

# Copywriting UNIVERSITY

*Michael Senoff Copywriting Interview Series*



**How To Effectively Use Story Telling  
In Your Copy To Sell More Of Your  
Ideas, Products Or Services**

Michael Senoff Interviews Hollywood Screenwriter

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

Founder & CEO: [www.hardtfindseminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com)

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## *Story-telling Advice From A Hollywood Screen-writer*

# **How To Effectively Use Story Telling In Your Copy To Sell More Of Your Ideas, Products Or Services**

Ruben, a screen writer and a teacher of screen writing skills, was in the process of creating an information product on how to write compelling stories, screenplays, or stage plays. He was basing the content of his product on his own personal experience, various teachings from his mentors over the years, seminars, and courses.

As Ruben was creating his product, he realized that his techniques not only applied to screen writing, but many other areas such as:

- Creating more effective marketing and sales presentations.
- Helping teachers to present their lesson plans more effectively.
- Teaching lawyers how to present their cases better.
- Telling stories to children.
- Improving personal relationships.
- ... and the list goes on because telling and listening to stories are such an integral part of our daily lives!

Ruben presents the parts of a successful screenplay. First, you have to have an idea for a story. After you have a story, the screenplay becomes your story in writing – what the audience will see and hear. He explains that the screenplay is a “blueprint” and gives us some simple examples.

Listen as he discusses what the best structure is for any story and presents several elements essential to create a successful, compelling story. Understanding story structure will become important as you continue to listen to this interview.

Ruben goes on to teach some other keys to creating a good story. There must be a conflict, whether it's an outer or inner conflict. An outer conflict may be another character. An inner conflict may be a character's self doubts or fears. The writer must make sure that the audience will care about the story and stay to see the end.

For example, Ruben gives a list of great techniques to make the main character more identifiable to the audience. This is the key to a successful story.

Subsequently, Ruben reveals that the same principles used to create a great screenplay can be applied to just about any facet of business or personal life.

For example, in a business situation where perhaps you are a sales person trying to make a sale to a potential buyer, you can become what Ruben terms “a Dramatic Strategist.” This involves a mind shift that makes both you, the sales person as well as the potential client both “characters” in a story. In fact, Ruben suggests that you keep in mind that each of you would be the main character in your own lives – each of you with a different goal.

When there are two characters, there may be a conflict. In a selling situation, things such as price, terms, and conditions can become the conflicts.

Ruben suggests that you will be a more successful sales person or marketer if you are aware of both your role as a protagonist in your own drama paradigm and your client’s role as the protagonist in his or her own drama paradigm. Further, you should not try to hide or minimize the conflicts of the situation. Instead, identify and resolve these conflicts with the client.

Make yourself identifiable to your client, just as an audience should identify with the main character of a story. Develop the trust and rapport with the client so that he or she sees you as an authority and that there is a feeling of affinity between the two of you.

This interview really presents a unique approach to understanding human nature and dealing with conflicts in a very imaginative way. I know you’ll enjoy it! This recording is 46 minutes.

START:

Ruben: As a salesperson or marketer, the more that you are able to open your mind into the dramatic possibilities of this person’s life that you’re trying to sell to, and that can be done by asking them questions. “Do you have children?” “Are you married?” “How long have you been doing your current job?” or “How did you become interested in marketing?” “Have you ever overcome any major obstacles in your life?”

The more information you have as a person who’s trying to sell something or persuade somebody, the more you have to work with, and by simple aligning it in a way that they can identify, in the same way that they identify with watching Law and Order that night, they will subliminally fall into line in a way that they trust you. They trust you in a sense that they understand, “He has a goal. He’s achieving it. I have a goal. I’m achieving it.” And, if you do it right, you create a relationship where you are the authority. Then you can

create a client that will buy from you repeatedly as opposed to making just one sale.

I hope that's the goal everybody, but the same can be said of a trial attorney trying to persuade the jury or a teacher trying to teach a class or a speaker trying to persuade their audience or a husband trying to save his marriage, or a parent trying to raise her kids, or a boss trying to manage his employees.

### *Music*

*Hi, this is Michael Senoff with [HardtoFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardtoFindSeminars.com). Here is a very, very interesting interview I did with a gentleman named Ruben. Ruben was a Hollywood screenplay writer and teacher, and he contacted me with the concept about screenplays and developing story lines for huge motion pictures that you see in Hollywood. And, he actually worked for Cameron Crowe reviewing all the screenplays that came in. But, his concept was designing a successful screenplay and using effective use in story telling, and it all perfectly relate to copywriting and selling any of your products through the use of the written word. I think you'll be able to find some parallels that you can use and interject into your copy that will make it even more powerful than it is now. Enjoy!*

Michael: First, let me ask you this. Your screenplay product, are you actively selling it right now?

Ruben: No, in fact I'm currently writing it. I have taught classes for eight years using the things that I've learned and have applied, and it's all just literally a matter of putting it down on paper which I'm currently doing.

But, if you keep on reading further down in the letter, that is my major product and it has a huge market. I mean, how many times have you seen a movie and thought, "I can do better than that." Or people just sitting around having dinner and say, "I have a good idea for a movie."

Michael: You probably know about the marketplace and the desire for wanting to develop a screenplay, and you hear of Hollywood, people are flooded with screenplays, but so few of them get chosen.

Ruben: Well, there's thousands and thousands and thousands of screenplays registered each year with the Writer's Guild, and that doesn't include the people who simply write screenplays don't register them, and it doesn't include the people who have an idea for a screenplay and think they could write one if they only knew how.

There's a huge market, but as I mentioned in the letter, one of the things that I found in writing this manual for people with ideas for screenplays is that it's applicable to other areas as well. That's what has me so excited.

