

STORY WARS EXERCISE 3:

These exercises are designed to be used as companions to the book *Winning the Story Wars*. Most of them assume that you've already set your brand's storytelling strategy (your values, moral, hero, archetype and brand gift) and are now ready to launch stories in the real world.

EXERCISE #3: GO ON A DEADLY SIN BENDER

When I wrote chapter 2 of *Winning the Story Wars* a few years ago, I figured naming marketing's five deadly sins might be enough to help readers transcend them. What I failed to realize was that, as with all sins, the more you resist them, the more you deplete your willpower. The temptation to indulge in vain, gimmicky, fact-based communication doesn't just die because you tell it to. So here's a fun way to acknowledge the temptations to sin and, in the process, help clear them from your storytelling habits.

Step 1: Sin Away

What I'm going to ask you to do now is quickly review the five deadly sins, then write an ad, elevator pitch or presentation that indulges *all* of them. Go on, take the sins as far as they can go. The more you indulge, the more helpful this exercise will be.

The sins are:

Vanity — Casting yourself as the flawless hero of your story

Authority — Lording your facts and logic over your audiences

Puffery — Speaking in the disembodied voice of god

Insincerity — Blatantly shifting your message to fit what you think your audiences want to hear

Gimmickry — Using cheap humor or sappy emotion to paper over an otherwise empty message

For a little inspiration before you write, you might check out this hilarious intentional sin-indulgence by branding experts determined to exorcise the worst of their own industry by just putting it on paper with the now-famous **Santa Brandbook**.

Step 2: Post and Share

If you've taken on the challenge wholeheartedly, you should have a cringe-worthy and perhaps uproarious worst-case scenario for your future marketing. You may be tempted to burn it now — but don't. It's time to share what you've created with everyone on your team and to post it at your desk.

What you've done is customize the deadly sins for your brand. I gave you the generic versions of them. You've created your own private monster. Now, as you go forth to create more Digital-ready communications, you can compare your real communications to this monster you've made. You may be surprised how often the comparison will point out the small flaws in your stories, helping you to make them less sin-based and more empowering for your audience-heroes.

If you come up with a particularly fun sin extravaganza, I'd love to see it. Please send it to me at jonah@freerange.com and I'll share it with the Story Wars community.