

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO
EMOTIVE
SELLING

FOR THE ONLINE RETAILER

By Ian Rhodes

INTRODUCTION

EMOTIVE SELLING

Retailers, I want to introduce you to a more focused, more purposeful approach to selling for your ecommerce business. Not through investing your profits into lines upon lines of new stock. One where you focus on what you know you can sell best. Your core products. The products you know your audience want to buy. Your job is to find your audience. Then, the small task of convincing your audience to buy.

This is about building a smarter approach to selling online. I call it emotive selling. I want to share with you 5 ecommerce businesses that I see selling through emotive connection with their audience right now. I'll also share with you some actionable ideas you can implement to grow your retail revenue.

Stick with me. It's a long one, but an important one.

Ian Rhodes

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THE EMOTIVE CONTEXT

There's a story about renowned '60s ad man David Ogilvy I want to share with you. Whether it's true or not, I'm not so sure. Still, it's a lesson in selling we can all learn from.

It was a crisp April morning as Ogilvy crossed Central Park on his way to his Madison Avenue office. A homeless man sat cross-legged on the floor, a blanket across his lower half, his head rested on the cast-iron fencing behind him. He was staring up at the bright blue morning sky. Expressionless. In front of him was a polystyrene cup with no more than a few coins inside. Probably spare change from New York City commuters having picked up their morning bagel.



On a well-worn piece of cardboard underneath the cup was a simple message. **"I'M BLIND. PLEASE HELP."**

The sign told David why there was no squint in the homeless man's eyes as he stared up towards the sun.

He couldn't see the beauty around him. Central Park in full April bloom. The colours. The scenery you shouldn't take for granted. Many do.

Ogilvy bent down, balanced his weight on his own legs and asked the man a question. He wanted to write just three words onto his piece of cardboard. 3 words that he believed would help. "Would that be okay?" The homeless man obliged. Ogilvy placed a dollar note into the cup and continued on his journey.

THE OUTCOME?

That evening, Ogilvy retraced his steps home. There, resting in the exact place, the homeless man. This time, his cup was gone. Replaced by a larger jar. A jar full of notes and coins.

What 3 words had changed the homeless man's fortunes that morning? **"IT'S SPRING AND I'M BLIND. PLEASE HELP."**

Ogilvy placed the man's message into the context of the passing commuter. He challenged them to consider something different. Not the affliction, but the scenery that this man was missing out on. He built an emotive connection.

THE SOLUTION?

He added an emotive pull. Yes, we feel sorrow. We feel guilt. Is that enough to trigger an association? Most of the time we just keep on walking. A moment's distraction from our current task. Ogilvy forced those passing commuters to feel empathy. To swop shoes (for just one moment). Enough of a moment for commuters to place their hand in their pocket and do their bit to help.



Ogilvy forced an emotive connection between the homeless man and the commuter.

In his work, David Ogilvy was a master of the emotive connection. Emotive selling. Not simply getting people to read, but tempting people to consider. Persuading people to shop.

By definition, in order to persuade people to act, we need to reach them emotively. Emotion is an '*instinctive or intuitive feeling as distinguished from reasoning or knowledge.*'

INSTINCT AND INTUITION

Acting on what we believe to be best for us. What we believe to be true. What we tell ourselves oftentimes without reason.

Like it or not, you're in the business of selling. The homeless man in Central Park sold his story (thoughtfully adapted by David Ogilvy) to connect emotively. To persuade you to part with your spare change.

With your own work. The content you create. The knowledge you share. You're in the business of selling. Even the most caring and sharing businesses? Yep, you got it, they survive by selling.

We have to learn how to sell in a context that our audience responds to.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST RETAILERS

As ecommerce marketers our task is to reach the people who are interested in the products we have to offer. We then choose from an arsenal of tactics on how to sell what we offer.

- price discounting
- delivery incentives
- money back guarantees
- selection of colours
- limited-time opportunities
- invite-only promotions

We see these additional perks as a way to differentiate from the competition. To hook our customer. And they work. Sometimes they work really well.

However. Consider once more our blind man in Central Park. Why would we walk on by? Because we've heard the story before. As much as we will hate ourselves for it, when we read the same message 'Help me' our emotive response weakens until we simply feel nothing.

As consumers we also become accustomed to the messages we see and hear every day of our lives.

- When do we ever buy at RRP?
- When are we prepared to wait 3-4 weeks for delivery?
- When are we willing to accept that the only colour choice we have available is the black?

The businesses that don't simply survive they thrive, are the businesses that create the things we desire. When our natural instinct just feels right. Not just when the price seems that little bit too good to be true.

It's not just about the makers. It's the role of the retailer too. To present stock that just feels right. You're so in tune with your audience that you know presenting a new piece, a new product, to your audience creates that sense of desire. That emotive connection that persuades your consumer to act. Even if they have to wait and pay top dollar.

JUST WHO ARE THESE RETAILERS?

In his book **Influence**, Robert Cialdini taught us what we need to know in the art of persuasion:

- **Reciprocate** - the giving and the taking
- **Commitment** - justifying our decisions
- **Social proofing** - validation that we're not in this alone
- **Liking** - buying from the businesses we believe we know

- **Authority** - trusting in the experience of others
- **Scarcity** - knowing that the opportunity in front of us won't be around forever

All tactics we can employ to earn the right to enter into business with our consumer. To enter ideas into the minds of our consumer.

However, there's a problem. These are persuasive tactics that our brains have become so accustomed to. Hell, we're naturally cynical beasts. That 2 for 1 offer is really finishing on Tuesday? Just like it did last week?

As consumers we're **confused at the best of times** by limited time offers and price deals.

It takes great effort to emotively connect with your consumer. Particularly online. There's no pat on the back or warm handshake to greet you.

Online, our task is to find new ways to connect in trusted, more meaningful ways.

I want to share with you 5 emotive selling processes of online retailers I hugely admire. Businesses who are going that extra step to connect with their customer. Not through pictures of cute puppies and kittens, but good old fashioned human to human relationship building. I want these case studies to prepare the groundwork for your own marketing.