This system can show teachers how to teach dramatically or lawyers how to dramatically win a case. I'm reading from the letter now, business people how to make a dramatic presentation that increases sales or how to dramatically improve your relationships, or how to dramatically tell stories to your kids, and, even in marketing, how to dramatically market your product or service to make.

Now, in order for you to understand this, I think it might be best to just show only you a couple of the concepts that I have as it applies to screenwriting or telling a story which will help you to understand some of the concepts and how easily they are to grasp. Then, we can segue into other applications and you might see the potential. Does that sound okay?

Michael: That sounds great.

Ruben: So, for example, imagine you have an idea for a story or a screenplay and you're not sure what to do, but you do know, for example, that a story's made up of different scenes.

Michael: I want to interrupt you. So, when you say screenplay, I'm thinking in my head, "Hey, I saw this movie. I want to write a movie. The screenplay is actually almost the first step in getting the potential movie sold." It's like your resume for a movie, right?

Ruben: Exactly. Before you have a screenplay finished, you have to have an idea for a screenplay. That idea can usually be about anything, and I've heard every type of idea there is, and you can have an idea from your own personal life, your own experiences, or your own imagination – just make something up.

Michael: So, the screenplay is the story in writing?

Ruben: The screenplay is the story in writing. It's like a play made for the screen. When you look at a screenplay it's comprised of basically what you see and what you hear on the screen.

Screenplays are different from novels because in a novel, you can have a character talking about the history of a tablecloth for three or four pages. You can have the inner memories of a character. On a screenplay, you don't see inner memories or you don't travel back in time in the person's mind to hear why they're afraid of what's under the bed. You simply have to show it. It's a blue print of what you see and what you hear and that's what a screenplay is made up of.

In order to come up with a screenplay or just learn how to write one, first you have to come up with an idea. When people think of an idea, they think of in terms of movies. You know that a movie is made up of individual scenes, and for the purpose of this conversation, I'm not going to get into the actual format of the screenplay or how it's positioned on a page.

Michael: What if we did a real simple one like I'm going to get up out of my chair and go get some milk out of the refrigerator?

Ruben: All right, well, first of all you would use Michael as the name of the character if that's what you wanted to call yourself, and you'd simply say in terms of action, "Michael gets up from his chair and walks to the refrigerator. He opens it and pulls out a gallon of milk."

Michael: And, that's it?

Ruben: That's it.

Michael: So, the words are creating the pictures.

Ruben: Yes, you don't say, "Michael was afraid as he walked towards the refrigerator. He was unsure of what might be inside." That's the actors job. So, the writing is simply write down what they see, and if there's any dialogue, what they hear. "Michael gets up and walks toward the refrigerator, and then he says, 'Man, I'm thirsty for juice.' He opens the refrigerator and pulls out a gallon of milk. Uh-oh, just milk."

What I want to talk about is not so much that, but how the structure of the story happens because that's what everything I think derives from is the structure of the story.

We all know that a story has a beginning, and a middle and an end. You may have heard before that stories have three acts. We all remember fragments of things we might have learned in a creative writing class in high school or watching Inside the Actor's Studio on TV. We think we have a little bit of a working knowledge of telling a story. We all know jokes that we tell. We all can tell stories about what happened the night of our senior prom. These stories all have certain elements that are shared.

Whether we know it or not, humans have a basic structure already in their head when they tell a story. I don't know where this came from. It may have just been from prehistoric man sitting around the campfire talking about the day's hunt, but somewhere along the line, we figured out with language how to tell stories to each other.



We do it all day long. We come home from work and we tell our wife what happened that day at the office, or we tell our kids what happened when we met your mother.

Michael: Or, when we're kids and we're read to. I've got two young kids, and I've thought about that a lot. I've got a two year old and a five year old. I don't know about the prehistoric cavemen. They weren't reading their kids books, but certainly now you read your kids books and I think that has a lot to do with it too.

Ruben: Yeah, I think so. I think you're right. I mean, if you ask your two year old, if he's speaking, he can tell you and he can tell you in a basic structure a story. "I went outside, and there's a dog. Dog bow-wows, and scared me." That's a story in a few sentences.

So, inherent in almost everything we do, whatever interaction there is in fact just phone conversations, is following a dramatic structure beautifully with introduction and we have exchanges happen and little tiny scenes as we go from subject to subject.

Now, the one thing that is really basic and is a good way to jump into this thing is with the character. Every story has a character, one main character. That's their main point of view. In your story, it would be Michael going to the refrigerator or doing whatever he's doing. With Indiana Jones, it's him. I mean, every story has a main character.

So, as somebody who wants to come up with an idea, you have to come up with a main character, and it can be anything. It can be an alien or a snail or a serial killer or a dad with two kids.

Now, the secret about characters is that all characters must want something. If they don't want something, it's a boring story, and nobody wants to hear it. So, you have to decide what does your character want? You can start off with a simple sentence. "My character, Bob, wants blank."

Now, what Bob wants has to be an object or an action. In other words, it has to be something visible, something that we can show on the screen, on a stage. "My character Bob wants to win the trophy." "My character Bob wants to catch the killer." "My character Bob was to get married."

Michael: So you can show those images to the audience.

Ruben: It has to be something you can show and by starting off with this very simple sentence, "My character blank wants blank." You're on your way. It could be

something you can show the character getting or achieving. So, you have to be able to depict it.

Now, for example, a lot of times when people are starting off, they get too vague. They say, “My character wants happiness.” Or “My character wants love.” “My characters wants victory.” Well, those are nice sentiments, and scenes, movies can have those elements in it, but you have to be so specific you can show it on the screen.

For example, what is happiness for Bob? Happiness for Bob is different than happiness for Lisa. Perhaps for Bob, happiness is riding in a hot air balloon with a bottle of champagne.

