

JOE LAZAUSKAS | SHANE SNOW

CONTENTLY PRESENTS

T H E

STORYTELLING EDGE

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS,

STOP SCREAMING INTO THE VOID,

AND MAKE PEOPLE LOVE YOU

WILEY

“Shane Snow and Joe Lazauskas spend the overwhelming majority of their time thinking, writing, and theorizing about brand storytelling - so you don't have to. They're smart and they know this topic inside out (and sideways). Read their book. While I can't guarantee you'll rise to Shane and Joe's ridiculously obsessive level, you will be infinitely better prepared to tell your own brand's story. Promise!”

—**Rebecca Lieb**, analyst, author, advisor

“The Contently team understands the power of story, and how to craft and spread a great narrative, like no other. In an era where brand, design, and mission are a competitive advantage for every business, Contently underscores the importance of stories and how they transform companies and industries.”

—**Scott Belsky**, entrepreneur, investor, founder of Behance, and bestselling author of *Making Ideas Happen*

“I can't think of a better way to illustrate the power of storytelling than by telling great stories. This book should be required reading not just by those with content in their titles, but by anyone in Marketing AND Sales. Then, when you're done, give it to your CEO to read . . . but make sure you get it back, because I guarantee you'll refer to it more than once.”

—**Shawna Dennis**, senior marketing leader

“When it comes to storytelling edge, Joe and Shane have it—they're among the best minds in the business on the subject of content-centric marketing. Their book is a must-read for anyone looking to create profitable and sustainable relationships with customers. Basically, everyone.”

—**Margaret Magnarelli**, senior director of marketing and managing editor of content, Monster

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To Charlie and Lighthouse and all the other Contently OGs.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Joe Lazauskas is a New Jersey native. Shane Snow is an Idahoan. Both are New Yorkers now. Joe has written for *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, Mashable, and many more. Shane has written for *GQ*, *Wired*, *The New Yorker*, and others. Shane cofounded Contently in late 2010, and Joe joined soon after as editor in chief.

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a pale woman with crazy eyebrows and a keytar strapped to her back shot a home video. Standing on a street corner in Melbourne, Australia, at dusk, she wore a kimono and held up Sharpied signs. One by one, the signs flipped. They explained that the woman had spent the past four years writing songs. She was a musician. She had parted ways with her record label, which wanted to charge an outrageous amount to produce her next album. She and her bandmates were happy to no longer be with the label, and they had worked hard to create some great new music and art. But they couldn't finish producing the record on their own. If their new business—independent music—was going to get off the ground, they needed people's help.

“This is the future of music,” one of her signs read. Another: “I love you.”

Then she posted the video on the crowdfunding website Kickstarter.

In 30 days, the video raised \$1.2 million—more than 10 times her goal. Nearly 25,000 people preordered the album, bought artwork, or simply donated money. The album and tour became a huge success, and the artist turned her music into a profitable business.

The woman in the kimono was named Amanda Palmer. She changed the game for independent musicians with that campaign. And she didn't do it by asking for money.

She did it by telling her story.

Stories Matter

Every few minutes, a new buzzword rips through the business world, gets a bunch of blog posts written about it, and ends up in a pile of tired terms next to “*synergy*.” Today, one of the biggest corporate buzzwords is “*storytelling*.” Marketers are obsessed with storytelling. Conference panels on the subject have fewer empty seats than *Hamilton* on Broadway.

Funny thing is, storytelling has been the buzzword off and on since the advent of advertising. It keeps rising to the top of the pile because it's timeless. Stories have driven human behavior throughout history—for good and for ill.

And in the digital age, businesses, workers, and leaders have more opportunities than ever to stand out, spread their message, and spark change through stories.

Good stories surprise us. They make us think and feel. They stick in our minds and help us remember ideas and concepts in a way that a PowerPoint crammed with bar graphs never can.

Stories are the reason thousands of creators like Amanda Palmer have rallied the support of millions on Kickstarter, and Kickstarter knows this. It doesn't just allow creators to tell their story; it requires it. Every project must have a video in which the creators explain what they're doing and why they need help.