and furniture than what they had.
- Turns out there are enough people out there wanting creative solutions that we could base a business off of it.
- Now we got a niche: being the interior design-build firm that you go to when you need creative solutions to common problems.



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# Figure out who you're talking to.

- It's better to make a small group of customers happy, than to offer something mediocre to everyone.
- Talk directly with them, using the communication they prefer.
- You want to appear in places that they look. Listings are better than Ads.
- Best of all is when they talk with each other about you! Make this happen!



- Understand the people you're talking to.
- It's better (and easier!) to make a small group of customers really happy, than to offer something mediocre to everyone.
- Talk directly with them if you can. We did this with a nice website, good e-mail communication, a little social networking, and one-on-one meetings, because those are the things software companies (our clients) care about and use themselves to talk.
- You want to appear in places that they look. Listings are better than Ads.
- Best of all is when they talk with each other about you! Make this happen!

# Go to where your customers are.

- Doing work for software & game companies, our customers are online and into social networking. So we are there too.
- We made a website that would show up at the top of Google searches, started blogging, etc.
- If we were in a different industry, we would have done other things!
- It's about telling your story to the right people.

- Being in the Bay Area, and doing work for software & game companies, our customers are online and into social networking.
- So we went to where the customers are, making a website that would show up at the top of Google searches, blogging, and more.
- If we were in a different industry, we would have done other things! It's not about Twitter (or other fads) it's about telling your story to the right people.

# Don't waste your time & money

- You need to tell the right story to the right people.
- Spending time or money without a plan in place is a waste.
- Your customers will tell you everything you need to know.
- Word of mouth is the single most powerful marketing tool, for it's both free and hugely influential.
- So focus more on making your customers really happy, and on telling your story to new customers, then on ads or social networking!

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- It's foolish to spend a lot of time and money on a fancy website or magazine add if your clients will never see it, or don't care. This counts for your potential clients too.
  - Your customers will tell you everything you need to know, but only if you really listen to them.
  - Word of mouth is typically the single most powerful marketing tool, for it's both free yet hugely influential.
  - So focus more on making your customers really happy, and on getting more customers to know who you are, then on advertising or social networking or anything else!

# Steve the Steampunk

- One way to figure out how to best reach out to your customers is to come up with abstract profiles for them.
- Think about who that person is, what they care about, and how to best reach them.
- Base your profiles from reality, not from assumptions!



- One helpful thing is to make up fake people that represent your 'typical' customer.
- Think about who that person is, what they care about, how you can reach them, and how they spend money.

# Roughly scoring

Service Balance											
Description	Demand	Market Size	Pluses				Minuses				Totals
			Profitability	Growth Potential	Job Happiness	Competition	Disruptive	Risk	Difficulty to land job		
Interiors	3	2	5	4	5	3	5	3	1	6	
Pre-designed Furniture	4	4	2	3	4	4	1	2	4	6	
Custom Furniture	3	2	3	2	4	1	2	4	1	6	
Doubts	3	5	1	3	5	5	1	1	4	6	
Fabrication Services	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	1	4	
Consulting	4	3	4	2	1	5	1	1	3	4	
Buildings	2	1	3	4	4	4	1	4	4	3	
Signage	3	4	3	3	1	4	2	3	2	3	
T-shirts	1	5	1	1	5	5	1	2	5	0	
Event Elements	2	4	4	3	2	4	4	5	3	-1	

  

Services Offered												
What we Typically do	Example Project	T-Shirts	Doubts	Buildings	Interiors	Fabrication Services	Custom Furniture	Pre-designed Furniture	Event Elements	Consulting	Signage	Total Services
Bob the Boss	Big projects			3	5	4	5	5		4	3	37
Olga the Office Manager	Interiors				5		5	5			3	20
Danny the Designer	Fab. for stuff					4	5	5		4		22
Martha from Magazine	Event stuff		4				5	5	-1			19
Dave the Developer	Buildings			3		4		5		4		19
Billy from BeingBeing	Products	0	5					5				15
Steve the Steampunk	Products & custom stuff	0	5				5					12
Carl the Contractor	Helping them build stuff			3		4				4		11

  

	Bob the Boss	Olga the Office Manager	Danny the Designer	Martha from Magazine	Dave the Developer	Billy from BeingBeing	Steve the Steampunk	Carl the Contractor	Totals
Referrals	185	104	110	113	95	29	24	44	700
Website	185	104	110	113	95	70	80	33	708
Consulting	185	130	44	113	95	70	48	33	677
Throwing Events	148	52	88	88	19	56	48	11	488
Industry Conventions	148	78	88	88	95	14	48	11	572
Giving Talks	111	78	88	44	79	14	12	55	478
Joining Clubs	111	52	88	44	95	14	24	33	401
Getting Press	111	104	88	113	95	70	36	11	603
Maker Fairs	111	52	88	88	19	70	80	11	499