Michael: I think I see where you’re going, and maybe I’ll just play a game and see if I can jump what it is. The more specific your goals are, the easier it is to get them, and there’s the parallel, right?

Ruben: Absolutely. So, once they get it or they don’t get it, which is also another option. You can have the character want a goal and fail. That’s where tragedy comes from. Then, you can at least depict and the audience subconsciously will know they failed in their quest.

Michael: How about the movie Rocky One?

Ruben: Perfect example. I’m glad you brought that up. Rocky One very specifically stated his goal in the first film. He did not want to win the fight. If you remember Rocky One, he said, “I only want to be standing when that final bell rings.” That was his goal.

Michael: Did he say that at the beginning?

Ruben: He said that early on. He just wanted to be a fighter. He just wanted to fight, but he wanted to fight the heavyweight champion of the world, and he knew, and I don’t remember how early on he said, but the goal was very specific. He didn’t think he could win. He thought he was a bum. He just wanted to be standing when the final bell rang. That was something that’s very easy to depict on screen, and at the end of that film, the final bell rang. Rocky was still standing, and the story was over.

Michael: I never knew that’s what he really wanted, and now that you tell me that, and that’s what the ending was, it makes the story that much better.

Ruben: Oh, much better. Not only is it better, but it was so over. In other words, the goal was so achieved that in the end, Apollo even said to him, “There’s not going to be a rematch.” And, Rocky said, “I don’t want one.”

Now, this was before anybody knew this film was going to be a success and before they knew there was going to be a Rocky Two. That was so successful, they had to come up with Rocky Two, and then what is the goal in Rocky Two? So, this time it is to win the championship. It's not just to be standing. It's to win it.

How do you depict somebody winning the championship? And, the way that they depicted it is winning wasn't just him standing there. If you remember, it was holding up the belt. It was the belt.

In Rocky Three, it was the American flag. It had to be the American flag draped over him. That may have been Rocky Four, but in other words, there was a specific visual that showed the character getting his goal. The more specific you can get, the better. So, you can show it, or maybe even not show it.

I mean, it's possible to fail, but you have to be able to depict it in such a way that the audience without being told knows that he failed or he got it. He got his goal.

So, that's important. That character must have the desire. Now, this desire becomes the character's goal. That becomes the thrust of the plot is the reason that the character acts because the audience, the carrot at the end of the stick of this goal is what keeps us watching this movie or reading the book, or in terms of the real world, reading the sales letter or listening to the lecture or the speech or the presentation.

In other words, the reason the audience is watching or spending this time with whoever made this story is to discover whether the character will obtain his goal or not. That's what we're doing. That's why we spend two hours in a movie or we read 500 pages of a novel. Will Rocky win the fight? Will Indiana Jones find the treasure? Will Tom Hanks get off the island or will he save Private Ryan? Will Flodo destroy the ring? Will ET go home?

In the real world, these are applied to will the students get the answers to the upcoming tests and get an A? Will the business client get the product or service they need? Will a child hear a story that involves and captivates them? Will the marketing target pull out their credit card and pick up the phone? That's how they apply in the real world. That's the desired outcome.

Now, once we have a goal, and the main character wanting to achieve that goal, and willing to take the actions in that direction, can we give him a goal that is inconsequential? It's not a good idea, and here's another secret about

goals. They must be life-changing. Here's where a lot of beginning writers make a mistake.

My character wants to go to the school dance, or my character wants to go to Disneyland. It doesn't do anything. There's no consequence if they don't get it, and there's no consequence if they do get it. A good goal needs to change the characters life if they achieve it, but the best goals are life changing even if they don't achieve it.

In other words, we're on a journey to changing the life of this character, and it can be for better or it can be for worse, but major change is coming. So, careful selection of a life changing goal is necessary.

Michael: Is that a hidden desire of everyone? Is that what is so appealing?

Ruben: Well, we kind of look to characters and stories because they do reflect us. We identify with stories and some ways, a science fiction movie, we know we're never going to be in that type of situation, but we like to live vicariously through characters. That's part of what we do. We like to remove ourselves from the problems of our own lives and escape into a good book or a movie or even songs can be transporting if they're done correctly.

A good goal could be life changing. It not only has to have changes that are good or bad, but if you're really creative, you can almost find changes that are both. In other words, here's one. I want to care for my dying mom. Well, there's a journey towards some change that's both good and bad. There's going to be some bad when your mom dies, and there's going to be some good in the fact that your goal is to care for her while she was dying.

Or, I want to turn in my fellow police officers. That was the basis of Serpico. There's some good to that, and there's some bad out of that. There's definitely life changing either way you go.

Or, I want to be a martyr for freedom, remember Braveheart. He got some good life changes and some bad life changes out of that one.

So, carefully select a goal, "Bob wants to blank", and 'blank' is an action or object he wants to achieve, will cause the audience to ask this question throughout the story, "Will Bob get his goal?" That's the spine. That's what they're watching for, and that's what they're going to the end of the story for.

Michael: Let's do an example. We're talking about some things, and what kind of storyline do you think you could make for this phone call? Will the listener learn how creating screenplays can teach them how to relate a system you've

learned in your own business or in their own life through multiple applications?

Ruben: Well, it depends on actually what specific area we're talking about. For example, in the purpose of a screenplay, will the listener learn how to tell a story? Will the listener learn how to write a story? If they're a teacher listening to this, will the teacher learn how to present their lesson plan dramatically? Will the salesperson be able to persuade the buyer? Will the husband be able to save his marriage in terms of communications and relationships? The areas are varied.

Once we have a goal, and a main character wanting to achieve that goal, and we're going to take the action in that direction, to simply give them desire would be very boring as I mentioned.