5 WAYS TO SELL YOUR PRODUCTS (WITH EMOTION)

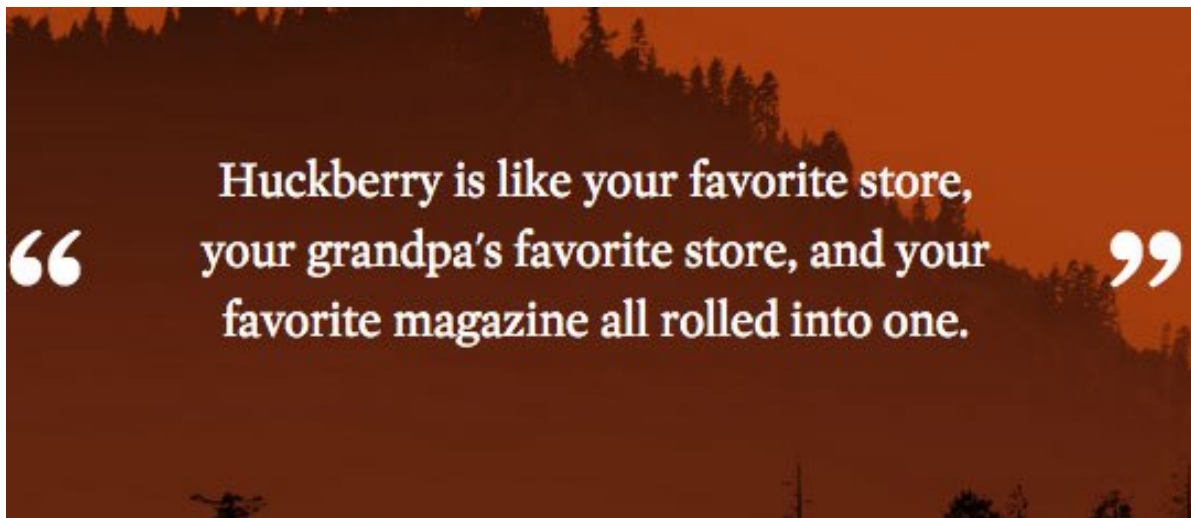
You ready to get all emotional with me?

I've identified 5 methods retailers can form an emotional connection with their audience. I'm not talking about authenticity or trust. These are prerequisites for your business. You don't require me to teach you this.

With each emotive connector I'm also looking at how each business builds connection. The methods they use. There's enough people telling you what to do, this is an exercise in giving you examples of ideas in action.

1.) FORMING KINMANSHIP

I love preaching the story of Huckberry. A bootstrapped retail of men's outdoor living fashion and lifestyle goods. I didn't need to check their site again to figure out how to define Huckberry. It becomes engrained.



They could present themselves as a 'leading supplier of outdoor goods'. You know, like 95% of the retailers they're competing with. They don't. They connect through an idea that hits home. It's more than just another store:

- It's your favourite store
- It's your grandpa's favourite store
- It's your favourite magazine too

Everything that we consider of value now and in the past. Plus, the addition of sharing content that you will find of value. Why? because it's a company built and run by likeminded individuals. Your tribe.

You know we're never meant to talk about 'us'? We're taught that effective marketing is supposed to be all about our customer, right? Well, this is how Huckberry describe their online store, "the products on our site are culled from all over the world to suit the diverse interests of our team, and can often be found in the bed of our trucks,

keeping us warm and dry on our bike ride to the office, and on our not-so-tidy desks."

They're buying the products that they would buy and use themselves. It just so happens that their customers are of the same mindset, the same passion, the same desire.

THIS ISN'T JUST LIP SERVICE



Huckberry's success over the past 5 years is down to the tribe they've built. You don't shop with Huckberry until you've become a member of that tribe. Your commitment is the email newsletter you request to receive every few days. That commitment is how you access the site. It's gated to non-members.

Their selected product range is a blend of finds from large and specialist brands from

across the globe. Unique products you've probably never come across before. Items you'd love to own yourself.

Each and every Huckberry newsletter (there are 2-3 a week) are signed off with a message of 'See You Out There' alongside a spectacular photo shared by a fellow Huckberry customer. That email is usually a selection of content-themed selections alongside limited-time, or limited-availability, offerings.

The key, I believe, to the success of Huckberry (success you can judge by the 1m

The founder's own backstory **is shared on Signal v Noise**. I'm sure you get the sentiment the founder's felt:

"We don't need Mount Everest tents," Greiner explains. "We need a tent where we can go on a little backpacking or car camping trip, something functional and well-designed. ... There's no resource out there for 'guys' guys.' Nobody's talking to us in a way that is more conversational or more relaxed."

Consider those two words. Conversational. Relaxed. When do you feel at your most conversational? When do you feel your most relaxed? When you surround yourself with like minded people. That's what Huckberry are doing right now as they accelerate the growth of their retail business. They're recruiting likeminded people to their private buyers club:

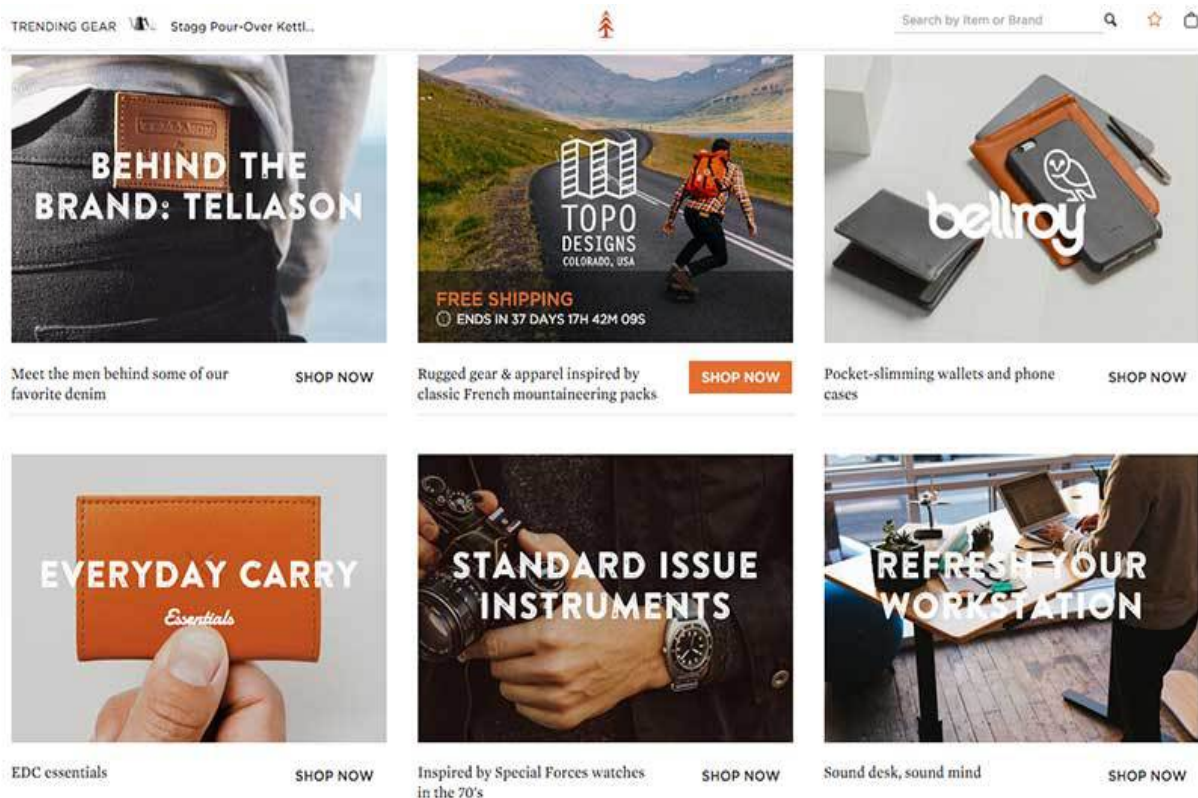
- 105,000 followers on Facebook
- 158,000 followers on Instagram
- close to 1m newsletter subscribers

WHAT CAN HUCKBERRY TEACH US ABOUT EMOTIVE SELLING?

First and foremost. Community. If you want to build a business around your own passion and lifestyle you lead your tribe. You build your community. A quick look through the **Huckberry Instagram** feed and you're see this is all about people. People doing things they love (aided by products they purchase through Huckberry). Nice way to connect with your people? An even nicer way to build your business.

They do all the things that Cialdini taught us. Offers with limited-time availability. Social proofing through the messages shared from the community. How do people find out about Huckberry in the first place? That'll be the recommendations, likes and shares across Social Media where friends tell friends about what they've found.

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO EMOTIVE SELLING FOR THE ONLINE RETAILER



The store is a blend of insight and product. They don't simply present offers they tell the story 'behind the brand'. Those stories are neatly entwined into the homepage, category and product pages. The screenshot above is taken from the homepage. *'Meet the men behind some of our favourite denim'*. Again, it's about Huckberry's team, what they love. Their favourite denim. This is retail leadership 101.

Consider how you're communicating with your own audience.

Is the association between who you are and what you sell obvious?

I'm not talking about your 'about us' page. As important as it is, it's not where we (as consumers) are immediately drawn. Do you give your own opinion in your product descriptions? Are you sharing your own stories within your website?

There are so many ways that Huckberry build an emotive relationships with their consumer. This isn't about finding your 'ideal customer'. For Huckberry this is 'being your ideal customer'.

GET EMOTIVE - THE ACTION YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW - REVISIT YOUR EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Take a look at the last email newsletter you sent to your database. Answer honestly, was it just a pitch of the products you wanted/needed to sell? Now consider Huckberry. Here are the subject fields from the last 10 newsletters I received from them:

- Upgrading a classic we love
- We weren't planning on doing this
- Meet the new North
- Bold Man > cold man
- Recommit to the run
- Robot shoes
- Not your Grandpa's wool
- It's bonfire season
- This jacket is for the ramblin' man
- These boots score 100%

They read more like magazine article headlines than a retail newsletter. Think about it. That's how we're programmed. We don't buy magazines to stare at the advertising. The subject line is the hook to open the newsletter.

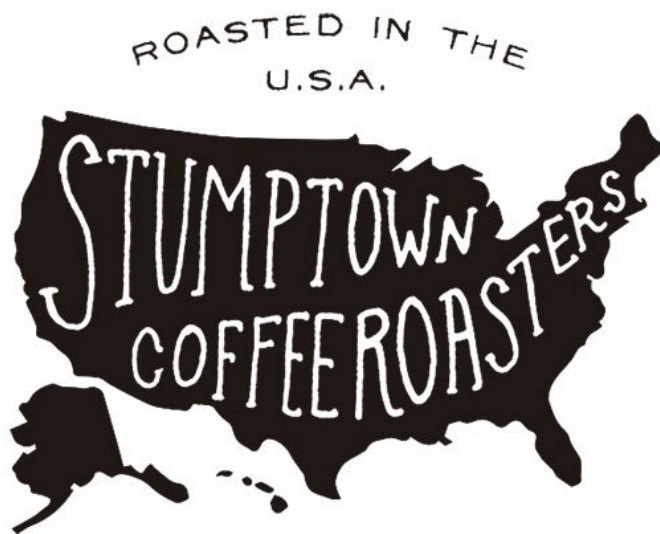
Once inside, you are greeted with a promotional offer on most items. It's not the lead. It's the hook (this time to click). Firstly you're introduced to why that particular product should matter to you. The context.

Start considering how you can add greater context to your newsletter. Can you make your newsletter the most vital 'ding!' that occurs each week for the recipient? Can you at least make this your mission? To blend insight and value. The context and the offer. It may transform the response you see to your current email campaigns.

2.) APPEALING TO THE SENSES OF THE BUYER

What sells coffee? On that rainy Thursday morning as you pass the local coffee house, what triggers the desire to hand over 5 maybe 10 times as much money as you'd pay for a home brewed coffee? The smell? The anticipated taste? The feeling.

The coffeeshop on the corner has a distinct advantage over the online retailer. They're a few steps closer in that sensory-triggered sell.



This is why you have to admire **Stumptown Coffee**. With coffee shops in 4 cities across the USA, Stumptown Coffee also sell their unique blend of coffee online.

There's so much we can learn from independent makers. Makers that know their buyers.

The coffee industry. Think about the sheer size and volume of competition.

