

# MASTERING The **Reteller** Channel™

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How to create and deliver stories that influence media,  
social networks and prospects

By Meghan O'Sullivan & Gabe d'Annunzio



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

- ➔ Is it positioning you as a market leader?
- ➔ Is it attracting new customers?
- ➔ Does it clearly communicate your benefit?
- ➔ Is it a good story not well told?
- ➔ Or is it a bad story told too often?
- ➔ Are you telling it using the new social media?
- ➔ Do you know how to get your story discovered?
- ➔ Do you know how to get your story retold along the Reteller Channel?

Mastering the Reteller Channel will help you answer these questions and provide you with helpful information to get your story right, tell it well and tell it often.

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## **NOBODY BUYS WHAT YOU SELL UNTIL THEY BUY-IN TO THE STORY YOU TELL**

Have you ever bought anything without first buying the story about it? Did you buy your Blackberry or iPhone by accident or did you first buy-in to the story about its unique features and functions? Were you influenced by a story in Walter Mossberg's column in the Wall Street Journal or did a colleague tell you how much she likes hers?

The simple truth is that nobody buys anything until they buy-in to the story about it. Which means, your product and the story about it are inseparable.

The right story told well and told often, plays a critical role in motivating a purchasing decision and reinforcing brand loyalty. But if you tell your story directly it's greeted with skepticism and is easily dismissed. Tell it indirectly through trusted "Retellers" and the message sticks.

Therefore, the best way to get your story told well and often is through a network of trusted and respected retellers. We call this network the *Reteller Channel*<sup>™</sup>. On the pages that follow you will learn how to master your relationship with this vital channel.

# AllAboutRetellers

## WHAT'S A RETELLER CHANNEL?

Just as products flow through “Reseller” Channels information about them flows through “Reteller Channels.” Retellers are people who influence decisions and buying behavior in the markets you serve. They add value to the story because of the trusted relationship they have built with their audience.

If you're in charge of your company's sales and marketing it is vital you understand how to get the reteller channel to work for you. In order to do this you need to know three things:

- a) Who the retellers are
- b) How to reach out to them
- c) How to craft stories that they'll want to tell

But before you do this, you need to understand a little bit more about retellers.

## THE CHANNELS ARE CHANGING

Traditional print and broadcast media were once the only way to get your story told. And the retellers in these channels were easy to identify. Today there are many more channels and many more retellers. A new blog is created every second. There are more than 130 million active users of Facebook. Every minute, ten hours of video is uploaded to YouTube.

With the tremendous increase of new retellers, how do you effectively communicate with your market? How do you get them to pay attention?

The answer is to build your own reteller channel(s). In order to do this you need to identify the best retellers for delivering your story to the market, understand what they hope for and provide it to them with speed and frequency.

But remember, not all retellers are created equal. An important starting point to building your channel is to understand the basic characteristics of the most influential retellers.

## HOW TO SPOT A RETELLER

Today, there are many types of retellers. The tricky part is identifying the ones who are the most influential. Below are some general characteristics of influential retellers.

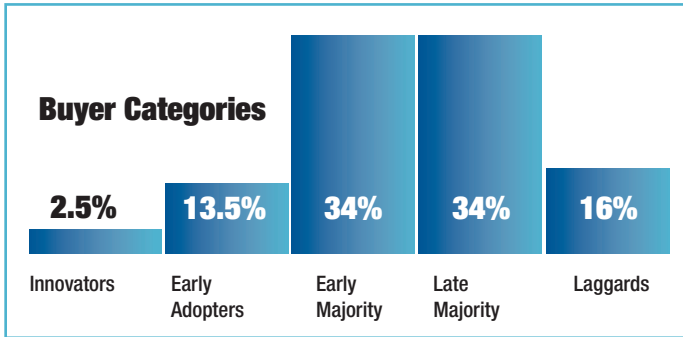


- ➔ Some get paid for their opinion so they have an incentive to retell your story. (Media)
- ➔ Some are industry thought leaders.
- ➔ Some are decision influencers within an organization.
- ➔ Because reteller's opinions are respected, they can motivate an audience to take action.
- ➔ They are believed because they have demonstrated some expertise in the market they are retellers in.
- ➔ They have an attentive audience to tell the story to.
- ➔ They have the medium to reach people (public speaking, media, blog, ear of top level executives)
- ➔ They add value by interpreting the details of your story for their audience.