For example, "I need a hundred dollars. Oh, well, here it is on the ground. How lucky am I?" There's something missing there. We need an important ingredient that is we have to make it difficult – the more difficult, the better. We need conflict and that's the second major area of the character is conflict.

Conflict is the juice of drama. It's the nectar of soiree. We need it to hold our interest. We need it to lead us along, to excite us, to fuel us, to motivate us, to teach us. Conflict is anything that makes it harder for the character to reach his goal, anything.

He's broke. He's wounded. Nobody believes him. He's out of bullets. In fact, I was thinking of a wonderful action film, for those who like action films. They are the most popular genre of film. Die Hard – it's almost perfect as an action story in the way that conflict is used. You have a guy who has limited ammunition, who doesn't know the way that the building is made. He's bare foot. He doesn't know what the bad guys look like. He becomes wounded with glass in his foot. It's beautifully layered with a bunch of different conflicts.

Other films that use it very well are the Abyss if you ever saw that, wonderful conflict. Speed has wonderful conflict. They're all great examples of it.

Michael: So, let me ask you. The success of the movie, you have the screenplay first. So, the person writing the screenplay, it's got to have those elements in the screenplay or does the director and producer know about these elements to put them into his screenplay if a screenplay doesn't have it to make a successful movie?

Ruben: It has to be on the page first. In fact, there's an old saying, "If it's not on the page, it ain't on the stage." In fact, many bad films resulted because too many

cooks were in the kitchen trying to add their own input, and it was already in the screenplay. A director comes on or a producer or even more insultingly, business – what they call ‘suits’ in the industry – studio executives who are just these young guys with MBAs, know nothing about writing stories, but they’re just looking at ways to make more money at the box office. “We need some explosions here guys.” “We need some naked ladies.”

Now, the conflicts that I have been mentioning that are very easy to grasp are the outer conflicts. They’re outer because they’re physical. You can see them. There’s also a whole are of inner conflicts which is things that you don’t necessarily see on the screen, but the actor can reveal such as doubts and fears, phobias, insecurities, beliefs.

Great character stories use this. You see it perhaps more often in novels, in plays, but there are a lot of great films. American Beauty is one. As Good As it Gets with Jack Nicholson, Dead Poets Society – there’s a lot of dialogue and inner conflicts that are revealed, but don’t necessarily involve bad guys with guns.

So, the secret is to use conflicts, both outer and inner, but the best conflict comes from other characters. Remember the secret that each character in a story wants something different. That’s the key. Your main character wants something. Every other character also has to want something. You make the characters want different things, and your job is to mix it up.

Tom Hanks on an island, there will be other characters in this story. All of them want something. So, you have to mix it up, and out of that, naturally will come conflict. You don’t even have to work at it. If one character wants a promotion, and the other character wants that character to get fired, and another character wants to embezzle from the company, you have conflict in there because everybody wants something different.

So, those are two main areas, character and conflict, that will give the listener a basic idea of the spine of the story. There are a couple of other areas that we could get into such as setting and relationship, but what I want to get into I think you might enjoy more is I want to talk a little bit about why an audience should care.

In other words, how can we make an audience or a group of business people or a classroom or a marketing client or our own children care about the story we’re presenting. You’re creating a two hour movie with a screenplay, or you’re creating a 16 page marketing sales letter or you’re creating a ten minute speech in front of the company. How can you make the audience care enough to listen to tune in and not tune out for the duration of the story that you laid out?

The way to make them care is to make them route for the main character. They have to want to follow this character through the story. So, how do we hold their interest? How do we make them care?

Well the answer is by making the main character identifiable. I'm going to explain this. We have to, as an audience, identify with the character. We have to make them care, and there are five ways to do it.

I use what I call the "Y word", Y as in the letter 'Y', but also as kind of a double meaning. "Y" should we care? All these words have Y's at the end which are easy to remember.

The first way to make an audience care about your character is jeopardy. You put your main character in danger right off the bat. Someone's trying to kill them – Indiana Jones or James Bond. Or he's on a sinking ship. This will grab the audience's attention and it will subliminally tells them that this is the guy to keep their eyes on. So, right off the bat, at the beginning of your screenplay, put your character in danger.

The second way is empathy. You make us feel sorry for him. You use pity. You start off the story his dog just died. He lost his job, or he found his wife cheating. His car's been stolen. This can be done in the first scene, and it will serve to make the audience identify with the main character.

The third way is likeability. This is the easiest one, by the way. You just make the character likeable. He lends money to his friends. He helps an old lady with her grocery. He makes a little kid at another table smile. He makes us, the audience, laugh with a funny line. People will route for and carry about those that we like. This is why Tom Hanks, Jack Nicholson, Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Meg Ryan to use a woman, they all have an advantage before the movie even starts because we already like them, and we generally like their characters.

But, in the real world, the same can be said of Zig Zigler or Dr. Phil or Jack LaLanne. These are people who we like, and in liking them, we're going to tune into them. We're going to route for them. We're going to want to listen to what they have to say.

In fact, this is kind of interesting to me because Christopher Reeve, who passed way, Michael J. Fox, are two guys who were very, very successful because of their likeability who had the unique experience of going from character identifiability through likeability to evolving and being even more identifiable through empathy, through pity. They're both great spokesmen.

Michael: Yeah, with their situations. That's right.

Ruben: With Parkinson's Disease and with his spinal cord injury.

Michael: That did make them great spokesmen because people liked them.

Ruben: We like them. We will listen to them. If they come on our TV set, we want to hear what they have to say. People do listen to them, and they're using, not perhaps consciously, but using likeability and empathy to create a character identifiability to that. And, it works great for spokespeople. It works for almost any endeavor. But in the purpose of this conversation, it helps to make your character in your story more identifiable.