Ask yourself, if you were setting up a small coffee brewing business right now, how would you differentiate yourselves? What immediately comes to mind?

You have a two pronged competitive attack. The Nescafes, Kencos, Folgers of the industry adorning shelves of retailers across the globe. All part of larger conglomerates with marketing budgets the size of small countries.

Then, oh, of course, yes. There's the coffee shops. You know. The Starbucks, Costa Coffees, Prets, then you throw in every single independent in the market.

We're saturated head to toe in caffeine.

Stumptown ooze sensory copy. They've figured out what triggers response. Visit their website **Stumptown Coffee**. If you stick your nose close enough to the screen you can actually smell the roast. Seriously, you did that? That's not good.

Let's take the Rwandan Huye Mountain roast as a quick example.



Firstly, *'The crisp of white grape is balanced by a sweet roundness of currant and clove.'*

Is this wine we're talking?

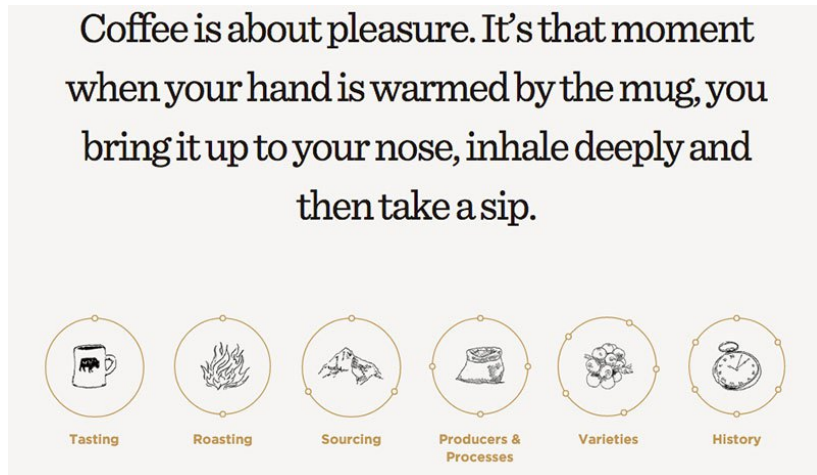
Who produces the coffee? Oh, that'll be David Rubanzangabo. He brings a *'discerning eye and processes only perfectly ripe beans, leading to year after year of incredible coffee'*

So what about Huye Mountain? Good question. *'The high altitude and mineral-rich soil brings out their best characteristics; the bean must be a little bit stronger to survive.'*

A product description that creates intrigue. A product description that paints a clear picture in your head of the story from field to cup.

What does it tell you? These guys know their coffee. Starbucks' baristas know their coffee too though.

However, Stumptown catch you right where you want to be caught. The emotive connection.



That, dear reader, is how you sell the sense of ownership. You recognise that moment don't you? The same way you opened the door of your new car and took in that beautiful smell of the leather upholstery. You react to that moment. You remember that moment.

What Stumptown Coffee do here, so well, is prompt you to recall that moment. That's the moment that sells coffee.

WHAT CAN STUMPTOWN COFFEE TEACH US ABOUT EMOTIVE SELLING?

You couldn't sell coffee unless you'd shared that same sense. As you bring your mug closer to your nose and inhale deeply. Your role in retail is to capture that similar moment.

- the feeling as you lock the door as the taxi pulls up. You know spending a little extra on that dress was worth it. You feel good.
- the greeting as you head up the stairs on the 747. You know treating yourself to First Class seats is now worth it.
- the smell of cotton as you gently layout your new born child's first clothing. The sense of trepidation and excitement.

The emotive hook is one of the strongest sales skills you have in your armoury. Tying that emotion in with a sensory recall is hugely powerful. To the stage it no longer feels right calling it 'selling'.

A LITTLE STORY OF MY OWN

I once owned a guitar shop. A business I started from scratch in my back bedroom. The greatest moments were the moments when a customer had patiently waited for weeks for their custom built guitar to arrive. I had the pleasure of unlatching the case and presenting them with their musical treasure. It was a brilliant feeling to see the look on their face. It never disappointed.

Our clientele were experienced guitar players. They weren't buying their first guitar. Maybe their 5th, maybe their 20th. One thing I knew was that they'd encountered the unboxing of a guitar in the past. The moment when the wood gleams and the pickups sparkle. Only they would tell you something different. It was the smell of the case. You see, guitars arrive in cases lined with fur. It's a very distinct smell. It's the reason why I always had a dozen or so guitar cases on display. Once the customer recalled that smell, they recalled the moment. It made selling guitars a lot easier.

Your task is to align the sale of your products with that moment. Explain that moment. Let your customer feel that moment. Let your customer smell the coffee beans right under their nose.

The beauty of Stumptown's work is the clarity in their content. There's no repetition from coffee bean to coffee bean. Each product's backstory is unique. They've taken the time to write descriptions that clearly demonstrate their passion for coffee. Their knowledge of coffee. This is the difference between me buying from a coffee supplier and me buying into Stumptown.

GET EMOTIVE - THE ACTION YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW - REVISIT YOUR PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

Choose 10 products from your site. Products that frustrate you because they're simply not selling at the rate you expected. Now, jump into the shoes of your customer. What fresh angle can you take to demonstrate how that product will make your consumer feel? If that product was on a shelf of a store, what would make them inquisitive? The size? The colour? The weight? The smell? Now, take a few moments away from the computer. Arm yourself with a pen and paper. Right down how your customer would feel the moment that product arrives and is unboxed.

Ask yourself 'What's life like now that they've got what you're looking to sell?'

Now, how does that compare to the current product description? What's the weighting of 'feature & benefit' talk to 'emotive connection'?

Now, using Analytics monitor the conversion rate of these products. Monitor the time on page of each of these products. Keep the same flow of traffic, whether that be PPC, SEO or from your homepage. See what the response is. No change to the product price or availability. Just the rate at which people engage and convert. It may surprise you.

3.) THE FEELING OF ASSURANCE

Two UK clothing manufacturers producing high ticket items for the non-luxury market. Think of luxury, you think of Chanel, Tiffanys, Breitling. Brands where you know you're paying for a little bit of glitz and a spoonful of glam. Something where the label is instantly recognisable. You have no story to tell. There's recognition. You've done well.