## WHAT RETELLERS HOPE FOR

It's always important to remember that when you're trying to get the channel to tell your story, you ultimately have to understand the audiences they serve. Which means you need to understand your buyers. Luckily, there's a predictable model that describes how receptive buyers are to new ideas and products and what your stories need to include to appeal to them. According to Everett M. Rogers, the pioneer of the diffusion of innovation theory, buyers are split among five categories listed below. Notice that each category has a percentage which indicates the portion of the total market they represent.



Each category of buyer and the retellers who reach them have a different receptivity to new products and services.

Here's a psychological profile for each category:

**Innovators** are looking for something new and exciting

**Early Adopters** want to experience a breakthrough

**Early Majority** want what everyone else is getting

**Late Majority** want a brand they can trust

**Laggards** will use what you're selling eventually because it's now a commodity.

## WHAT RETELLERS WANT TO HEAR

Now that you know what retellers hope for, tell them what they want to hear.

### New

When you launch a new product your initial retellers will be Innovators. So the only word you need to own in their mind is new. Tell them about the technology, how it works, and why it's innovative.

### Breakthrough

Early Adopters want you to tell a story about the problem you solve. They are not as interested in how you do it or how new it is, they just want to know that it's a breakthrough.

### Proven

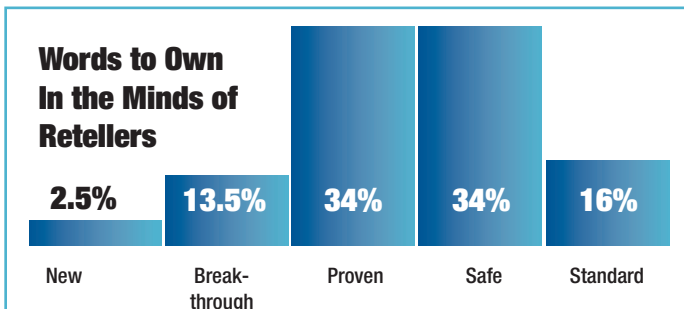
The Early Majority want to know who else is using your solution. So be prepared to have a list of clients willing to be interviewed and case studies you can reference.

### Safe

The Late Majority are as interested in the company behind the product as the product itself. They'll want to know how many clients you have, how long have you been around.

### Standard

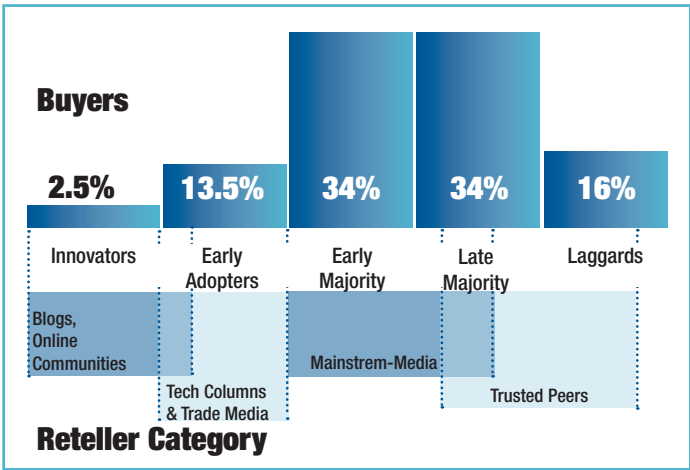
Laggards will only write or talk about you if they know you're the industry standard.



