

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 — because every story is the same, only the names will change.

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.

Any marketing leader will tell you: creating a 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. It's called the hero's journey — the oldest story template in the world. You probably learned about it in high school English class.

The hero's journey is a 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

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 Template for Your Customer

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.
- 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:** 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.