

A photograph of a woman and three children sitting at a table in a restaurant, eating pizza. The woman is on the left, smiling and looking towards the children. The children are on the right, focused on their food. The table is set with a large pizza on a tray, several drinks, and a red bag. The background shows a window with a view of a city.

DEVELOPING YOUR BRAND STORY

PLAYBOOK 1

GRANDE
CHEESE COMPANY



IT STARTS WITH YOUR DREAM

In this guide, you will find a rich assortment of ideas, tips, talking points, and resources to help tell your story—a story that will help your business succeed and attract new customers. Consider it a field guide to bringing your story to life.

As a company that grew from a small business ourselves, we at Grande have an appreciation of the challenges you face and are here to support you in telling your story.

Everyone has their own unique story to share, and yours is just waiting to be told.

CREATING YOUR SUCCESS STORY



YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE



Stories are the simplest, oldest, most effective form of connecting and communicating.

Every person, every business has a story to tell. Our stories make us who we are. They differentiate us and make us interesting.

Creating a unique story for your restaurant helps set it apart from the competition and helps it become and stay top of mind for potential customers.

The tips in this guide are intended to help you craft a story that informs people about your restaurant in a way that can help attract new customers, increase repeat traffic, and build both your business and your overall brand.



HOW TO WRITE YOUR UNIQUE STORY

- Communicate to your customers what you are famous for
 - Identify the ways your dining experience differs from the competition, such as a new taste or unique style
 - Describe the benefits only your restaurant delivers
 - Personalize the connection your customers feel towards your business
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3 KEY ELEMENTS TO GREAT STORYTELLING

1. THEY ARE SIMPLE

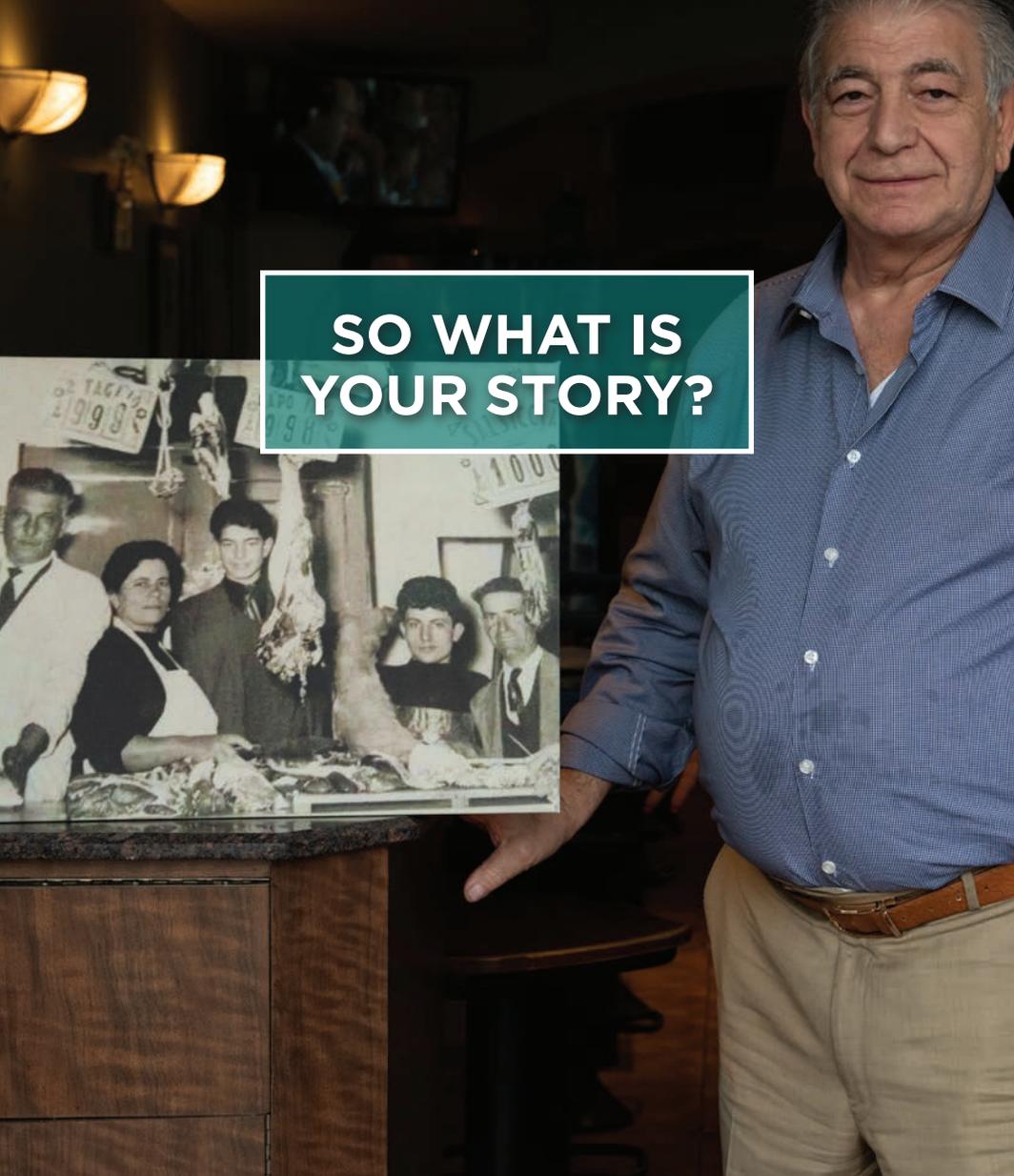
Good stories are easy to understand. The best stories are told in the same way that your customer speaks, with a clear, simple message.