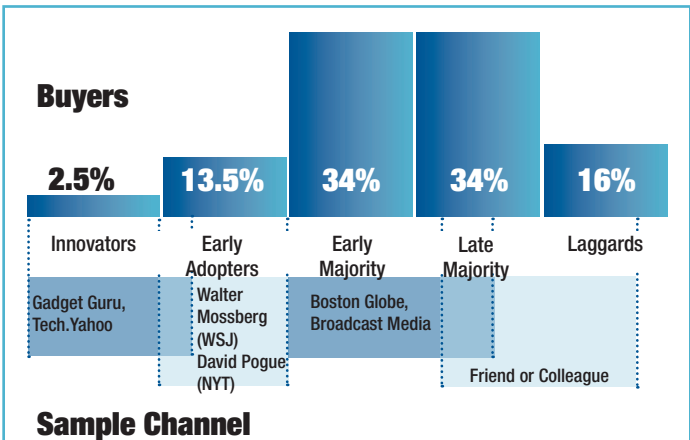
## WHERE RETELLERS LIVE

It's important to understand that retellers mirror the audiences they serve. Therefore, you can identify your retellers by understanding how the different categories of buyers get their news.

### Sample Reteller Channel Categories



### Sample Reteller Channel For A High-Tech Product



## DETERMINING WHERE YOUR STORY FITS

Before you begin identifying and reaching out to retellers, you need to know what category of reteller your story appeals to. Below is a simple way to determine which retellers to contact first.

- ➔ If your product is creating a new category then your story appeals to innovators. Find the bloggers and opinion leaders who can begin telling your story to the front-end of the market.
- ➔ If the market category has recently been established, then your story appeals to early adopters. Find established columnists and trade journals who want to feature a breakthrough solution.
- ➔ If your category has reached the mainstream market, your story appeals to early and late majority retellers. Find mainstream media who reach the middle to back end of the market.

# Crafting **The Story** for the **Channel**


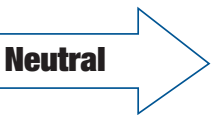




## HOW THE MARKET INTERPRETS YOUR STORY

According to Noriaki Kano, who developed the Kano Model to understand customer preference, there are key attributes your product needs to include to ensure customer satisfaction. And since your story and your product are inseparable, you need to include them in your story as well.

**Presumed Attributes** are parts of the product that retellers presume are there, and therefore don't need to be a major part of your story. But, if upon further investigation, your retellers discover that your product doesn't include these attributes, you're about to experience a marketing disaster.

**Expected attributes** are the ones retellers are looking for to determine the value of the product and if they want to do the story. These are the attributes they are most likely to compare to your competition. Therefore your story must include them or you'll be dismissed as a "me too" product.

**A Delighter Attribute** is an attribute of the product or story that exceeds expectation and creates a strong interest. Also known as the "hook," your delighter would be the feature you lead with in any pitch or press release.

Attribute	Not Included	Included
Presumed		
Expected		
Delighter		

## HOW TO FRAME YOUR STORY

Once you know what retellers presume and expect about your product and what might delight them, putting together the story is easy. And the best exercise for doing this is filling in the two-sentence positioning statement. Remember, these attributes change based on the reteller category you are targeting. So, over time, you may need at least four variations of your story.

### *Innovator*

*For (named buyer) whose problem is (describe in buyer's terms not yours), (Your product name) is a (describe solution category) that (solves this problem). Unlike (competitors' product name or status quo) (your product) (State the delighter).*

### *Early Adopter*

*For (named buyer) whose problem is (describe in buyer's terms not yours), (Your product name) is a (describe solution category) that (solves this problem). Unlike (competitors' product name or status quo) (your product) (State the delighter).*

### *Early Majority*

*For (named buyer) whose problem is (describe in buyer's terms not yours), (Your product name) is a (describe solution category) that (solves this problem). Unlike (competitors' product name or status quo) (your product) (State the delighter).*

### *Late Majority*

*For (named buyer) whose problem is (describe in buyer's terms not yours), (Your product name) is a (describe solution category) that (solves this problem). Unlike (competitors' product name or status quo) (your product) (State the delighter).*

# BUILDING YOUR STORY FOR VARIOUS CHANNELS

Below is a Reteller Channel Messaging Map that will help you visualize how your story changes to appeal to each reteller category. We've used the the launch of a new computer as an example.