Luxury is defined as '*a state of great comfort or elegance*' and associated with the big price tag. The two brands I want to share, **Hiut Denim** and **McNair** are run by makers with meticulous attention to

detail. Creating products where the investment you make isn't to be 'seen' but to be 'worn'. Specialists in their trade.



Taken from Hiut's user manual, point 14: *"We make jeans. We will only ever make jeans. We will focus our minds on making jeans. It will keep us plenty busy. So no bobble caps. No sweatshirts. No mugs.*

No perfumes. No distractions from the main thing. The main thing will be the only thing." As I said, these guys are specialists.

There's that feeling when you know you're in safe hands. Like the calming voice of the pilot as you hit a turbulent spell. You just know things are going to be okay.

In a world of abundance and mass market production it's nice to know somebody is looking out for your best interests. Hiut do that.

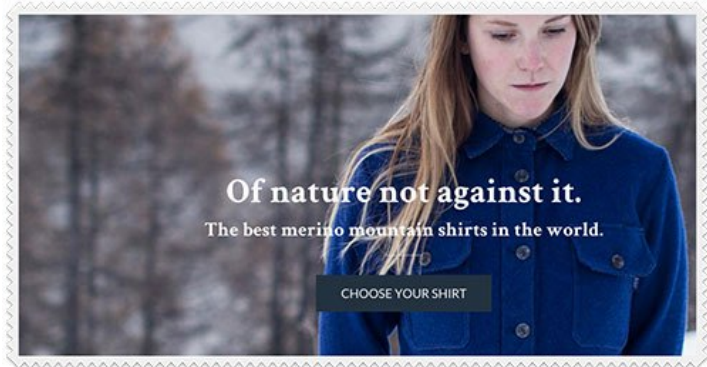
'The Grand Masters [makers of jeans] can only make 100 pairs of Hiut's a week. But at the end of the day, we are here to try and make the best jeans we can and not the most jeans we can.' In the same way a luxury brand sells on the basis of exclusivity, you know with a pair of Hiut jeans, you're not simply buying off the peg. The jeans are made for somebody. That somebody is probably you.

When you buy a pair of Levis, as an example, you know you have a variety of choice. Styles, colours, sizes... 100's of variants on the common theme of denim leg coverings. With Hiut, your style choice is far more limited. Why? That focus on doing one thing well. Jeans that are built for life don't come with tears at the knee or stonewashed looks. They form part of the story. The natural wear and tear.

There is a cost associated with quality. Hiut jeans price tag is around £120. £120 for an article of clothing, as co-founder David

Hieatt explains *'In our town, there are people who have spent 20,000 hours, 30,000 hours, and in some cases, 40,000 hours making jeans. Their hands and eyes have been trained in the essence of making great jeans. They are the Grand Masters of denim.'*

Similar to Hiut, McNair are creating a premium product made to be worn, the McNair Merino Mountain Shirt. *'A McNair Mountain Shirt will keep you more comfortable in more*



variable conditions for longer than anything else on the mountain.'

McNair are producing the best merino shirts in the world.

McNair shirts retail at around £300. A hefty investment for any consumer. A worthwhile investment once you understand how the product benefits align with your consumer's life.

That knowledge, the comfort you take, in the shirt being designed for all environments:

'Wear it instead of a jacket when you think you need a shell. Use it as a mid-layer on the very coldest days. Wear it out in a blizzard, and watch the snow shake off it, wear it down the pub or just to fall asleep on the sofa watching telly.'

A shirt to be lived in.

Both McNair and Hiut raise the level of purchase consideration you make. Yes, you could buy cheaper (but won't you just end up replacing your shirt or jeans after a year or two?). This item is for life. In the case of Hiut jeans you can share the story, you can **trace the story**, of each pair of jeans that they sell.

WHAT CAN HIUT AND McNAIR TEACH US ABOUT EMOTIVE SELLING?

Premium products exist in each and every industry. Somewhere somebody is looking to undercut somebody else whilst others are looking to create exemplary products that showcase their craft. Websites. Cakes. Notebooks. Light Bulbs. The list goes on.

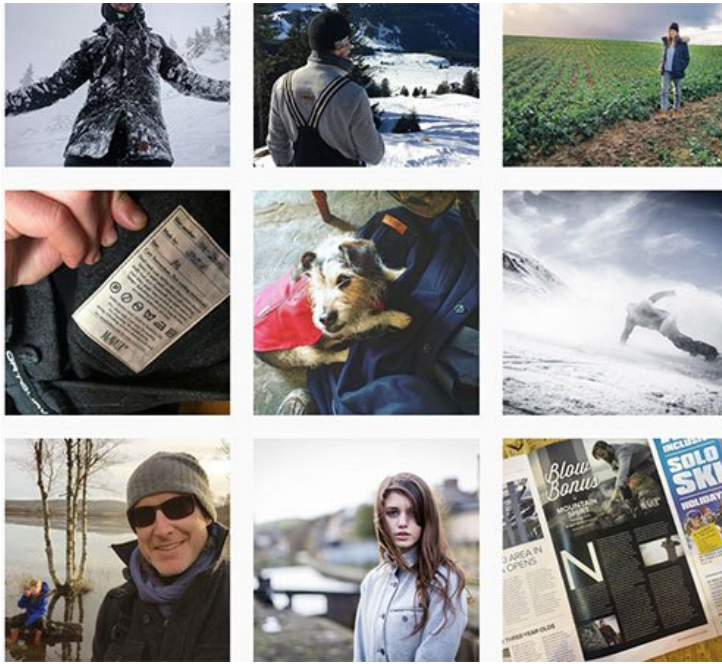
First things first you need to answer the question 'Why?'. Why should I invest my hard earned money in your product when alternatives are available at a fraction of the price. Remember. This isn't about the label you show off. This is about selling products to be worn well. Personal investments.

A premium pricetag allows you the opportunity to capture the consumers attention for a greater extent than a 'typical' priced product. It raises questions.

Your job marketing your premium product is to answer those questions.

The backstory is crucial.

- How did these products come into existence?
- Why should it matter to me?
- What's the relationship between my own world and that of the makers? What's the common ground?