2. THEY SPARK EMOTION

A good story makes people feel something. It compels people to laugh, empathize, maybe even to make them cry. It's what creates a personal connection they can remember and makes your business impossible to forget.

3. THEY ARE BELIEVABLE

A good story feels authentic. Whether you are telling a story that really happened or writing a brand new one, it is important to tell it in a way that your audience will recognize as true to the dining experience.

A man with grey hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt and khaki pants, stands on the right side of the frame. He is pointing his right hand towards a black and white photograph of his family in a butcher shop. The photo shows a woman in an apron, a young man, and several men in suits, with a large piece of meat hanging in the background. A green text box with white text is overlaid on the photo.

SO WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Your story doesn't need to be elaborate . It just has to be relatable and reflect the passion you put into your business. Your answers to the questions that follow will help you to identify your unique story.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

- How did you get into the restaurant business?
- Is your business a family business? If so, for how many generations?
- Is there a founder or relative who did something interesting or unique?
- How did you get to where you are today?
- Who or what inspired you or inspires you today?
- What does your restaurant do better than anyone else?
- Why should people choose your restaurant over others?
- What does quality mean to you?
- What is the most important thing you will not compromise on?
- What do you do differently than your competitors?

LOCAL QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose your location?
- What do you love most about your customers?
- What do you love most about your neighborhood, city, or state?
- What tastes, local flavors, or ingredients are unique to the area?
- Is there anything distinct about your building or neighborhood?
- Did you renovate the site? If so, how? Why was it important to you?
- Was your site part of a major moment in local history?
Was it used for something novel in the past?
- How do you support the community or local charities?

FOOD-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- What is your signature dish?
 - What makes your food so special?
 - What keeps your customers coming back?
 - Are there any ingredients that set you apart from your competitors?
 - What are you 'famous' for, and why?
 - How are you committed to offering a quality dining experience?
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TAKING YOUR STORY FURTHER

Now that you have established the core of your story, build on it by explaining your commitment to quality through the food you serve. Your dishes are the clearest proof of the high value you add to your customers' dining experience. Letting your customers and staff know about your commitment to quality is important because it can help you stand out from your competition.

Need some ideas on how to get started? Go online and check out the stories of restaurants you admire. While your final story will be different, you may gain some inspiration to begin writing yours.



