

Every Environment Tells a Story

Every day, your church stewards thousands of moments of truth. Every time a member talks to a neighbor, someone drives by the church facility, a ministry email goes out, a pastor's business card is left on a desk, some interaction on behalf of the church has transpired. Every time these events happen, the church's vision grows brighter or dims in the tiniest little increments.

The leader's role is to crank up the wattage.

Tell your story in every environment with compelling consistency.

THE QUICK SUMMARY [Unique](#), by Phil Cooke

Today's culture is more connected than any time in history, but all of this connectivity comes with a price. We live in a world that's become cluttered, distracted, and disrupted by social media, with the average person receiving as many as 5,000 messages a day in one form or another. If you're a pastor, nonprofit leader, artist, filmmaker, entrepreneur, or creative professional in this hyper-connected, highly distracted world, how do you get your unique idea, project, or vision on the radar of the people who need to respond?

In *Unique*, Phil Cooke, a highly respected media producer and consultant, addresses both the challenges and the opportunities of branding and social media in the 21st century. If you have a vision or message to share with the world, *Unique* provides a blueprint to cut through the clutter, communicate your story, and impact your audience.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

To maximize your ability to connect, you must invest time, mental energy, and resources to really discover and articulate your uniqueness — your vision, your essence, **your story**.

Stories inspire and capture imagination. Stories connect on personal and emotional levels. They help us develop relational connections.

That's why it is so important for your communication toolbox to say who you uniquely are— what differentiates your church from the crowd.

The combination of the right words with powerful imagery compels engagement, insight, and memorability.

Most churches haven't developed their story and leveraged great design to share it. Don't miss the opportunity to tell your church's story with design so you can really extend your reach. Shouldn't the church connect and build relationships in every way possible?

At its core, branding is simply the art of surrounding a product, organization, or person

with a powerful and compelling story. At its most basic level, branding provides answers to the simple human need to differentiate one thing from another.

The goal of branding is to win the hearts and minds of the largest audience possible and imprint an indelible story around your vision.

The power of these stories and the hold they exert over our lives is remarkable, and many would say the power of story is embedded in our genetic makeup. From the ancient days of the Israelite storytellers who recited the epic chronicles of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the writers, preachers, and filmmakers of today, we are a story-driven people, and we use stories to make sense of life.

Stories work because we want to experience the emotions, feelings, and passions of others who have encountered the challenges we face each day.

During Jesus' short time of ministry on earth, He had to teach a message that wouldn't simply change people during His lifetime, but transform the world for ages to come. If you had faced that challenge, what would you have done?

Jesus did what many pastors in that position would probably consider a career killer: **He started telling stories.** Most of Jesus' stories were just everyday people doing everyday things. They weren't particularly exciting, romantic, or even thrilling.

Stories drill deeply into your brain and explode later with meaning. Sometimes the meaning comes when you least expect it. Stories impact audiences because each person interprets the story in light of his or her own personal situation and experience. As a result, the impact is far greater than a simple object lesson or teaching session.

In many cases, you can interchangeably use the words "brand," "story," "identity," and, sometimes, "reputation." Branding is about building trust and loyalty and extending your relationships far beyond a single transaction.

Stories are the central focus of the art of branding.

Phil Cooke, [Unique](#)

A NEXT STEP

How well does your brand tell your story?

Here's a question for you: What's the Nike brand all about? If you said "Just Do It" you would be incorrect – that's their tagline. Their brand is really their mission – "Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world." (By the way, the * is further explained by Nike as "If you have a body you are an athlete.")

To help understand how your brand tells your story, [watch this 5 ½ minute video from Nike](#) with your leadership team.

After watching the video, discuss these questions with your team:

- How much more important, and eternal, is the mandate of the church than a shoe company?
- How well defined and well lived, and resultantly effective, is our church at telling our story?
- Does our story create movement and reflect the heart of God for the church or is it just words on a website or worship service bulletin?

Many **pastors tend to be skeptical of investing time and resources** into working on statements of identity like mission or values or taglines, especially when things around church “feel” like they are going well enough.

When *any* organization lives their mission, the results are seen – *and life change becomes possible*. The marketing video from Nike sums up why, for them, **people living out their mission is more important than people knowing their tagline**. And shows how good they actually are at living it, *better than most churches*.

What are three stories of life change that capture the essence of your church’s brand? How does your church’s mission statement move beyond generic statements to reflect these examples of your unique calling?

With the Gospel at the center of everything we do, the church, by its nature, is a message-centric organization. Jesus, the greatest story-teller of all time knew, before science showed us, that people are simply hard-wired to respond to story and images. And today’s world is becoming ever-increasingly visual, with selfies, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Consider this: there are hundreds of little moments of truth - touchpoints of connectivity - that happen each day.

Each of these are opportunities to share the message of the gospel. Are you going to make them or miss them?

Just by being more intentional with your brand, you really can capture more “makes” than “misses.”

When the communication gets cluttered, tell your story in every environment with compelling consistency.

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*This is part of a weekly series posting content from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix** Book Summaries for church leaders. SUMS Remix takes a practical problem in the church and looks at it with three solutions; and each solution is taken from a different book. As a church leader you get to scan relevant books based on practical tools and solutions to real ministry problems, not just by the cover of the book. Each post will have the edition number which shows the year and what number it is in the overall sequence. (SUMS provides 26 issues per year, delivered every other week to your inbox).*

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