

Miller, DonaldBuilding a StoryBrand 2.0

10. A Character — StoryBrand Principle One: The Customer Is the Hero

This chapter argues that a brand's message should make the customer, not the brand, the hero of the story. A story only starts once the hero wants something, so a brand must define one clear thing its customer wants and become known for delivering it. Doing so 'opens a story gap' that pulls the customer toward engaging and buying.

Key takeaways

- The customer is the hero; your brand is not. Marketing that talks about your building, staff, or history invites nobody into a story.
- Define one specific thing the customer wants and state it in plain, repeatable words (e.g. 'Find the luxury and rest you've been looking for').
- Naming a customer's desire opens a 'story gap' — the tension between the hero and what they want — which is what drives attention and action.
- Pare the desire down to a single focus. Listing many benefits at once confuses people; the brain can't hold much new information.

- Tie the desire to survival — the primitive need to be safe, healthy, connected, and strong. Vague desires give customers no reason to care.
- Survival desires include: conserving money, saving time, building social networks, gaining status, accumulating resources, showing generosity, and finding meaning.
- Don't assume customers know what you offer — tell them, and give them the exact words to repeat.

Passages worth keeping

“Attention rises and lowers with the opening and closing of a story gap.”

The core mechanism the whole chapter rests on — how to hold a customer's interest.

“People will always choose a story that helps them survive and thrive.”

Why the customer's desire must connect to survival, not just sound nice.

How it connects

The 'story gap' idea echoes how longing drives people toward what will satisfy them — a pattern Scripture uses when it frames the human heart as restless and seeking until it finds its true rest.