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# Storyminers gives birth to word of mouth advertising

August 22, 11:54 PM Atlanta Small Business Examiner Sam Dobrow

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In 2002 when Mike Wittenstein started Storyminers, a boutique customer strategy studio, he wasn't satisfied with being just another marketing firm. According to Mike, the old ways of selling and telling designed to manipulate customers into wanting your product are gone. Cookie cutter approaches to consulting like "best practices" ignore the changing dynamics of today's consumers. Successful companies with the most desired brands create customer experiences that engage their customer and deliver truly emotional outcomes. Mike was determined that Storyminers would help clients create an experience customers would be raving about - customer experiences that give birth to the most compelling and cost-effective form of advertising, word of mouth!



Mike has always been a forward thinking, innovative, visionary. In 1992, he cofounded Galileo, one of the earliest Internet marketing agencies and later joined IBM's strategy practice. At IBM, he helped architect the "innovation center" concept on a global basis. As the Internet economy emerged, Mike recognized that this technology was giving people new choices which were leading to new behaviors in purchasing and brand loyalty. New channels for selling emerged from Internet sales to self-service kiosks but the customer experience wasn't always what people expected. When the experience wasn't up to par, the customer went looking elsewhere. The consumer was now calling the shots - and that is where Storyminers enters the picture.

In the early days, the Storyminers methodology was looked in Mike's head, but over

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locked in Mike's head, but over the years he formalized his approach, refined his tools for

analyzing the customer experience, and excelled at redesigning the customer experience around what the customer really wants. Making his clients successful can't stop with good design, it has to be implemented. Change is hard to implement in any company, so Storyminers develops tools that help employees and management visualize the change from the customer perspective. When stakeholders see the future they are much more willing to embrace it. Clients report revenues increasing 200% to 600% over several years in addition to increased profit margins.



Mike is a testament to his own methodology in that most of his customers come from referrals. To ensure his customers have an experience they rave about, he focuses on overdelivering in three key areas: intent, desired outcomes, and conditions of satisfaction. For small businesses this usually translates into delivering value in the form of new revenue streams, cost savings, and operational leverage. Mike describes his customer as "A fun leader who wants to differentiate his/her brand through the customer experience and cares about people. They tend to be good operators, smart, have a healthy ego, and are good collaborators. Companies tend to be in the service business of retail, entertainment, hospitality, healthcare, professional/financial services and have sales in the range of \$5M to \$500M ."

Although these are challenging economic times, Mike is very bullish on the economy. There are more wants and needs now than ever before. Businesses have an opportunity to listen to their customers and create value in new ways that will lead to the unassailable brands of tomorrow. He sees fundamental changes that are creating real opportunities greater than the imaginary ones of the dot-com run-up in the 1990's.

Some things in business never change. One of those things is the need for agility and rapid adoption of change. Mike is once again growing his toolbox with some innovative approaches to further improve rapid adoption of new customer experiences. He is experimenting with the latest and greatest video technologies to present compelling visions of future customer experiences... stay tuned!

Mike graduated from the University of Florida with a degree in foreign language and culture and later earned his MBA from Thunderbird School of Global Management. Mike speaks 4 languages, has represented the US in exchange programs to Brazil and the former USSR. When he's not working, Mike enjoys woodworking, hiking, and family travel.

Visit Storyminers on the net at [www.storyminers.com](http://www.storyminers.com) or schedule Mike to speak at your next business event [www.mikewittenstein.com](http://www.mikewittenstein.com).

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