

VIROLOGY

WORKBOOK



CHAPTER 5

GRABBING & KEEPING ATTENTION



GRABBING AND KEEPING ATTENTION

If you hear a strange noise at night, likely you can't sleep again until you find out what the noise was. You'll feel uneasy until you resolve the issue, essentially ending the story. Once you discover that it was only the cat climbing through the window, the story is complete, and you can get back to sleep...

People need closure. They need to end the story.

Think about the last time you witnessed a road accident. Probably you couldn't help yourself from looking right? Your mind was trying to make sense of what was going on so that you could learn not make the same dangerous mistake that they did.

When people experience events that weigh heavily on them emotionally, they often can't stop thinking about it, and it becomes mentally exhausting as they rehearse over and over again what happened.

But why do people do this?

People have a desire to make sense of the world around them. When you don't close the story, it locks people in, and they can't stop thinking about you until you complete the story.

Stuff isn't going to go viral if you can't hold people's attention. That's the power of anticipation. When your target customers can't stop thinking about you.

ATTENTION



CLOSING THE STORY

The power of storytelling in affecting people's wellbeing can be seen in the way that clinical psychologists use them to treat patients suffering from mental trauma. Psychologists believe that mental trauma is not just about the events that caused the distress, but how the person dealt with the events afterwards. In other words, how the victim interprets and constructs the story of what happened. Distressful events such as a divorce, or a significant career setback, cause the sufferer to obsessively run through their minds what happened in an attempt to find causes and make sense of it all.

The distress is caused from people's inability to find a satisfactory ending to the story, since the facts don't appear to make sense to them. Psychologists in psychotherapy sessions get the sufferer to tell their story, or sometimes write it down, to help them simplify what happened and therefore help them understand. To complete the story.

ATTENTION

Narrative Storytelling

A story is basically an event that's supported by a beginning that adds context to the event, and an ending that resolves any conflict created by the event. A story has a beginning, middle, and an end.

Todorov's Narrative Framework. The framework has three parts: Equilibrium, Disruption, and Resolution. A story begins with Equilibrium where everything is normal and as it should be. Then an event happens, usually some kind of Disruption that shakes things up and is out of the ordinary. The story then concludes with a Resolution to fix the disruption to bring things back to normal.

Most books, movies, and even songs follow this formula. It's the basis of storytelling.

Anticipation occurs when you know a disruption is coming, but you don't have enough information to know what that disruption will be, and how it will be resolved.

There's a quote from Aaron Sorkin, the famous screenplay writer: Don't show who the character is, show what the character wants.

It's the same with the story. Don't focus on the people in the story—they're only there to help you tell the story.

Drop the viewer into the scene right away. Almost like dropping them into mid conversation. Or a crime in progress.

Focus on the story.

ANTICIPATION

The problem with marketing content, particularly video movies, is capturing and holding people's attention. You need to hook people in straight away and hold their attention, otherwise people get bored quickly and they move on.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to grab and hold people's attention is by using anticipation.

When a comedian begins to tell a joke, we find ourselves guessing what the punchline might be. If we guess the punchline before the comedian reveals it, the joke flops. But if the punchline comes as a clever surprise, we find it entertaining. A joke that we know the answer to is rarely funny. People feel anticipation when waiting for the punchline of a humorous situation.

ATTENTION

Many viral movies use anticipation to lock in people's attention. The trick is to provide enough information so that the viewer knows a disruption is about to happen, without revealing what the disruption might be.

You could for example suggest something dangerous is about to happen—the cliché of the young kids entering a deserted house on a hill suggests all kinds of danger, and therefore intrigue and anticipation.

PUB LOO SHOCKER

[Pub Loo Shocker](#) is a superviral that has over 13 million views on YouTube. The advertisement is a public service advertisement about the dangers of driving while drunk, but you don't know that before you start watching, you find that out at the end.

The ad features a prank that's played out in a pub bathroom. Men enter the bathroom, do their business, and as they're washing their hands the realistic head of a body unexpectedly crashes through the bathroom mirror from behind, like someone would smash against their windshield in a car accident.