WHY YOUR QUALITY STORY MATTERS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

25% of customers said they would not trade off food quality for better service or lower price

—*International Journal of Hospitality Management 2015*

41% of customers say fresh ingredients influence their decision when choosing a fast casual restaurant

—*Mintel 2015*

9 out of 10 consumers say food quality is an important factor in choosing a restaurant

—*National Restaurant Association's 2015 Restaurant Industry Forecast*

TAKE A LOOK AT GRANDE'S QUALITY STORY, THEN USE IT TO BOLSTER YOURS

- 1.** It takes great milk to make great cheese. Grande exceeds the highest standards of milk production in the nation, so your customers can feel confident they are getting only the best.
- 2.** Grande works with dedicated independent dairy producers who are also family businesses, like yours.
- 3.** Healthy cows produce higher quality milk. Grande's Field Services Team works side-by-side with dedicated producers every day to monitor our cows' hygiene, diet, fitness and health.
- 4.** Using time-honored approaches and the latest technology ensures consistency, which means quality the customer can count on. Grande's five cheese production facilities in Wisconsin incorporate the best of traditional Italian cheese-making techniques enhanced by the latest technology.
- 5.** Grande's authentic, traditional flavor brings out the best in your recipes, providing an authentic taste that keeps your customers coming back
- 6.** All of our products always have been—and will always be—100% natural.
- 7.** Your patrons will taste the difference between your food and the big chains'. Grande is a champion of the independent pizzeria and refuses to sell to national chains.
- 8.** You know it takes a great cheese to make a great pizza and so do your customers!
- 9.** Grande Cheese delivers consistent flavor and quality in every package, so your customers will be confident they will get the same pie they know.





YOUR FINAL DRAFT

Now that you know the basics of writing the unique story of your restaurant, take some time to craft the final version. Get some feedback from trusted friends, family and customers to make sure your message creates the feelings and emotions you want.

Once you are comfortable with your final brand story, you are ready to move onto the next step, sharing it with the world.



**HOW TO SHARE
YOUR STORY**



IN YOUR RESTAURANT

The Importance of Making a Good Impression

From the moment customers enter your restaurant, they are forming an opinion about who you are. It's all part of your story and your brand—the colors, the decorations, the language on the menu board, even what your staff is wearing. These are all places where you can begin to share and reinforce your story.

AT THE DOOR

- Do a regular walk around the perimeter of your business property. Take note of building improvements or changes that can be made to reinforce your brand. First impressions matter!
- Place your window clings or signage at eye level or near the door handle to ensure focus, and don't forget to clean the glass as needed.
- Encourage your staff to be upbeat and friendly while greeting customers and to deliver the same message and approach you would if greeting them yourself. How your staff greets your customers sets the tone for their entire dining experience.
- If there is a wait to be seated, provide something entertaining to read to make the time go by faster. A poster, placard or video screen is an ideal place to share and reinforce your story and get the customer ready for a memorable meal.
- Use your walls (if you have the space). Individually framed passages from your story can be read like chapters in a book while moving down a hallway or counter. Old photos or relevant images are an interesting way to help reinforce your messaging.
- Hang appealing photographs of your signature dishes to make customers hungry for them before they even sit down.





AT THE COUNTER

- Use decals on the glass of the counter to draw attention to different types of pizza, ingredients, specials or interesting facts about your food or story.
 - The food on display should always look fresh and appetizing. Remember, people eat with their eyes first.
 - Call out special offers with table tents, counter cards and point-of-sale materials. These provide short, clear messages that will prompt conversation.
 - Create a clean, modern look and the opportunity for more display with LCD screens. Not only are they great for presenting your menu, they can be programmed to stream videos, highlight upcoming events, identify your social media pages and tell your story in new and interesting ways.
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AT THE TABLE

- Once your customers are seated, give them time to read the menu, order drinks and relax. Engage them with your story by communicating it on table tents, the menu or placemats.
- Describe the items on your menu in a way that conveys who you are and what makes your place special. A friendly descriptor can be written with humor, passion or in any number of styles that best reinforces your brand personality.
- Encourage wait staff to reinforce your story when customers order. Don't forget to tie in the quality of your ingredients and how important that is to you. This can help your customers make menu selections while assuring them they are getting the best food possible.





TAKE OUT & DELIVERY

Printed takeout menus have the power to communicate more than just what's on your menu. Dedicate space to tell your customers what makes your place the best.