RETELLER CHANNEL MESSAGING MAP - NEW COMPUTER

Retellers	Innovators (2.5%)	Early Adopters (13.5%)	Early Majority (34%)	Late Majority (34%)
What they want to hear	New	Breakthrough	Safe	Standard
Who They Are	Special Interest Bloggers	Nationally Syndicated Columnists	Mainstream Newspapers/ Magazines	Social Network
Where to find them	Online	Online/In Print	In Print/In Person (Trusted Peer)	In Person (Store Clerk/ Trusted Friend)
How To Pitch It – Pitch should include:				
Delighter	Quad Core 3.6GHz	Free Online Backup	On Sale at Best Buy	Recognized Brand
Expected	2GHz	File Compatability	Friend Uses One	Store Tech Support
Presumed	Dual Core CPU	Stable Software	Complete System	3-year warranty



## STORY TELLING TIPS

### **Abide by Rules of 3**

When writing about any innovation people tend to get verbose. It's natural – you have something exciting to say and want to tell people everything it includes. Unfortunately you'll overwhelm them your readers. Therefore try to stick to three key benefits or product features.

### **Speak in the language of the buyer**

Don't be clever for the sake of being clever. Make it easy for your audience to understand your product and your benefit. Often-times you try to create acronyms or new terminology to describe your offering – leaving the audience in the dark. Keep it simple and speak in the language that the buyer understands.

### **Revson's Revelation**

The founder of Revlon once said, "In the factory we make cosmetics. In the stores we sell hope." Do a good job addressing what retellers and their audience hope for.

### **Facts Tell Stories Sell**

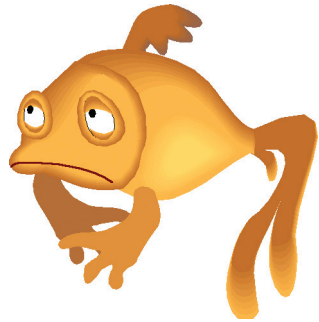
When talking about a new product you wouldn't list a whole pile of facts without framing it into a nice story. The story creates a context for the details about your product and gives the audience the ability to relate the facts to their own situation. A good story is also easier to repeat and less likely to break in the retelling.

## TESTING YOUR STORY

Once you have developed your story, be sure it passes the CARP test. Before you contact a reteller ask yourself these key questions.

### The CARP Test

- C** Is your story Credible? Will your target audience believe it? What evidence can you provide to support it?
- A** Does your story clearly describe how your solution Adds Value? Can it be measured?
- R** Is your story Relevant to the buyer's needs? Does it address the buyer's perception of presumed and expected attributes?
- P** Does your story clearly position your product for maximum competitive differentiation? Does it offer a compelling delighter?



# Delivering **Your** Story To **The Channel**

## **DELIVERING YOUR STORY TO RETELLERS**

### **Using Wire Services**

Wire services not only reach retellers, but also reach your buyers directly. Wire stories get your story told often and offer great advantages in that they can target the retellers most appropriate to your needs. Most wire services include search engine optimization so that you're facilitating rapid discovery of your press releases by major search engines including Google, Yahoo! and MSN, RSS Channels and blog directory services.

### **Email**

Email may seem antiquated but it's still the tried and true method for reaching retellers. Emails to the media need to be short and sweet and be crafted to meet the needs of the reteller. Your subject line is critical to getting your release opened so make sure it intrigues, informs and speaks to the needs of the recipient. Guard against using words that will get you trapped in a spam filter and don't include attachments without the request of the reporter.

### **Press Releases and Social Media Releases**

To borrow from Monty Python's Holy Grail "I'm not dead yet." Yes, there are a gazillion new ways to get your news out there, including the emergence of Social Media Releases. But the traditional press release is still alive and well. Press releases still need to be posted on your website's newsroom; they still need to be sent on a wire service if you want them to be searchable, and they still need to be relevant (remember the CARP test).

### **RSS Feeds**

RSS allows retellers to subscribe to their favorite news sources. RSS feeds are an important component to any media relations or marketing campaign because they allow you to provide automatically updated information to individuals who elect to follow your progress. Make it known on your website and in your press releases that you offer RSS feeds.

## HOW TO BE DISCOVERED

As we discussed earlier, the first group of people likely to take an interest in you are innovators. So they'll want to find you – which means you need to make it easy to be discovered.

### Optimizing Your Press Releases for On-line Search

By now you've probably heard of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) which is the process of increasing traffic to your website using the key words people use in their online searches. Just as your website needs to be searchable, so do your press releases. That's why your press releases need to use key words and phrases that retellers might use to find news about you. Press releases should also include active links to information that supports the message of your release.