We have jeopardy, empathy, likeability. The fourth one is authority. So, the character is the best at what they do. We start our story by showing them to be the best cop, the best teacher, the best racecar driver, the best parent around. This is enough to get us to identify with that character. We're attracted to excellence, and it's very easy to show somebody being really great at what they do.

The fifth way is affinity. In other words, we make the character like the audience. We make them have an affinity to each other. The character is one of us. The character is an every man. You show the character being a struggling parent, trying to pay his bills. He can't find his car keys, and he's late for his doctor's appointment.

Tom Hanks is the king of this. At one time, it was Kevin Costner. They were every man. We like those people who remind us of us.

Now, in the real world, as a businessperson trying to make a sale or a marketer trying to gain confidence, this is used extensively. We do it all the time. "I know of what I speak because I was just like you, and look at me now. Buy my course." It works.

So, you don't have to use just one of these tools. The more the better. If you use all five, great. Harrison Ford, Tom Hanks, Tom Cruise – some of the biggest stars in Hollywood use all of them right off the bat, at the beginning of their films.

In the real world, there's only one person that I can think of who embodies all five of these. That's Muhammad Ali. He was constantly in jeopardy in the ring. Empathy – we empathize with him because of his Parkinson's Disease. Likeability- he's extremely likeable and personable and he was funny throughout his life. Authority – he was so good at what he did, we still call him The Greatest. He was definitely the best at what he did. And, affinity, for



the African American and Muslim communities, he's still a great uniter, and people want to feel like they're like him. At one time, he was the most recognized person in the world. I believe that some of those reasons was because he had each of those wonderful character identifiability. He had all of those traits.

Most recently, in terms of film, The Passion of the Christ came out, Mel Gibson used all five of these tools for his portrayal of Jesus, and we all know how successful that film was. Even if you're not religious, it's a great story. Jesus embodied jeopardy, empathy, likeability, authority and affinity.

Michael: How many screenwriters really know this type formula or anything close to it?

Ruben: Well, I don't know.

Michael: When you taught it, did you come up with this yourself or did you learn it from a mentor?

Ruben: I got them piecemeal from many different mentors. I read every book I could find. I went to every seminar I could. I approached this much like somebody who wants to learn marketing. I bought the courses and I learned it. But, there is something pretty amazing about getting up in front of people and teaching. I mean, you do learn by teaching. Students challenge especially high school students, a lot of time. They'll start dialogue, "Well, tell me why? I don't believe it." So, a tug and pull type situation, and you just kind of learn this stuff as you go along.

So, I'm borrowing some different teachers and different seminars and my own experiences. For two years, I worked as a story analyst for Cameron Crowe.

Michael: So a story analyst is someone who analyzes screenplays or stories?

Ruben: I analyzed every screenplay that came across his desk that was offered to him for directing. So, for two years whenever there was an offer for him to do something, which was everyday practically, there would be a screenplay that would come across his desk. I would read it because he didn't have the time. I would analyze it. I would say what worked, what didn't work, why I liked it, why he should avoid it and why he should consider it, and then I would give him a report on it.

Michael: He hired you to do this, or were you doing it on commission or as an employee?

Ruben: No, he hired me to do this. For two years, I was doing this. I was in his office reading screenplays and also books. A lot of times books would come in, and

they'd want simply a blurb on the dust jacket from him. It might be a true story about a famous rock and roller or it might be anything.

Michael: Tell me a story or one of these movies we've all heard of that came across your desk before he even saw it, a screenplay.

Ruben: The screenplays that were read, none of them were ever made by him because he was doing Vanilla Sky at the time which was a film that was an adaptation of a Spanish movie and it wasn't his film. He was interested in doing films that he didn't also write because it would involve a lot less time.

Michael: So, his real good ones he wrote himself.

Ruben: He wrote all of his films. He just decided, "I want direct something that I haven't written" so, that's why I was hired. As it turned out, Vanilla Sky came out and he decided after that film, it was a good movie, but he just wanted to only direct his own words.

He actually wrote another script called "Elizabethtown". It's kind of like the Big Chill, but now.

So, at the time he was an A-List director. He won an Oscar for writing Almost Famous, and he was getting submissions from everybody from Kevin Spacey, Julia Roberts, Danny DeVito, a lot of really great material.

Michael: What's a submission, for instance, from Danny DeVito? What is that?

Ruben: It means that Danny DeVito is producing a script. He's looking for a director. So, he will send a script over to different directors.

Michael: Do you mean Danny DeVito put the script together?

Ruben: He may have purchased it from a writer. He may have developed it, maybe came up with a story idea. Ideas can come from anywhere. If you're Danny DeVito or Kevin Spacey or Tom Hanks and you're reading this month's Esquire Magazine, and you read an article and say, "Oh, check this out. This is an interesting story about a guy in Lithuania who lost his leg and decided whatever." And, you call up a writer, and you say, "Listen, have you read this month's Esquire Magazine? There's a great story in there. Check it out. Take a look at it and see if you can make a story out of it."

Or you might read today's newspaper and read a story about something that happened.

Michael: So, you're constantly looking for stories that can be turned into scripts that can be turned into million dollar movies.

Ruben: If you're a producer or you are a writer or you're a big name actor like Tom Cruise or Tom Hanks, you are always looking for stories.

Michael: Because that one story with all these elements we're talking about, if someone can recognize it, knows it money in the bank if they can get a good producer.

Ruben: Absolutely. For example, do you remember the movie about the couple that was lost at sea with the sharks?

Michael: Vaguely.

Ruben: It wasn't a huge movie because it was made literally with just a video camera for not a lot of money, but that was based on a true story. It was a couple that was left out in the middle of the Australian ocean and forgotten about for two days. That was a wonderful story.

The guy who lost his arm in the Utah Mountains, you're going to see movie.

