

CASE STUDY: RYVER

Pat Sullivan's team had been hard at work for more than a year. As a consummate and successful entrepreneur, Pat was incredibly frustrated with email as a communication tool. He knew there had to be a better way. He brought together a team that shared his belief: Teams need to communicate more effectively. Together, they built Ryver — an innovative team communication tool unlike anything on the market. With only weeks to go until their launch, they were all confident they had the perfect platform to totally disrupt communication.

Then, out of seemingly nowhere, Slack arrived.

Overnight, all of the oxygen has been sucked right out of the room. Ryver had been in development long before Slack was released, but with only days to go before Ryver was unveiled to the public, Slack's similar features were the talk of the tech world.

Ryver launched as planned, and put Slack in its crosshairs. The Ryver team ran ads touting its superior features. Anyone who was posting on social media about Slack heard about Ryver. Ryver even added a page to its website: Ryver vs. Slack

The Ryver team scored some wins, but growth was slow. Despite building the first, best product, they could not get the attention they needed.

So they reached out to Woden.

*A lot of times, we'll ask customers what they were using before Slack, and the most common answer is: **nothing**.*

Bill Macaitis, Chief Marketing Officer, Slack

On the day Ryver engaged Woden, there were about 1.3 million people on Slack. That sounds like a lot, until you consider that there are more than 400 million who use Microsoft Outlook alone for email. By chasing after Slack users, the folks at Ryver lost sight of what made them get into business originally — a desire to upend email and the way people communicate. They lost themselves in a marketing war based around contrasting features, instead of an ideological crusade to show the hundreds of millions of people who have overflowing inboxes that there's a better way.

Slack 1.3 million

Microsoft Outlook

400 million

Building a brand story

Like many brands, Ryver was selling itself on features and benefits. A strong product is essential, but ultimately what spurs evangelism and explosive growth is more than features, a pithy slogan, or a piece of advertising. A brand's story is

the emotion that makes what they do become real in the eyes of their audience.

The democratization of information that has occurred, due to social media, means that the only way to gain mass-market adoption (and that's what you need to win over 400 million Outlook users) is to have your audience evangelize for you.

What kind of content do people share?

Stories

Virtually every story that has gone viral since the dawn of time follows the same narrative arc: the hero's journey. This arc, first outlined in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell³, is simple:

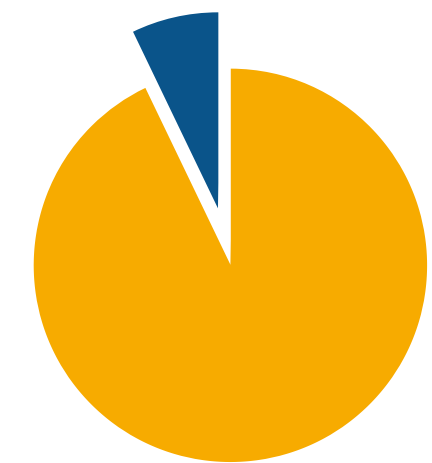
The journey begins with an outsider protagonist, who is powerless in a broken world. This outsider meets a mentor, who helps reveal to the hero how to unlock the power within him or herself, and sets them off upon a journey to cure the world of its ills with the help of a magical gift. The hero uses the gift to defeat the source of the world's problems and return the world to harmony.

If Ryver was going to get the kind of adoption it deserved, it would need to make those 400 million Outlook users the heroes of a great quest to defeat email and make communication easier and more enjoyable.

Stats you can't ignore:



84% of people trust recommendations from those they know¹



91% of B2B decisions are influenced by word of mouth²

Turn your flood into a Ryver

The first thing Woden and Ryver did together was craft a StoryKernel™. The StoryKernel is a 300– to 500–word document that codifies an organization’s brand story and aligns it along the same narrative arc as the hero’s journey. It’s an internal-facing document that helped Ryver refocus itself on what mattered: transforming the way people communicate.

Today’s work is too dynamic to be constrained by a cluttered and opaque inbox. Ryver connects teams in real time across every device, introducing a new brand of transparency and meaning to business dialog. As teams unchain themselves from the weight of their inboxes, productivity climbs because employees spend their time doing, instead of pointing fingers or making excuses.



Great brand stories speak to why a business began in the first place⁴. When an audience understands the “why,” they are more easily able to internalize the brand’s relevance to them. To uncover this, Woden conducted dozens of interviews with the Ryver team, Ryver users, Slack users, and email diehards. We wanted to know how these people saw and understood themselves.

