

Miller, DonaldBuilding a StoryBrand 2.0

12. And Meets a Guide (StoryBrand Principle Three)

This chapter argues that in every story—and every business—the customer is the hero and the brand is the guide. Heroes are weak, unsure, and looking for help; they don't want another hero, they want a mentor who can lead them to victory. Positioning your brand as the hero instead of the guide is a fatal mistake.

Key takeaways

- The customer is always the hero; your brand is always the guide (like Yoda to Luke, Haymitch to Katniss, Mary Poppins to the Banks family).
- Positioning your brand as the hero makes it look weak and self-centered—heroes in stories are the second-weakest character, filled with doubt.
- Tidal failed because Jay-Z made the artists the heroes instead of the music-loving customers; it should have made streaming rivals the villain and fans the hero.
- A guide must show two traits: empathy ('we understand how you feel') and competency ('we know how to fix it').

- Empathy builds trust; find common ground with customers so they feel seen, heard, and understood.
- Prove competency without bragging using five tools: testimonials, statistics, awards, press mentions, and client logos.
- First impressions turn on two subconscious questions: 'Can I trust this person?' (empathy) and 'Can I respect this person?' (competency).
- Talk about yourself only in the parts of your story that show you care about the customer and can help them win.

Passages worth keeping

“Customers aren't looking for another hero; they're looking for a guide.”

The core principle of the whole chapter.

“The day we stop losing sleep over our problems and start losing sleep over our customers' problems is the day our business will transform into a brand customers love.”

Sums up the shift from hero to guide.

How it connects

The guide-and-hero pattern echoes the biblical picture of mentorship and servant leadership: the strong come alongside the weak to help them grow, seeking their good rather than their own glory.