The men are clearly shocked, with

reactions ranging from falling backwards, to running out the door.

The movie creates a strong emotional reaction (shock and awe), because people are expecting some sort of disruption.

Why else would hidden cameras be following people into a bathroom?

The anticipation of what the disruption might be acts like a rubber band, that once released exponentially increases the strength of the emotions, in this case fear and disgust.

Creating anticipation is a powerful way to not only hold people's attention, but also increase the strength (or arousal) of the emotions.

Action Plan

GRABBING & KEEPING ATTENTION

TUTORIAL

INCLUDING YOUR BRAND IN AN AD—THE RIGHT WAY

There are two main ways to include a brand in an ad, either: (1) the brand reveals itself briefly and intermittently through the advertisement, or; (2) the brand is included as a character in the story. The preferred option is the latter; to include the brand as a character in the story. It's more subtle than dedicating explicit scenes in your video to showcase the brand, however brief. Including the brand as a character also has many more options to add associations to the brand based on the role that the brand character plays.

The options to include the brand as a character include: Hero (protagonist), Donor, or Helper.

If including the brand as the Hero, the brand plays a main role in the story. The disadvantage of doing this is that it can create a problem with the brand taking an overly prominent role. The chances of the viewer concluding the video is a brand sponsored TV-like advertisement is increased if the brand is too prominent, and therefore there is more chance of them switching off.

Placing the brand as the helper is another option, where the brand helps to resolve the conflict somehow. This model is typically used by advertisers to demonstrate how a product is able to resolve a consumer problem. A shampoo ad might demonstrate how the shampoo is able to control the problem of dandruff.

The best of these three options is to include the brand as the Donor character. The Donor character is the entity that gives the hero of the story some magic to help them achieve their goals. The [Nike Ronaldinho](#) and [LG Meteor prank](#) video ads are two examples where the brand gives the main character or storyline magic. This ties the

movie together and creates intrigue. When the brand is central to the story in terms of enabling the entertainment (by providing the magic), viewers are more likely to extract value from the experience, and form favourable associations towards the brand.

Whichever strategy is chosen, you should take care to focus on the benefits of using the product, not the physical attributes of the product. People tend to think about how brands solve problems, and the benefits of using the brand, rather than the physical attributes of the product itself.

TASK

Watch the [Volkswagen: Eyes on the Road](#) superviral. Note how this superviral uses intrigue and suspense to create anticipation and hook the viewer in early on.

Create a storyboard for an ad that includes your brand. Use a narrative framework to tell the story. Start with an equilibrium phase, introduce a disruption, and complete the story with a resolution, bringing the story back to a new equilibrium where something important has changed.

Including your brand. As described in the tutorial earlier, the options to include the brand as a character include: Hero (protagonist), Donor, or Helper. The best of these three options is to include the brand as the Donor character—think how you can include your brand in your storyboard as a donor.

Structure emotion. The structure of your video movie should spike hits of emotion. The spiking should begin early in the story to hook people in and maximise engagement. Using the storyboard, mark out where the spikes of emotion are likely to occur, so you can visualise the emotional ups of the viewing experience. Then try to estimate the time between each spike. The aim is to shorten as much as possible the time periods between each spike of emotion. Ideally you want as many spikes as possible, as close together as possible.

Use chunking. It is important that the story structure is simple and effortless to watch. People expect a story to follow a predefined pattern from past to present to future. Jumping around short scenes creates confusion for viewers too easily. One way to simplify the story structure while at the same time spike emotions is to use chunking. This involves grouping common elements together to ensure a smooth linear transition from Equilibrium scenes, through to

the Disruption scenes, and finally Resolution scenes. The [LG Meteor prank](#) uses chunking by showing all actor scenes in the equilibrium phase one after the other in short bursts. Then the disruption scenes are all shown in chunks one after the other, and finally all the resolution scenes. The result is that each element within a chunk is able to deliver a spike of emotion, resulting in multiple spikes of emotion at each stage, while retaining a simplified linear story structure.

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