

Miller, DonaldBuilding a StoryBrand 2.0

7. The Key to Being Seen, Heard, and Understood

The opening chapter of the StoryBrand framework argues that most marketing fails not because the product is bad but because the message is unclear. Pretty websites don't sell; clear words do. It introduces the core idea that story is a proven formula for organizing a message so customers instantly understand why they need what you offer.

Key takeaways

- Words sell things, not design. If your message isn't clear, no amount of expensive marketing collateral will make customers listen.
- The brain is built to survive and thrive, so it ignores information that doesn't obviously help it (think exits in a room, not the number of chairs).
- Brands make two mistakes: (1) failing to show how they help people survive and thrive, and (2) making customers 'burn too many calories' to understand the offer.
- Clarity wins. A confusing message loses to a simpler competitor even if your product is better — hence the mantra 'If you confuse, you'll lose.'

- Story is a sense-making tool: it names what the hero wants, the challenge in the way, and a plan to win. Framing your brand this way gives customers a mental map to follow.
- Cut, don't add. Great communication comes from what you leave out; noise you create as a business is your real enemy.
- Real example: adding 'Kids Love Aquariums' to packaging lifted sales 99% in a test market — three words that connected the product to a survival drive (nurturing family).

Passages worth keeping

“Pretty websites don't sell things. Words sell things.”

The thesis in one line — messaging beats aesthetics.

“If you confuse, you'll lose.”

StoryBrand's mantra; clarity is the whole game.

How it connects

The chapter borrows story structure — a hero, an obstacle, a guide, a resolution — which is the same shape Scripture's narratives take, though the book applies it only to business communication.