These are brands that thrive through social media. Not just the story that they tell, but the stories that are subsequently shared. By the brand and by the consumer.

You have to let your customer know that the product you create has been created for them.

From the homepage to the product description. Every step of the way through the delivery process and the unboxing of the product upon receipt.

You know that the mass market isn't interested in what you have to sell. You're fine with that. You know your task is to focus on the minority. They're the people that will help build your brand.

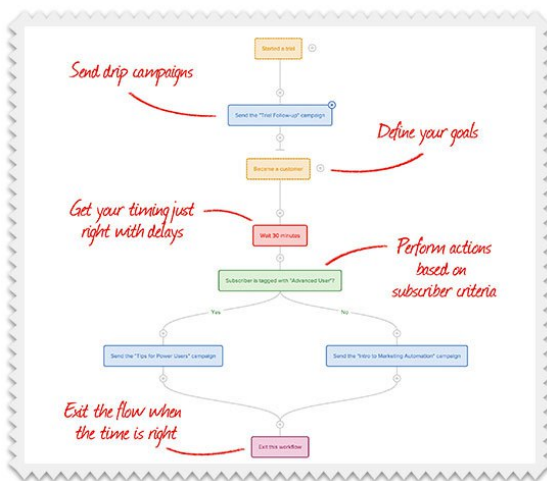
You're a consumer too. You understand how you buy. Use that to your advantage as you discover how to sell.

It's not necessarily about the time in which a customer considers purchasing a product. Believe me, I've seen wealthy individuals umm and ahh about buying a £150 starter guitar that will probably live under the spare bed for far longer than a gigging guitarist who's investing £3000, maybe £4000.

Yet again, clarity is key. No bullshit. No voucher code incentives. Let your audience know that vouchers exist and they immediately begin the question the validity of their proposed purchase. They start focusing upon price, not promise.

GET EMOTIVE - THE ACTION YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW - REVISIT THE POST-SALE EXPERIENCE

A consumer never feels better than the immediate moment after they've made that purchase decision. Use that moment to your advantage. Use drip-campaign marketing software such as **GetDrip** or **ConvertKit** and send an email 1hr after purchase welcoming your new customer to the world they're now entering. Give them that little reassurance they may need to affirm that they've just made one brilliant decision. Follow that email up the next day with an update into the order's progress.



That one-hour delay is crucial. It takes away the element of automation. We expect the immediate response of a purchase receipt. We don't expect the email form the founder shortly after purchase.

Oftentimes products are made to order or are in short supply. If this is the case, and it's demonstrated BEFORE the order is made, then don't just wait until the product is dispatched to talk to your consumer. Share the process. Share what's happening and what's going to happen next. Build up the excitement. Keep the momentum going.

Yes, this is post-sale selling. It's crucial if you want to develop brand advocates for your premium products. People will feel pride having invested so heavily. They will want to share their new purchase. Set another trigger through your email drip campaign to find out how they're getting on 7 days after receipt of your product. It will have given them enough time to use/try/wear/fit/build the product you sold. See if they want to connect through Instagram (let them know you'll follow back!) and share their new purchase with the community. To be part of something. All the businesses I've mentioned so far do

this exceptionally well. Own your hashtag and let them feel like they're now fully fledged members of your online community.

Let people know that they matter.

4.) THIS MIGHT NOT BE AROUND TOMORROW

We don't like pushy sales people. Sometimes, though, we do require a push.

We're back to New York City again. This time to visit an innovative offline-only retailer we can all learn from. **Story**. This is more to do with the concept of the business. The business model itself. Like Huckberry before, Story recognise the importance of retail beyond retail. Story is a retail space that takes the 'Point of view of a Magazine. Changes like a Gallery. Sells things like a Store.'

From their 2000sq ft boutique space on Manhattan's 11th Avenue, the team at Story, led by brand consultant Rachel Shechtman, transform their stock, display and message every 6-8 weeks.

Each limited run of 'Story' has a different theme. Previous themes have included 'Making Things', 'Home For the



Holidays'. Each theme sees a completely new range of sourced stock ready for sale. All themed around a cause, holiday or event.

It sounds like an enormous achievement. It's difficult enough for many of us to change our homepage. To change our entire stock? It's monumental. However, Story do this with tremendous success.

Each theme has a sponsor. Each theme has a range of special events lined up. Cooking classes. Special guests. An array of ways to pull in a fresh crowd every few months.

This business model has intrigued some large names like Home Depot and GE to become involved. As sponsors and providers of stock. Home Depot use their relationship with Story to test out new product and ideas. This is retail innovation in action. Who wouldn't want to be involved?

Story are very selective about the products on offer. Many are unique one-offs. Some are vastly expensive. Others quirky. There's enough to pull customers back again and again and again. To share the Story. To follow the Story.

WHAT CAN STORY TEACH US ABOUT EMOTIVE SELLING?

We don't want to stale. Consider the personalised homepage Amazon builds for you. Consider your response if each and every time you visited Amazon they presented the same products. Over and over again. Buy this. Buy this please. You haven't bought this yet. What's up, buy it!!!

It doesn't work. Instead, Amazon keep things fresh. They can. They have millions of products to pitch and a huge team of analysts recoding algorithms based on shopping habits of millions of people.

You don't.

You have to work on intuition.

Consider how you can theme your own online store like the cover of a magazine. "In this month's issue we're focusing on...." No matter how niche your retail business is, you still have categories of products available to you. You still have the ability to shape those products with the message you present.

This is about keeping things fresh. This is about keeping things shareable.

GET EMOTIVE - THE ACTION YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW - RE-WORK YOUR HOMEPAGE

If your SEO and PPC is working right customers looking for specific products will land on specific products. Your job is to sell that product.

What about people who land on your homepage. What's their intent?

- returning customers looking to browse your shelves
- product page visitors heading to see what you're all about
- visitors who searched for generic terms that relate to your product line
- enquiring customers looking for information about their delivery
- word-of-mouth visitors heading your way for the very first time



Between those 5 bullet points I expect you're capturing the intent of 90% of your homepage visitors (the other 10% being nosey competitors).

The role of your homepage isn't simply to sell. It's to introduce ideas. To demonstrate your existence. To direct visitors to where they want to go.

