

Your sales deck should be a hero's journey

How to use the world's oldest and greatest storytelling template to sell your brand's story.



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Storytelling will always be crucial

Storytelling is the act of capturing an audience's imagination.

It's the most precious skillset in marketing.

That will never change — because it can't.

Marketers must tell stories because our success depends entirely upon sparking the imagination of our buyers.

Those buyers must imagine themselves owning the product. Stories put words and images in buyers' heads to help them do just that.

The first-call deck is the most powerful story you tell

The first-call sales deck is the most powerful storytelling vehicle in enterprise tech.

It's the tool that every salesperson in the org uses when speaking to a prospect. It's what helps an org tell a consistent story at scale.

Of course, there are many types of first-call decks. There are decks for budget holders and decks for end users. But here I'm talking about the first-call deck that sells the strategic benefit of using your brand and your product.

Any marketing leader will tell you: creating that kind of captivating story can be difficult.

This is especially true when you're selling something technical to a sophisticated audience. This is where internal product teams often fail.

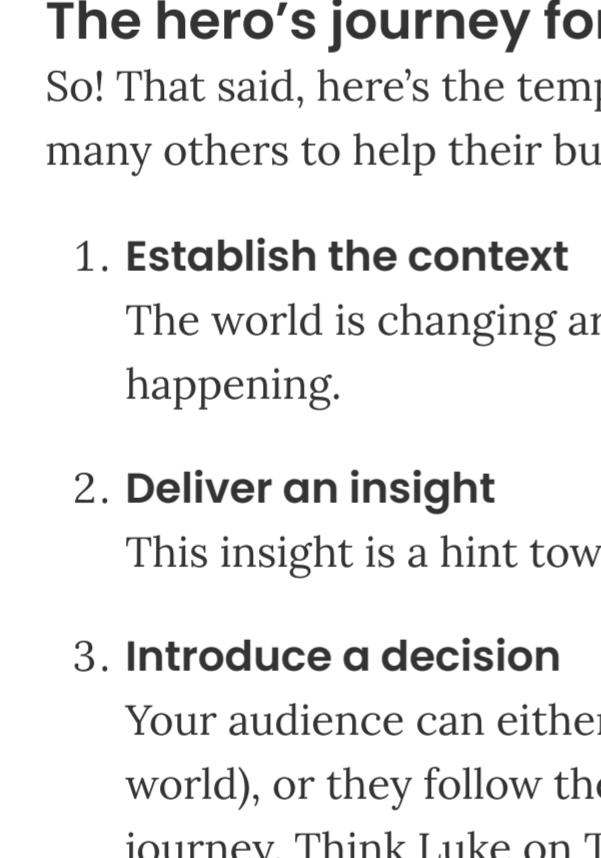
Why? Because they're too close to their product. Because each feature feels special. And because they decline to realize the most effective shortcut of all: every story is the same.

It's all the same ... only the names will change

The details of those stories aren't the same, no. But the template for those stories is.

Here, the conversation about deck templates often turns to [the Zuora sales deck](#), or any number of deck templates. But those templates, too, are almost always variations on the oldest story template in the world.

You probably learned about it in high school English class. It's called the [hero's journey](#):



It's a pretty simple cycle:

1. A hero, living in an ordinary world, hears a call to adventure;

2. Meets a mentor;

3. Receives a supernatural aid;

4. Passes the threshold;

5. Finds helpers;

6. Endures hardships;

7. Transforms into a stronger version of themselves;

8. Pays a price;

9. And returns to their normal life, changed.

There are many variations of this journey, but they're all basically the same. It's such a ubiquitous template that it provides the structure for many of your favorite TV shows and movies — from *The Wizard of Oz* to *Toy Story 3*, from *Mary Poppins* to *The Matrix*.

Unique details, same storytelling stages.

A first-call deck is a hero's journey

There's a reason screenwriters use this template!

A movie asks the audience to imagine themselves to be the protagonist in a fictional world. To be the hero. To go on the journey. To win.

A sales deck does the same thing. You're asking your audience to imagine themselves as the hero. That is, you are asking them to see a slightly different version of themselves — one that owns and uses your product, and is better for it.

One that goes on the journey. One who wins.

So when you construct your first-call deck, you're simply telling the audience their journey as a hero.

You're the mentor. The Gandalf. The Obi-Wan. The product and the brand.

The hero's journey for your customer

So! That said, here's the template we use with clients like Google, Salesforce, AWS, and many others to help their buyers imagine themselves as winning the day.

1. Establish the context

The world is changing around your audience. Set that stage. Tell them what's happening.

2. Deliver an insight

This insight is a hint toward navigating the changing world. Thus, this insight should ...

3. Introduce a decision

Your audience can either remain unchanged (and thus be passed by the changing world), or they follow the path suggested by the insight. This is the beginning of their journey. Think Luke on Tatooine in *Star Wars: A New Hope*.

4. Show what's at stake

Illustrate what's likely to happen. Who wins and loses in this new world?

5. Introduce yourself

Pretty self-explanatory. Say what you are, with clarity and concision.

6. Show what you can do

Explain the benefits of your product or service.

7. Prove you can be trusted

Reveal your pedigree, history of success, etc.

8. Show how to take action

Tell them what the next step, with you, is.

Try this storytelling structure yourself, and let me know

Questions? Disagreements? Amendments? Get in touch on this fine website, or over on Twitter at [@ArticleGroup](#).

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