Michael: There will be a movie about that. So, let's say that story happened. How would someone be opportunistic to hear about that story? Could anyone write a screenplay on that? Do they have to get permission from him?

Ruben: Anyone can write a story on anything if you're going to use it as a writing sample. For example, you want to write movies, and you hear about this guy who cut off his own arm to escape from being trapped by a boulder. You don't have the rights to that story. He does because he's still alive.

Michael: Oh, really? So, under copyright law, you can't steal that experience from him and sell it?

Ruben: You can't sell it, but you can certainly write it. For example, I, Michael, know I can tell this story than anybody. So, you sit down, and you spend two weeks and you hammer out the story, and you come up with a screenplay. It's 120 pages and you're really proud of it and it's really good. You could go show it to anybody and say, "Look at this screenplay." And use it as a writing sample.

Now, if somebody says, "This is fantastic. I want to buy it." "Well, you can't buy it. I'm sorry. It's not mine. But, if you like me, then maybe you can hire me to write something else, or I have other ideas that I've made up."

Michael: I see.

Ruben: So, the best thing to do is really not write stories that don't belong to you, but actually to make up a story or to use your experiences or the experiences of somebody in your family and use that to create a story that is your own, that you can sell, that you do have the rights to.

Now, these tools or secrets that I've outlined work exceptionally well and are necessary in any compelling screenplay or a stage play or a book or a story, but in developing this approach, I became aware that many of these same principles can be used in other areas of life, and that's what was so exciting to me and made me write you.

Sales, motivation, teaching, law, business presentations, marketing, relationships – you name it. Now, the secret is it becomes possible and applicable when you make a shift from the main character being a made up person to being you, or more importantly, your client or your jury or your audience or your classroom or your spouse.

Michael: As I'm listening to you, I'm thinking in my head, "These characteristics you're telling me, when I do my audio recordings or my interviews, they are stories." It's two people talking, but I could structure this and set it up to make it more compelling to identify with the listener better.

Ruben: You're right on track. This I think going to be the crux of what you're going to find most interesting. For the sake of this discussion, let's confine our options to your self and your clients, thinking in terms of business. We'll forget about being a lawyer, or a teacher, or spouse. Just let's talk about yourself and your client.

There are two characters there. Any dramatic story, two characters means conflict. Because of the nature of the structure, each character must want something different. When you're in sales and marketing, that's not a good thing. You don't want you and your clients to want different things, but subconsciously, your client knows that he is the main character of his life, and you are the main character of yours. He has his goals for the day. He has to finish a report or pay some bills or pick up the kids or prepare tomorrow's presentation.

If we were to break down each of these tasks into a separate little drama, if you will, he would be the main character in all of them, with a little goal and conflict and a plot and all of the things that we talked about, and more that we haven't talked about. Our lives are made up of hundreds of these little stories day after day.

Michael: I need an example. Let me just set up a little scene. It's a real scene, okay. I had an eBay auction. I have a lot of Jay Abraham stuff that's been up on eBay.

Then, I get an inquiry from someone in Australia. They've got no feedback. They've never bought anything on the Internet. It's a lady. She's skeptical, and then I want to sell my item to her. She wants to buy it.

Ruben: That's key by the way, that you know that while you want to sell to her, and you're the main character of that. They're the main character. They're looking to buy some marketing materials, but they also subconsciously know that you are the main character in your life. You have little goals and tasks each day just like him.

Now, he may not know what they are. He doesn't know if you're married or if you have a car payment due or whatever, but he knows that you're trying to sell him something.

Now, he does know that the short period that he's on that auction, whether he's on the phone with you or in person in a sales meeting or reading a sales letter that you've written, he knows that you have the goal of selling him something. He knows this. People aren't stupid.

He recognizes you as the protagonist in your own little drama. If he subconsciously knows that there are two simultaneous stories going on here, you want to sell him something and he wants to buy something, he knows there's going to be some latent conflict. There has to be.

In sales and marketing, it can take the form of price, terms, conditions, viability, you name it. Now, if he's looking at an eBay auction, he's thinking about the price. He's thinking of the conflict of somebody coming in and at the last second they snipe you. He knows that maybe he's going to get in trouble if he bids too high and his wife finds out about it because it's going to go on his credit card. Or, he knows that the terms are such that there are no returns on this product if you've outlined that in the auction.

Michael: All kinds of conflicts. Absolutely, I'm with you.

Ruben: As a buyer, he's looking for these conflicts, and as a seller, this is the mistake we make. As marketers and sellers, we usually try to hide or minimize them. That's drama.

Now, the crux of my theory as it applies to business within a dramatic paradigm is this – you will be more successful as a marketer or a sales person by knowing your role as a business protagonist in your own dramatic paradigm with it's own conflicts and goals and settings and relationships, yet acknowledging and focusing on your client as the customer protagonist in their own little drama. Does that make sense?

Michael: You've got some actor words, but do it by example.

Ruben: For example, we're going to become dramatic strategists. That's what I am. I'm a dramatic strategist, and by understanding the strategies of drama as it dramatist in marketing or if you become a dramatic strategist in sales, you can design, shape and structure the plot of your client's interaction with you.

Michael: Well, let's use this eBay auction. You've got a lady in Australia. She has no experience on eBay. She has no feedback. She doesn't know who I am. She's 3,000 miles away from me. She wants Jay Abraham material. I've got the auction that's up there. She inquires about it.

Ruben: Well, you've already said it just describing that. You said her goal is she wants Jay Abraham material. So, her name is Susan. Susan wants Jay Abraham's material. That's your goal laid out.

The audience is going to watch this little drama take place and wonder, "Will Susan get Jay Abraham's material?" That's the question. She's the protagonist in her little drama. So, the question for her is, "Will I get Jay Abraham's material?"