Give your patrons something to help you stay top of mind. It can be in the form of a flyer, a menu with your story included on it or a handout near the cash register.

Insert similar items into takeout bags, stickers, printed messages on boxes and bags as a reminder of what's so great about your place.

Consider a referral program to encourage customers to spread the word to friends and family and reward the ones that do.

Visit **Solutions@Work** at **grandcheese.com** to see how our experts can work with you to develop marketing pieces that will set your restaurant apart from the competition.



WORD-OF-MOUTH

“ Word-of-mouth ranks first as a driver for new restaurant trial with 60% saying they would try a restaurant based on friend/family recommendation. ”

— Pizza US, Oct. 2015, Mintel

Connecting with customers by sharing your story with them one-on-one...

- Is impactful and engaging
- Creates a warm connection between you and your customers
- Builds their confidence in you
- Encourages them to make repeat visits to your restaurant



**BUT REMEMBER,
YOU'RE ONLY
ONE PERSON**
—one extremely busy person

So, how do you create the same impact in a way that lets others do the talking for you?

You give them the tools to help spread word-of-mouth with the same passion you would deliver yourself. Let's start with your waitstaff and other employees who interact with your guests:

- Identify a clear message and explain how you want your staff to deliver it
 - Train your staff to understand exactly how you want your story to be shared with customers
 - Encourage your staff to ask questions and provide feedback during their training
 - Educate your staff about the natural, fresh, high quality ingredients you use and why quality matters
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YOUR STAFF IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Next, it's time to share your story with your community. There are many ways to get people talking about your restaurant and your story. Begin with these ideas:

1. ENCOURAGE YOUR CUSTOMERS TO LEAVE REVIEWS

Because customers tend to trust a third party much more than they trust brands (and your business is, in fact, a brand), it is important to make it easy for your patrons to leave reviews about their experience in your restaurant. In our next chapter, we will talk more about online review sites and the power of social media. For now, begin with using our template on **grandecheese.com** to make **Customer Comment Cards** for your restaurant.

2. GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

To give customers ongoing reasons to talk about you, consider joining local clubs or organizations, host events or create programs that help build awareness of your business for new customers. Other opportunities include partnering with local schools, giving away door prizes or feeding volunteers at local festivals. Try using our template to create a **Fundraising Program** on **grandecheese.com** so you can easily connect your restaurant to a local cause you support.

3. SHOW YOUR CUSTOMERS YOU CARE

The more your customers feel heard and appreciated by you and your restaurant, the more likely they are to give it a positive review. They will share with their friends, family and online, all of which can greatly help increase repeat traffic and attract new customers. Go the extra mile for your patrons with offers like gluten-free and vegetarian options and do everything you can to keep your current customers happy and eager to not only come back, but spread the word.



BRINGING YOUR STORY TO LIFE

Hopefully some of these ideas will help you share your restaurant's story. Everyone has a unique story to share, so even if you never thought of your restaurant as having "a story," we assure you, it does, and the task of weaving it into your business is not as difficult as it may sound. Determining and describing your restaurant's story is important because it can help grow your business and win new customers.

Think of it this way, if you were a hungry patron looking for somewhere new to eat, which would you be more likely to try, a place you know nothing about, or a restaurant with a personal story that tells you up front that they are committed to quality, and the journey they took to bring their dream to life?

Once you've decided on the story you want to tell and how you want to tell it in your restaurant and through word-of-mouth, you can move on to the next step: telling your story online.

The Next Chapter

The Internet and social networks like Facebook and Twitter are valuable resources for any independent restaurant owner. Using them allows people to discover your business, read your quality story, and form an opinion about your restaurant before they ever walk through the door. They can even interact with you and your business one-on-one. Look for the next chapter in our series coming soon; utilizing social media can mean turning hungry strangers into loyal new patrons of your restaurant.



Grande is here for you, committed to helping your business grow. Any time you would like more information about our cheese or business-building solutions, contact your Grande Sales Associate or call our customer hotline at **1-800-8-GRANDE (1-800-847-2633)**.

We also encourage you to register on our website for access to exclusive content only available to 100-Percenter: grandecheese.com/login