Here is a spreadsheet of our potential customers

# Roughly scoring

Service Balance					
Flows					
	Description	Demand	Market Size	Profitability	Growth Potential
Interiors	Interior Design Services, like YouTube videos & furniture and ideas	3	2	3	4
Pre-designed Furniture	Furniture off our <a href="#">website</a> (office or otherwise)	4	4	2	3
Custom Furniture	Design & fabrication of custom furniture for clients	3	2	3	3
Decorative	Small products from our <a href="#">website</a>	3	3	1	3
Fabrication Services	Fabricating other people's designs	4	2	3	3
Consulting	Real, Web, or Marketing services	4	3	4	3
Buildings	Building design & services	2	1	3	4
Signage	Custom signage work	3	4	3	3
T-shirts	T-shirts from a 3rd Party (i.e. not made here)	1	3	1	1
Event Elements	Design & Fabrication of furniture / props for shows	2	4	4	3

Service Balance							
Flows			Risks				
Viability	Growth Potential	Job Happiness	Competition	Disruptive	Risk	Difficulty to land job	Totals
3	4	3	3	3	3	1	6
2	3	4	4	1	2	4	8
3	2	4	1	2	4	1	6
1	3	3	3	1	1	4	6
3	2	2	2	2	4	1	4
4	2	1	3	1	1	3	4
3	4	4	4	1	4	4	3
3	3	1	4	2	3	2	3
1	1	3	3	1	2	3	0
4	3	2	4	4	3	3	-1

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# Roughly scoring

	What we Typically do	Example Project	Services Offered					
			T-Shirts	Doodads	Bulk/Trade	Interiors	Fabrication Services	Custom Furniture
Bob the Boss	Big projects	3 Kings, Parkers			3	5	4	6
Olga the Office Manager	Interiors	<a href="#">Youtube</a> , Youtube				5		5
Danny the Designer	Fab. Fair stuff	Stanford, <a href="#">Sublime</a>					4	5
Martha from Magazine	Event Stuff	Unity, Wedding		6				5
Dave the Developer	Buildings	<a href="#">Youtube</a> , 20th Ave			3		4	
Billy from BringAlong	Products	Little Robots, Square tables	0	6				
Steve the <a href="#">Steampunk</a>	Products & custom stuff	Little Robots, Custom Orders	0	6				4
Carl the Contractor	Helping them build stuff	Vertical Slat			3		4	

	Bob the Boss	Olga the Office Manager	Danny the Designer	Martha from Magazine	Dave the Developer
Referrals	125	104	102	112	85
Website	185	104	110	110	57
Socializing	185	120	44	110	57
Throwing Events	148	52	88	88	19
Industry Conventions	148	78	88	88	85
Giving Talks	111	78	88	44	78
Joining Clubs	111	52	88	44	57
Getting Press	111	104	88	112	85
Maker Fairs	111	52	88	88	19

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# Know your Market.

- How can you tell a story if you don't know the plot?
- Is your product / service:
  - An Existing Product to an Existing Market?
  - A New (Niche) Product to an Existing Market?
  - A New Product to an New Market?



- How can you tell a story if you don't know the plot? Understanding what it really is that you're offering will go a long ways in making your marketing better.
- Is your product / service:
  - An Existing Product to an Existing Market?
    - Making Cabinets for Home Builders. It's an existing product (lots of people make cabinets) to an existing market (lots of people need cabinets).
    - Here you win by being actually better in some way (faster, cheaper, higher quality...) and communicating that fact to your customers effectively.
    - Or you can win by simply spending a lot on advertising (sad but true!).
  - An New (Niche) Product to an Existing Market?
    - Making unique Cabinets that install easier or are more affordable for Home Builders. It's a new product (special cabinets) that is attempting to make a new niche in an existing market.
    - Here you win by your niche actually being valuable and communicating & educating people that would be interested in that niche market.
  - An New Product to an New Market?
    - A totally new kitchen storage system for portable BBQ trailers. It's a new product (special cabinets) for a new market (mobile BBQ trailers).
    - Here you win by educating your market as to why they would want your new thing.
    - You need to know what you are, before you can eloquently sell yourself

# Let's look at Shopbot.

- They are a Niche product in an Existing Market.
- There are already CNC machines, and demand for them.
- However, many of us needed a more accessible and affordable CNC package.
- So Shopbot were able to carve out a niche in an existing market by offering something new.

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- There are already CNC machines, and demand for them.
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# Nobody really cares

- Your customers are overwhelmed with options and information.
- Who wants to sit through a boring story?
- Rather than listing features or services, address directly how you can make your customer's lives better.
- Address what they care about, in real direct terms.



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- Who wants to sit through a boring story?
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# Keep it up

- A half-told story is worse than no story.
- Don't start a blog, newsletter, or social network unless you've got a plan for keeping it going.
- Keep your materials up to date.
- Follow up with people and keep in touch.



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# Conclusion

- A powerful good story, told clearly to the right people, is worth a thousand ads.
- Getting people to share your story with others is the cheapest and most powerful thing you can do.
- Listings are better than ads.



- getting other people to retell your story

# We're not experts

- Here's where all this comes from:
- **The Four Steps to the Epiphany** by Steve Blank
- **The Stanford Entrepreneurial Thought Leaders lecture series**  
(a free podcast)
- **Tribes** by Seth Godin (and his great blog)
- **Marketing without Advertising** by Mary Randolph
- **Talking** with (and **listening** to!) smart friends.

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