



TELL ME A STORY

GEOSPATIAL MARKETING NEEDS TO STOP LISTING FACTS AND TO START BEING A CONVERSATION, SAYS ALISTAIR MACLENAN

In every walk of life, certain fundamental laws and rules hold true. The evidence supporting these principles can be objective, such as in the case of a mathematical proof that creates a statement that always holds to be correct.

Or it can be a subjective truth, such as knowing that starting an open and honest discussion about religion at a dinner party will inevitably lead to someone falling out with someone else.

These truths are very different but neither is less true than the other. Indeed, I have derived huge pleasure and solace from listening to a piece of music that the composer has used to tell an honest and compelling story. The development of the story allows me to understand how I am feeling at that moment. That truth can't be explained through objective reasoning – it is simply true for me.

Sadly, the geospatial industry seems completely deaf to the power of storytelling. It is wedded to the idea of providing objective, list-based, scientific explanations as to why its hardware, software, data, services or expertise is perfect for customers and better than the competition.

No telling stories, no evoking of emotion – only objective, dull truths.

Marketing has some fundamental rules that have been shown to hold true over time. Take the simplest one of them all – no one will buy a product because of what it does, only because of what it does

for them. This is as true today when Apple releases a new phone that does all the things every other phone can do but also makes the often middle-aged owner feel cool and trendy, as when Henry Ford released his eponymous Model-T and allowed a burgeoning American middle class to have the freedom of travel that previously only the rich enjoyed.

Successful companies tell stories about what their offerings will do for their customers. They create conversations and explain how purchasing from them will make their customers' lives easier, more productive or just better. It is impossible to start a conversation with a list of what something does. That's a lecture and even students don't like lectures!

Geospatial marketing is, on the whole, business to business, but that doesn't mean that prospective customers are faceless corporations. There is someone, a person sitting in their office, wondering how they can choose a supplier that will make their working day simpler or more productive. Why wouldn't you play marketing music that talks to that person, that tells them you understand how they are feeling because you're listening to them – not lecturing at them?

Marketing geospatial products and services must change. It must start telling stories that move people to action not bore them to tears.

Alistair MacLenan is founder of the geospatial B2B marketing agency Quarry One Eleven (www.quarry-one-eleven.com)