These first-person perspectives were buttressed with research on the market. Woden looked at competitors like Slack and Hipchat. We dove into their messaging, their features, and the profile of their users. We learned the ins and outs of how email became the de facto communication tool around the office. And we looked at productivity platforms for the office — Trello, Dropbox, and Google Apps among others — and asked:

“How have they won over their users?”

These perspectives were synthesized into the StoryKernel, the framework for all of Ryver’s messaging. It isn’t designed to be everything Ryver might ever say about itself, but it’s true to the core of the business no matter how the product evolves. And it’s a big enough “why” statement that it directs and frames everything Ryver might say now or in the future. It reminds the team why they get up every morning and come to work in the first place, and defines the way every user ought to feel when they engage with the brand.

Instead of struggling to use email in a manner for which it was never designed, smart businesses have a choice: Continue along this path and blindly accept the status quo, or take control of team communications, and transform their flood of emails into an elegant, manageable Ryver.



The guide for your journey

Pat and his team were ecstatic with the StoryKernel. They recognized their pursuit of Slack had distracted them from the true passion they all shared. The enthusiasm for their quest was reignited, but they needed a map for their journey. Woden provided them with the StoryGuide™.



Ryver's StoryGuide is 225 pages of specific recommendations on how to integrate the StoryKernel into everything they do. The StoryGuide's nine chapters included instructive, tactical directions such as rewritten website copy, specific targeting for social campaigns, copy for sales outreach campaigns, sample landing pages, and activities to align the growing internal Ryver team with the story.

Most importantly, the guide took the Ryver story and built it into an entire personality for Ryver. Slack had positioned itself as the smart-aleck in the room: a little irreverent, more fun than business, and too cool for school. That personality, though compelling for one segment of the audience, doesn't resonate with most email users. The vast majority of people frustrated by email are dedicated office workers who want a tool that is straightforward, easy to use, effectively replaces email and integrates with the rest of their workflow. Ryver's personality is designed to be the person who's always there to lend you a hand. That contrast said more than what a million "Ryver vs. Slack" web pages about features ever could.

Ryver StoryGuide™ chapters:

- *Why Story?*
- *How to Leverage Ryver's Story*
- *Telling Ryver's Story on Social Media*
- *How Story Informs Ryver's Visual Identity*
- *Telling Ryver's Story with Content Marketing*
- *Using Ryver's Story to Power Your Sales Team*
- *Using Ryver's Story in HR*
- *Sharing Ryver's Story with the World*

The physical StoryGuide arrived in Arizona, at Ryver's offices, on a Tuesday. For a full 72 hours, communication between Woden and Ryver was silent. Pat broke through it with a single message late Friday evening:

“Wanted to say I am enjoyed the read very much. It's actually very timely on several fronts for me. Thx for great work! Good stuff.”

The clear path illustrated by the StoryGuide made it simple for Pat to align the entire Ryver team around the direction forward. The content in blog posts shifted almost overnight. Social campaigns oriented away from Slack and toward the general market. Most importantly, Ryver's unique personality began shining through in everything. They stopped looking like a Slack clone, and became a totally different company with a different audience. The Ryver team became what it had originally set out to be — fulfilling its “why” perhaps for the first time since launch.

Ryver today

Ryver's user acquisition began accelerating as its market opportunity widened beyond Slack users. People who had never heard of Slack began gravitating to Ryver not as an alternative, but as their primary option. And the personality of Ryver resonated with a distinct audience that Slack's had not, and opened up team communication to a huge audience of people that would still be sifting through overstuffed inboxes.

Woden even helped Ryver execute on some of these projects. Long after the StoryGuide was delivered, Woden continued to help craft social ads, refine targeting, and improve website copy and email campaigns. Through the StoryGuide process Woden had evolved from a trusted partner to an integral part of the team — fully aligned with Ryver's growth.

Transformative brands deserve to have powerful stories that inspire their audience to greatness. Ryver is using its story to save millions of office workers from the pitfalls of clunky email.

What's your story doing for the world?

- 1: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2013/under-the-influence-consumer-trust-in-advertising.html>
- 2: <http://www.incite-group.com/brand-management/how-social-media-amplifies-power-word-mouth>
- 3: <http://www.wodenworks.com/how-to-tell-your-story/>
- 4: https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en



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