Far too often we simply use our homepage as the 'category master'. The all encompassing mega-category page that pulls products from your feed that you want to sell.

Your homepage can do so much more.

Firstly, take a stand. Story has the feel of a pop-up shop. A very smartly worked pop-up shop. You know that products aren't going to be around for a while. There's a timeframe set against your ability to buy that particular product. You don't feel pushed. You do, however, feel the need to act. What happens once it's gone?!

What if you could turn casual shoppers into not-so-casual shoppers? What if you focused your stock purchasing on buying in one-offs and exclusive products? What if you used your homepage to give a sense of finality to the offers that you present?

A FINAL GUITAR SHOP STORY FOR YOU

I had a chance to buy an exclusive line of electric guitars from one of the most prestigious makers. A limited line with a limited design. I had to buy the lot. I'd never bought more than 10 of any particular guitar line in one go. This manufacturer was asking me to buy 100. Holy shit! 100 of the same guitars landing in the warehouse in one drop. What happens if they don't sell?!?

I really really wanted to take these guitars on. I knew my customers would love them (I was my own customer). They looked great, they played great. The problem we often times face was that my customers didn't know these guitars existed. I had to pitch something new. I had to sell a guitar people didn't yet know they needed.

So, of course, I signed on the line and 7 days later those guitars arrived.

It gave me 7 days to figure out how to sell them in the 60 days invoicing period I was granted.

I did it. With 30 days spare. Earning £2 to every £1 I spent on stock.

How did I sell the guitars? I sold them by sharing my own emotive story:

- **anxiety.** 'I've never done this before!'

- **confidence.** 'I had to buy one of these guitars myself, that means I have 99 available for you'
- **belief.** 'Having bought 100, I wish I'd been able to secure 200, but these are the only ones they made'
- **exclusivity.** 'Only 99 other guitars in the country will own one of these'
- **availability.** 'I'm selling them in my high street store too. They won't be around for long.'



I did have one huge disadvantage that you now have available to you now. This was pre-social media. I couldn't utilise my own customers' story. You can do that.

I pitched the guitar on the homepage under the headline 'I can't believe I've just done this...' I made it personal. Me, the guitar shop owner and you, the guitarist.

It worked a treat. Enquiries were still coming in 6 months later. That's the art of emotive selling.

I made it a regular feature on my homepage. I bought in bulk and sold with emotion. Sometimes guitars from established brands, sometimes brands you'd never heard of. This sales process became a core part of my homepage and my newsletter. It kept my offering fresh. It kept my offering personal. It kept people coming back. It kept selling guitars.

5.) SHOW YOUR FACE: PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE

Watch this video - <http://irhod.es/goulet-pens> - It's a 'local' retailer of pens in Virginia. The **Goulet Pen Company**

Don't you love the way Brian described his business as a 'local' business. Local being the interest his audience shares, not the location in which they reside.

How smart is that? Thinking local.

Brian can achieve this as it's his business. His people. His passion. His knowledge. He just uses his media to share those assets. It just so happens that people buy the products he believes in.

Where's Brian in your retail business? Who's the face and voice of your business? You know this is so important for smaller retailers? People buy from people. Brian's emotive selling process is a blend of his knowledge and his understanding of his audience. It's his commitment to serve.

A service clarified by the 'About Us' message "Our mission is to provide fountain pen enthusiasts with the most personal online shopping experience through comprehensive education, exemplary service, and products we believe in." A message you read on every page of Goulet Pen's website.

The video you just watched is 1 minute long. It tells you everything you need to know about Goulet Pens. Again, in just one minute. It compels you to stick around. You're in safe hands here. Just like Huckberry before, you know that Brian's business will be choosing the products you want. They'll be doing the leg work in providing product lines that you can have confidence in.

WHAT CAN GOULET PENS TEACH US ABOUT EMOTIVE SELLING?

We talk a lot about trust. Trust doesn't compel us to buy. I mentioned at the very beginning of this article (okay, it's more like War & Peace...)

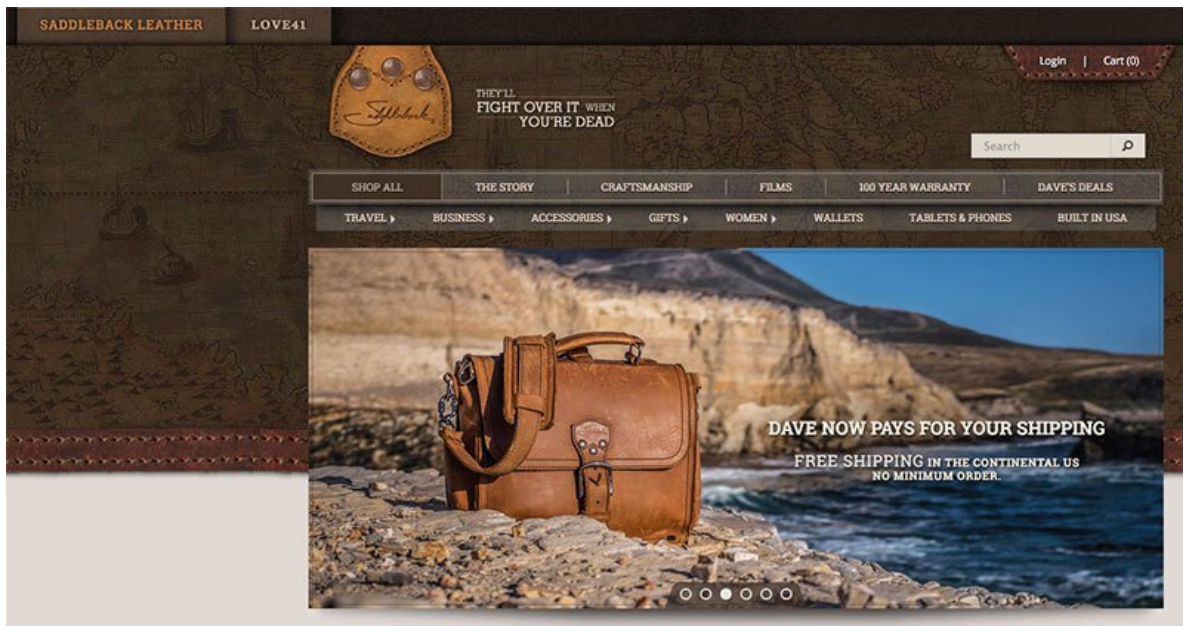
that you earn trust. Just the same way as you don't tell your audience that 'you're different'. Your audience will decide whether you're 'different' or not (and also, whether that even matters).