She's given an opportunity. There's an auction. There's Jay Abraham's material right her in front of me. "Will I get it?" We don't know what her conflicts are, but as a good sales person or a marketer, if you are writing a sales letter or making an in person business presentation, you could tell her. You could focus her attention on what those conflicts might be.

Michael: Identify or answer any and every objection that she could be thinking.

Ruben: Right. We've heard it before in other sales medium of applying it in a way that makes sense, and all we need is for a person to say, "You know what? I love movies, and this makes sense to me because I watch TV every night. So this make sense to me and I can apply it to an area like sales and marketing that I'm not so confident about."

Michael: Look, if someone was unhappy buying my product, I'm going to give them a guarantee. I'm going to give them their money back like most people would, but most people don't even mention it. But, if you mention it in a sales letter or in your sales presentation, and you bring it forward and you dramatize it, you said I'm identifying with it, it's going to make for a powerful sales presentation. It's proven to work better.

Ruben: And, not just for one sales, but by not hiding or minimizing what your role is, and your role is different from theirs. You're the seller. Your goal is to get their money. You want to make it real basic. That's what it is.

You can put glossy ideal to it and say, “My goal is to help this person. My goal is to help them make money.” But, for the sake of simplicity, let us say, your goal is to sell them this product. Their goal is to get this product.

The conflicts that lie in the middle in terms of condition or price or terms or whatever, that is something that a bad salesperson will try to hide the conflict, or they’ll minimize it. They’ll say, “I want exactly what you want. I want you to make money and be successful in your marketing endeavors. I want you to learn Jay Abraham.”

Now, this may all be true, but too often in this cynical world of ours, people know it’s a bunch of BS, and they know this guy just wants to make a sale. Unless you’re able to, using again the tools that I’ve mentioned, make yourself identifiable to that person buying it, unless that person knows looking at the eBay auction that Michael Senoff has overcome a lot of very tragic circumstances in his life and deserves my empathy or is dying of disease and is in jeopardy of something or he’s just a great guy.

Reading his letter or his auction wording this guy is so likeable. He has two kids. He lives in sunny southern California. He has a nice smile on his face in his photo. This guy is a really likeable guy.

Not only that, he’s an authority. This is the only guy in the world who’s creating this particular product for me or is making this niche or making it available to me at this particular price. So, he is an authority and affinity. He’s like me. He’s somebody who wanted to better his life, who wanted to make some money.

So, in other words, unless you’re able to make them identify with you and make them want to enter into a business relationship with you, and they trust you not to hide or minimize whatever conflict might come up and you address them, not only address like them a regular salesperson would or a good salesperson, but address them in this unique way by using a dramatic paradigm by literally acknowledging and it’s completely okay to say to them, in fact I encourage people using these techniques and tools to literally not hide it but say, “Listen, you’re the main character in your life. At this particular scene in your life and your day, you’re on an eBay auction. You’re checking this out. There are other auctions. There are other things for sale, and you’re wondering, ‘Should I buy this?’”

Now, this is something you can actually write down or say to them, and you may have conflict. You may not have the money at this particular time. Well, let me show you how I can address that. I’m going to give you three easy payments over the course of three months. Or, you’re worried about the fact

that you may not like this product. Then, you address that conflict you might have, “I’m going to give you a money back guarantee, no questions asked.”

In other words, you use the dramatic paradigm, and let them know that’s what you’re doing. You say, “Listen, I understand that you are the main character in your life. I’m the main character in my life. Here’s my goal. Here’s my conflict. Here’s your goal. Here’s your conflict.” And, this is how a wonderful screenwriter would approach it. This is how Steven Spielberg would address this story if it were a story. So, let’s make this a happy ending for all of us by addressing these things.

Again, I’ve used it in terms of sales, but eliminating conflict, you will achieve your desired outcome, your goal so to speak, from your dramatic interaction.

Michael: By eliminating conflict?

Ruben: Well, not so much by eliminating it, but by acknowledging it, overcoming it. In a screenplay, you want the conflict there. You want to overcome it, and in a story, the more exciting and more dramatic way that you can overcome it the conflict, the more exciting it is for the audience. So, you don’t want to eliminate the conflict. You want to acknowledge first of all, it’s there. You can’t get rid of it because it exists everywhere.

For example, this is costing you money. You’re calling me long distance. That may be a conflict for somebody who has to call into one of those teleseminars. They have to pay for those phone calls. They’re not free. They’re not 1-800-numbers. That’s a conflict.

The fact that I might have a lunch appointment in an hour, that’s a conflict for me because I have to get my information to you. I have to wrap this up in a way that let’s you know, “Hey, I’ve got to have lunch.” I don’t have to tell you that, but it exists for me in my life.

As a salesperson or marketer, the more that you are able to open up your mind into the dramatic possibilities of this person’s life that you’re trying to sell to, and that can be done by asking them questions. “Do you have children?” “Are you married?” “How long have you been in your current job?” “How did you become interested in marketing?” “Have you ever overcome any major obstacle in your life?”

The more information you have as a person who’s trying to sell something or persuade somebody, the more you have to work with, and by simply aligning it in a way that they can identify it in the same way they identify with watching Law and Order that night, or the same way they identify with watching Tom Hanks’ new movie, they will subliminally fall into line in a



way that they trust you. They trust you in a sense that they understand, “He has a goal. He’s achieving it. I have a goal. I’m achieving it.” And, if you do it right, you create a relationship where you are the authority and you are likeable and you do have a sense of that person. You can empathize with that person, and you can create a client that will buy from you repeatedly as opposed to just making one sale. I hope that’s the goal of everybody.

