

# CASE & STUDY

STORYKERNEL™

*Bluecoat.*



AMERICAN  
DRY GIN



WOJEN

ACQUIRED BY SAMSON & SURREY, NOVEMBER 2016

Since 2006, Bluecoat American Dry Gin's trademark bottle has graced the shelves of discerning retailers and barkeeps nationwide. Its beautiful packaging contains a handcrafted spirit that is world-renowned for its unique citrus flavor and small-batch distilling process. Bluecoat's parent company, Philadelphia Distilling, brought the spirit to market as America's first craft gin.

Since then, the craft spirit market exploded, and pioneer Bluecoat Gin was poised to capitalize.



*Cooper's Select*

*Bluecoat.*



**BARREL  
FINISHED GIN™**



Bluecoat®



Every week it seemed like there was a new entrant. From small batch whiskeys, to Texan vodkas, to more than 100 new varieties of American gin, the market became saturated. Each new variety peddled a novelty taste or ingredient that made it ever more difficult for Bluecoat to stand out as the category's trailblazer and leader.

“How do I get our fans to tell their friends without begging them? I don't know.”

- Andrew Auwerda, Founder & President, Philadelphia Distilling

Bluecoat's unique flavor had established it on the palette of discerning drinkers, but mass-market appeal had eluded them.

**SO THEY SCHEDULED A MEETING WITH WODEN.**

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Only the most die-hard enthusiasts of a particular spirit select their favorite brand due to taste. The vast majority of drinkers, instead, select a brand based on what they believe it conveys about themselves. Ordering a Bluecoat is about more than flavor - it's about how the world perceives the Bluecoat drinker.





# CRAFTING A NARRATIVE

There's a reason lifestyle brands don't talk about "what" they do: their product benefits are largely indistinguishable. Imbibing Bluecoat has the same effect as another 47 percent ABV spirit, and to almost all drinkers, will be interchangeable in a cocktail. Inspiring people to order it means crafting a meaning behind "why" Bluecoat exists – and why it's the only spirit for the discerning drinker.

That type of passion can only be inspired by story. Slogans or great advertising might be remembered, but the story provides as much definition to the brand as its signature bottle. It gives the spirit emotion that makes it tangible to the drinker.

Woden began its engagement with an in-depth research process (which, of course, included product sampling!). In speaking with Bluecoat drinkers, bartenders, leadership, and individual distillers themselves, a clear thread emerged about what made Bluecoat different. And unlike other gin brands, it wasn't a gimmicky garnish.

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# Bluecoat



AMERICAN  
DRY GIN



Bluecoat American Dry Gin was born in Philadelphia, mere miles from America's own birthplace. It shares a name, and heritage, with the Continental soldiers who blazed the trail to independence. The care with which it's crafted embodies American exceptionalism; it's the spirit for the independent spirit. It's liberty, distilled.

Embracing the latest trend may compel spirit sippers to allow strange things to garnish their cocktail. This only supports the quirkiness of the latest brand without affording the drinker authenticity that comes from a quality product. Bluecoat's distinguishing characteristic isn't novelty. It's character.



The “why” behind Bluecoat American Dry Gin is what forms the basis of its StoryKernel. Woden begins each engagement by crafting a client's StoryKernel - the document that provides the framework of their brand message, and positions them in a way people can't help but share.

A photograph of two men in a distillery. The man on the left has a full, dark beard and is wearing a green shirt. The man on the right is clean-shaven, wearing a dark blue shirt and a brown flat cap. They are standing in front of several large wooden barrels. A blue diagonal line runs from the top right corner of the image down towards the center.

## THE STORY OF A HERO

Virtually every story that has gone viral since the dawn of humanity has followed the same narrative arc: The Hero's Journey. This framework, first outlined by Joseph Campbell, has structured beloved stories across all cultures, from the Bible to Star Wars to today's Marvel movies. Recent research from scholar Paul Zak has uncovered that human brains are hardwired to have a strong emotional response to these types of stories, resulting in the stories being remembered and repeated often.

The journey always begins in a broken world beset by malevolent forces. The hero of the story is an outsider of ordinary means, who encounters a mentor. That mentor helps the hero unlock a power within themselves, setting them off on a journey to cure the world of its ills with the help of a magical gift. At the story's conclusion, the hero uses the gift to defeat the source of the world's ills, and restore the world to harmony.

Make no mistake: Bluecoat wasn't designed for every glass — or every drinker. It takes confident independence to put one's self out there. Bluecoat belongs only in the cocktails of the adventurous — those imbibers who aren't afraid to try something different in their quest to discover the extraordinary.

Audiences want to see the hero as an avatar for themselves. In the StoryKernel, Woden defined the story of Bluecoat American Dry Gin in a such a way that it would speak to those who most identify with its hero, an adventurous, confident drinker not afraid to make a statement. This intensely personal connection serves as a catalyst for consumers to tell their own story — which is also Bluecoat's story — to the world.

# INSPIRING EVANGELISM

In the days of the oral tradition, Hero's Journey narratives were internalized, repeated, and spread far and wide. With the advent of online reviews and social media, today's marketplace functions in much the same way. Consumers turn to each other for guidance, and its stories that they remember. Bluecoat's success required convincing their fans to tell their friends all about their favorite gin, whether through conversations at the local bar, a mixologist making recommendations, or drinkers enthusing on social media.

It isn't easy to carve out your own niche — rich with the subtle notes that comprise your independent spirit. But Bluecoat gin is old enough to be a tradition, while young enough to have its own unique character. In your shaker at home, or in your favorite discerning bartender's hand, Bluecoat will allow you to comfortably declare independence from the ordinary.

The key to an effective brand narrative is authenticity. Bluecoat's production, heritage, and distinctive bottling all evoked elements of their final StoryKernel, but it was codifying it into a single document that marketers, ambassadors, salespeople and leadership could all draw from that propelled Bluecoat forward.

Recent research by the University of Bonn suggests that, more than ever, consumers emotionally respond to brands as they do to other people. Woden used the StoryKernel to define a personality for Bluecoat American Dry Gin — witty, aspirational, and artisanal — that immediately began to infuse all they did.

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Overnight, Bluecoat's public-facing presence transformed from cocktail recipes and serving tips to celebrations of the independent spirit. Irreverent campaigns, invitations to "Declare Your Gindependence" and detailing the craft process became hallmarks of the brand's marketing materials.

The brand started using oranges as a key sales tool and calling card for ambassadors, under the mantra of "Nothing rhymes with orange, and nothing tastes like Bluecoat." The oranges were not a garnish to highlight an obscure taste most drinkers can only pretend to notice, but rather a symbol to remind people why they choose Bluecoat: because it's as unique as they are.

## AMERICA'S INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

The tangible success for Bluecoat American Dry Gin and Philadelphia Distilling have accelerated since putting their StoryKernel into motion. They have successfully opened their flagship distillery, where guest tours seamlessly integrate the story of Bluecoat Gin into discussions of craft distilling. The brand's footprint has expanded across America, and sales growth has accelerated.

Each week, a new craft spirit splashes into the market, touting a trendy flavor, espousing a unique twist or claiming to be of an exclusive variety. Yet, Bluecoat American Dry Gin remains America's favorite, and market-leading, gin precisely because of the story it tells: it is more than a spirit. It is liberty distilled.

"Companies that don't have a clearly articulated story don't have a clear and well thought-out strategy. The company story is the company strategy."

- Ben Horowitz



# WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



**WODENWORKS.COM**

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