### Social Media Optimization (SMO)

Social Media Optimization is the process of increasing awareness through the use of social media. Tools that are currently used in SMO include rss feeds, bookmark sharing, tagging, blogging, microblogging and video and photo sharing sites. SMO differs from SEO in that instead of people finding you through a search engine like Google, they are finding you through an on-line social network. It's essentially like viral marketing or word of mouth marketing – only you use the web instead of a face-to-face setting.

### Google Never Forgets

Another reason why it's so important to get your story right is that search engines never forget. So as exciting and convenient as it is to use search engine and social media optimization, remember that once your story is out there – it's out there for good.

## **DELIVERING YOUR STORY TO RETELLERS WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS**

Reteller networks also exist within the organizations you are trying to sell to. And therefore the story needs to be presented in ways that make it easy to move through the organization to reach key influencers and decision makers.

### **A Diagnostic**

To help the organization buy-in to your story, you should offer a diagnostic tool that reinforces the value your product delivers and elevates the pain of leaving their problem unsolved. This can be a survey, a series of questions in a power point, or interactive web-based analysis.

### **Power Point Presentations**

People within the organization are going to need to retell the story without breaking it. Equipping them with a well designed power point will help them achieve this. PowerPoint's and supporting materials need to include:

1. Top three customer needs you can solve
2. A differentiator and three to five pieces of evidence to substantiate your difference
3. What qualifies you to provide the solution

### **White Papers**

A white paper provides additional evidence and details about the problem you solve and how you solve it. It can be used to reach multiple retellers within the organization. We recommend you have two white papers for every new product. The first white paper is for innovators/early adopters within the company and should focus on details about how the product works. The second white paper should address early and late majority retellers and should focus on examples of how companies like them benefit from your product.

## WHEN TO REACH OUT TO RETELLERS

Don't invite retellers to dinner if you have nothing to serve. One of the biggest mistakes companies make when introducing a new innovative product, is to release the story before it's ready for primetime. Here's what you must do to make sure it's ready:

- ➔ Make sure your website doesn't contradict the story. Your website is the first place retellers go to see if you're for real.
- ➔ Since seeing is believing, have a demo or guided tour available.
- ➔ If you don't have a demo - have a clear description of innovative features, the problem you solve and an example of how you solve it.
- ➔ Have examples of high profile customers.
- ➔ Have your supporting materials available.
- ➔ Make sure a Google search about your company doesn't turn up old news that doesn't support your new story.
- ➔ Understand where your story fits within the market place. Do your homework; find out what retellers are writing, blogging, and podcasting about.

## RETELLER ETIQUETTE

If you're new to media relations or if you've been involved for years and need a reminder, there are certain rules of etiquette you need to subscribe to so you don't "repel" the retellers. Here are a few.

1. When calling – always ask if they have time to talk. If they are deadline, quickly arrange for another time.
2. Don't ramble – you'll lose them. Rehearse or have a written pitch in front of you but don't sound rehearsed when you say it. The two sentence positioning statement works great here if you need it.
3. Read their blog, column, articles. It always helps to reference past articles if your solution is a great follow up to a previous story. Take time to understand their beat so you can tailor the story to their audience.
4. Don't pitch your story to multiple editors /writers within the same organization. Find out who is the best fit for your story and try others only after your first choice passes on it.
5. If you aren't excited by your news, they won't be either. A small incremental change in your product is not a reason to call them. If you don't have a story to pitch – pitch a trend and then position your company as source for the story.
6. Don't send your press release as an attachment. Always embed it in the body of your email.
7. Avoid overused phrases like "Cutting Edge" "World's Leading," "Revolutionary", etc.
8. Don't annoy them by asking if they received your release.
9. Don't send them links that they can't open and make sure your demos work as promised.
10. Be prepared to answer key questions that will help determine if they need or want more information. These include: How many customers you have? How long the company has been around? Is anyone else doing this?



## THE INVISIBLE RETELLER CHANNEL(S)

In this book, we've focused on managing your relationship with highly visible retellers. It is this high visibility that makes it possible for you to understand who they are, what audiences they reach, and the stories that will most likely appeal to them. It is important to realize that the stories you create are also available to a much broader network of invisible retellers whose main channel of communication is word of mouth.