But, the same can be said of a trial attorney trying to persuade a jury, or a teacher trying to teach a class or a speaker trying to persuade their audience or a husband trying to save his marriage, a parent trying to raise their kids, or a boss trying to manage his employees. Or, even without the interaction, just you, yourself, trying to set goals for yourself, trying to motivate yourself or do time management, this works.

Each of these different areas and more that I haven’t mentioned, can be a different manual or a different course, a different set of CDs, or a different video presentation.

Finally, and this is kind of, I think, a greater extension of this idea – I can create a course on how to teach this concept so that people can apply it to other areas of endeavor that I don’t have any interest or knowledge of. They can take this template and teach or design courses on dramatic strategies for sports training, for example, or political campaigning or restaurant management. I know nothing about those things. It’s a template. It’s a tool.

Michael: All these things you’re talking about are very similar to what somebody who’s studying copywriting would learn when you study from the masters.

Ruben: And, what I’ve done is I’ve integrated things that I’ve learned from marketing. I’m not a beginner to marketing as I’ve mentioned in my letter. I’ve learned from some of the best, and things that I’ve learned from screenwriting, and I’ve learned from what I consider to be one of the best, Cameron Crowe, and my experience as a teacher. Basically, I think a good salesperson or marketer takes their own life experiences and applies them to what they do. They cross train themselves.

You as a parent may apply some of your successful parenting techniques to your auction. You may use some of your auction techniques to teach a lesson to your kids this weekend at the park. It’s all about integrating everything we know. And, I realize that when I was learning this that the dramatic paradigm – when we were kids, you remember in high school, we talked about this, we all learned that mountaintop thing. Somebody, most likely a boring teacher, should us this little dramatic paradigm, and we made a copy of it on a piece of paper, and that very top was climax, resolution, rising action, and we put all of

those terms that maybe you've forgotten, but it's simple enough that it can be, with a little bit of dedication and exploration, applied to anything.

Michael: That was linear, and your idea's almost created exponential.

Ruben: Taking a linear concept and integrating it into a real time, real world experience in interacting with people.

Michael: You're really taken what a good copywriter would look for, someone who has a swipe file. You look for winning sales letters – a sales letter or an ad or something that has worked, and if it's worked, you've got something that is proven that has touched the human on the other side who has bought that product.

Ruben: Right, we've all bought products from marketers that have winning sales letters. We've all used examples of other gurus and people who've been authorities in the field and said, "I can use this sales letter that Jay Abraham wrote, and I can apply it to selling my air conditioning." But, what I've done is I've just expanded it and not just looked at sales letters. I've looked at other things I enjoy. I enjoy movies. I enjoy watching television. I enjoy books and I enjoy things, fortunately, that everybody enjoys.

Michael: But, you're looking at screenplays. You're looking at books. You're looking at movies. These are all stories. All those stories' job is to sell, to sell the person sitting in the movie to sit through and come out feeling great. You're selling the experience. But, the formula, those six or seven things that you talked about that make it more dramatic, that heighten the emotion, that create the empathy, that do all those things, all those criteria in that story, make a winning formula.

So, you've got a winning formula. These things that you're bringing up, at least most of them if not all of them, create blockbuster hits.

Ruben: Right, and it's one of many formulas. It's not the end-all be-all formula, but I think it might be one that people can find accessible, and one that people can say, "Yeah, I understand that. Sure, main character, sure." We've all heard stories as kids. We all know basic beginning, middle and end type formulas. We all know about the fact that conflict makes for a dramatic story.

So, yeah, all I'm doing is taking something that we already know about, and I know that I've thrown in a couple you said "actor words" in this conversation with you, but these are things that you know instinctively already. They're subconscious things that I know I've said to you, and you have nodded your head on the other end of the phone. I recognize that, and I remember that in Rocky. You brought it yourself to the conversation. Things that we all

recognize, and they already lie dormant in our brain that all I have to do with this course or these tools is simply go, “Remember that? Remember this? Remember when this happened in this movie? Remember when you saw that?” And, people go, “Yeah.” “Okay, now pretend that’s you. Pretend that’s your client and that’s your audience, and it works the same way.”

Michael: That’s a great concept.

*Here is another bonus I want you to know about, extremely valuable. If you go to another site of mine called [ExecutiveAudioInstitute.com](http://ExecutiveAudioInstitute.com), you will see a site with nothing but all my audio recordings, all in downloadable mp3 form. Now, these are the same recordings that I have on [HardtoFindSeminars.com](http://HardtoFindSeminars.com) in the audio clip section, except I will offer you the reprint rights to all of these audio recordings. In other words, I’m going to hand them to you on a silver platter. If you have a website and you need something that generates traffic, I will set up a custom site for you, and you can send your visitors to my collection of audio recordings as a bonus. You have here thousands of dollars worth of audio content on some of the best interviews on the Internet. You have hundreds of transcripts that you can print out and share with your customers. I’m not going to charge you a dime for it. I’ll even build you a custom site. All you have to do is put a small deposit down, but it’s refundable once you introduce it to your list. Go on over to [ExecutiveAudioInstitute.com](http://ExecutiveAudioInstitute.com), and read the first part. You’ll see a link. If you want the reprint rights to these audios, it will explain everything there. I think you’re going to find this extremely valuable. It has taken me years and years to build up this collection, to get them all edited, to put up the transcript. I invested tens of thousands of dollars in this collection, and I want you to have it. Go check it out, [ExecutiveAudioInstitute.com](http://ExecutiveAudioInstitute.com).*

*That’s the end of this recording with Ruben. I hope you found this helpful, and I hope you will use some of these ideas in your copy to sell more of your products, services and ideas. Please make sure you check around the site for new recordings that I’m always updating here at [HardtoFindSeminars.com](http://HardtoFindSeminars.com), and don’t forget to tell your friends about our site. Thank you.*