We have a tendency to throw all the elements of building trust into our About Us page. This shouldn't be the case. You shouldn't restrict the 'hey! this is us!' to the About Us page. You should introduce your people, your leaders throughout your product pages. Your people should be sharing their opinion. It presents your knowledge. Knowledge builds trust. Trust stops us hitting the back button and exploring the competition.

Consider how you can bring your people into the products you sell. Brian uses his blog, his weekly video (which is sometimes 1 hr long) to demonstrate what's new and what's important to fellow fountain pen enthusiasts. He's a man with a passion for his hobby. That's clear to all.

GET EMOTIVE - THE ACTION YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW - YOU'VE GOT TWO STORIES TO SHARE

We all need to inject a bit of Saddleback Leather into our retail businesses. Saddleback are a leather carry goods manufacturer based in Texas. Firstly, take a look at that tagline, 'They'll fight over it when you're dead'. Briefcases that outlast you. It brings a smile to your face doesn't it?



'Dave now pays for your shipping'. Who's Dave? Dave's the founder. Before you buy a Saddleback bag, you'll get to know Dave. You'll also get to know your fellow customers.

Saddleback are using 3 stories to shape your own story.

The business and the mission:

"We want to help welcome skilled manufacturing back to the States. American craftsmanship is a huge part of America's past and we're going to help make sure it is a huge part of our future."

"Saddleback is a people business cleverly disguised as a leather goods company. Don't get us wrong, we make a really, really good leather bag. We use only the world's best leather, minimize seams to prevent leaks and breaks, hold it together with high-quality thread and rivets that won't give out that are added by true-to-the-word craftspeople, and guarantee it all with a 100-year warranty. It's the last bag you'll ever need, it's going to turn heads wherever you take it, and your family will fight over it when you're dead."

The founder, Dave's back story:

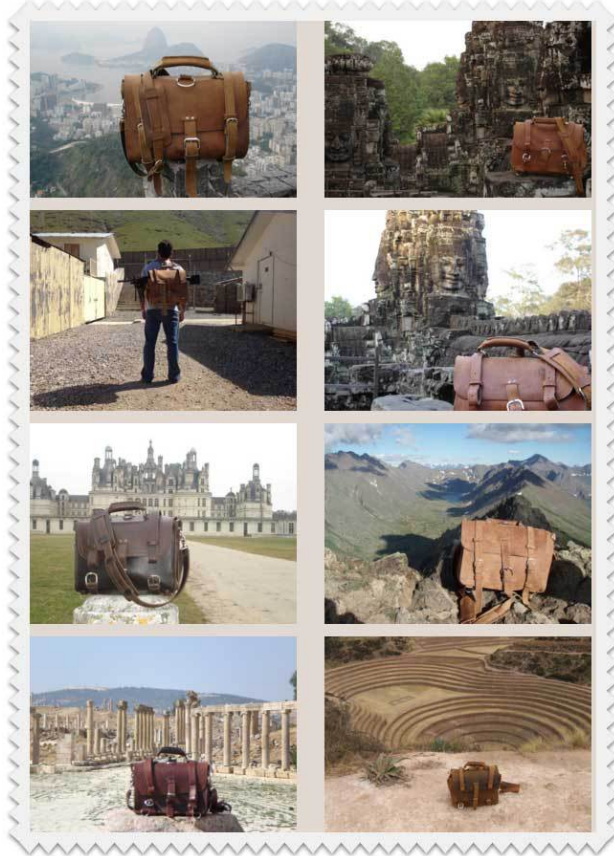
"A hot wife, two fabulous kids, 14 Rwandan sons and daughters, a cool dog and a crooked federale sent to kill me kind of makes up the

Saddleback story. And here's how it happened..." you can continue reading this intriguing back story [here](#)

Your fellow Saddleback owners:

This is a recurring theme you will have noticed. Fellow retailers using the power of Instagram and other image sharing platforms to build brand advocates.

These images shape the story that you want to show. They're authentic. Real customers that are out there using your products. No script. No models. Just real people. People you can associate with.



This is an enormous opportunity for online retailers to capitalise upon. Your customers doing the selling for you.

Seth Godin told us all we need to know about 'Tribes'. The emotive feeling of belonging to something.

Most retailers are ignoring this opportunity. They're not putting a face to their business. They're too automated in their approach. You can beat your competitors by doing what they're not.

The #saddlebackleathers hashtag on Instagram has 11,000+ posts. That's an awful lot of advertising to the friends and friends of your tribe.

It doesn't matter what product you're selling. Fashion, computing, any old thing. What matters is that people have a story they want to share. You have to make your product part of their story.

All this talk of storytelling? This is how you, as retailers, can take advantage of it. Let others help shape and share your own story.

Your audience, your customers have their phone by their side 24x7. You have to give them a reason, a justification, to become part of the story.

The products you sell have to matter. Your role, through your marketer, is to make those products matter.

YOU READY TO GET EMOTIVE?

I hope this article has helped you reconsider how you're marketing your eCommerce business right now. Startups, small businesses, larger corporations. These ideas I've shared only matter when you show the honest side to your business. The emotion isn't yours. It's your customers. This is about how you make people feel. Once your customer feels something, they're drawn in to your story. You've earned their time. They're willing to consider. It's emotion that compels people to buy.

So. Consider how people buy your own products. What's the emotive response that drives people to act?

- Are you selling premium items that require people to feel assured of their purchase?
- Are you selling selected items that require people to feel part of a community?
- Are you selling hobby items that require people to feel confident in your advice?
- Are you selling one-off products that require people to feel driven to purchase?
- Are you selling products people respond to through their senses?

Figure out how you want to make people feel. Then figure out how to market your products using your own unique form of emotive selling. From your homepage to the checkout to the confirmation email to the product in your customer's hands. Be there. Each step of the journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ian Rhodes". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "I" and a long, horizontal flourish at the bottom.

Ian Rhodes