Over the years these invisible retellers have been referred to by a variety of labels such as influentials, hubs, sneezers, and mavens. While it is virtually impossible for you to identify and interact with them directly, your story will do it for you. Make it easy for your story to be discovered, and there is a high probability that some invisible retellers will begin to spread the word. With a little bit of luck (sorry to be vague, but that's what it takes) your story will spread and eventually reach the audience your story was designed to appeal to. Which brings us back to the importance of getting your story right. A story that focuses on what people hope for, rather than what you make, is a story that encourages retelling...and retelling... and retelling.

# AboutUs

## OUR CONSULTING SERVICES

O'Sullivan Communications has assembled all the resources you need to get your story right, tell it well and tell it often. Getting your story right starts with our SweetSpot Analysis™ to help you identify the retellers most likely to tell your story; what features your story needs in order to appeal them and the markets they serve; and how to package the story so that it doesn't break in the retelling.

Telling your story well requires exceptional copy writing and creativity, followed by design and story delivery strategies that can help you be seen, be heard, and be noticed. Services include:

- ➔ Websites, Blogs, PodCasts, Vidcasts
- ➔ Brochures, Power Points, Advertising
- ➔ Press Releases, Social Media Releases, White Papers
- ➔ Story Telling Training For Sales & Senior Management

Telling your story often requires an understanding of how to reach out to your retellers through:

- ➔ Media Relations Tactics
- ➔ Social Media Optimization
- ➔ RSS Feeds, Bookmarking, Tagging, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
- ➔ Print and online advertising (google ad words, etc.)

Call Meghan O'Sullivan to arrange a customized proposal for your organization. tel: 978-264-0707 x 201. Email [meghan@thereteller-channel.com](mailto:meghan@thereteller-channel.com)

To learn how to Master the Reteller Channel you can access our blog, download our e-book, or email us for a consultation or workshop ...

## OUR WORKSHOPS

If the story you're telling isn't selling, we can help you develop a better one. We've put together two half-day workshops that can help.

### **Mastering the Reteller Channel**

A good story, told well is certainly an essential foundation for sales and marketing success. But the audience you want to reach with your story is busy. They're busy filtering out the vast majority of stories that vie for their attention everyday. So how does your story stand any chance of cutting through the clutter? How do you get the media and other influencers to retell your story? Our workshop entitled Mastering the Reteller Channel will show you how.

### **How to Sell Enterprise Anything**

For companies selling enterprise solutions we offer a workshop to equip both sales and marketing with a unique approach to telling the story well. We call this workshop How to Sell Enterprise Anything: Be Provocative or be Forgotten. The operative word is provocative. In this workshop we'll help you develop your skills for telling a story that not only gets attention in a highly competitive marketplace but follows through with compelling evidence that establishes the strategic importance of your solution. You'll learn how to adapt your story to a prospect's situation so that you can do any of the following: reveal an unrecognized problem, suggest an unanticipated solution, propose an unseen opportunity, or define an unexpected relationship between your organization's capabilities and the expansion or redefinition of the buyer's success.

Call Meghan O'Sullivan to arrange a customized proposal for your organization call 978-264-0707 x 201 or email [meghan@theretellerchannel.com](mailto:meghan@theretellerchannel.com).

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Meghan O'Sullivan and Gabe d'Annunzio are senior partners at O'Sullivan Communications, Inc., a marketing consulting firm specializing in helping innovative enterprises and organizations position themselves for success by mastering the reteller channel. Their strategic programs help companies identify the retellers most likely to tell your story; what features your story needs in order to appeal to them and the markets they serve; and how to package your story so that it doesn't break in the retelling.

Together they have more than fifty (gulp) years of experience in helping clients get their stories right, tell them well and tell them often. The team has developed and implemented award winning - profit driving - marketing campaigns for clients in a cross section of industries including computer software, consumer electronics, medical technology, and economic development.

They are the authors of ***Mastering the Reteller Channel – How to Get Your Story Right, Tell it Well and Tell it Often*** and founders of ***TheRetellerChannel.com*** a blog on how to create and deliver stories that influence media, social networks and customers.