

# **Welcome to the Professional Booksellers School**

## **Bookstore Development Series**

### **Marketing, Display & Storytelling Excellence**

*Workshop Four of Five*



**Developed by Steve Wax and Lisa C. Uhrick\***

*\*With help, inspiration and collaboration from many.*

Instructions:

**First, please print this document.**

Thank you for printing these and working through them by hand. There are such good things that happen when we read, write with our hands and hold things. So let's work some more on connecting books with their people.

This time, there is a lot to think about as you go. You'll be completing the field thought-work and planning as you read. After you've added your notes, upload your pages, and **that will signal your completion of this session and help us award points toward completion.**

As before, you have two weeks to complete this workshop. We will talk via zoom about your experiences, leveraging the power of our cohort. After the zoom, the last workshop will be available.

*To read more about the studies on reading retention from physical books and paper, reference the articles in the Bibliography and Reference section.*

**This is the fourth of the five workshops:**

*Completed: 1. Your Book Haven Space (Crafting Experiences & Setting the Scene)*

*Completed 2. I'm Curious... Marketing & Display as Emotional Curiosity - This week*

*3. Knowing You, Knowing Me (Using our Experience, Strength, Hope and Connections)*

**4. Better Together (How Marketing, Display, Events and Curation Work Better in Alignment)**

**5. Unforgettable (Methods of Storytelling in Display at Macro and Micro Levels)**

## **Workshop Four: Better Together**

### **How Marketing, Display, Events and Curation Work Better in Alignment**

We've been thinking about our stores like a publisher (and author) thinks about a book: the big idea, the "first line" that gets us going, a story arc that has us thinking about the whole store as a labyrinth of experience. And all with the very important sense of "who is this for?" (Persona)

It follows that we should move with these concepts beyond the store walls into the land of media and marketing efforts. But before we go there, let's make sure we keep the whole of this bookstore thing connected.

In larger stores, we often segment the jobs to get everything done. It's a logical path to accomplishing much, but the unintended side effect can be that someone is working on events over here, which are completely disconnected from the person(s) working on book orders, which is more disconnected still from the person who is working on social media.

Even in very small stores this can happen too: working with a segmented brain of sorts. Sometimes we use one brain for marketing, one brain for ordering new stock, one brain for events, and one for thinking about themes and displays.

This workshop segment is about bringing all of our independent activities together in a connected whole.

We started this workshop series thinking about our stores like a publisher would think about a book. And the one thing we booksellers know is that a book without a marketing plan is a personal project with a very small audience.

Let's build on the things you're already doing – the things that are already working for you — and try on some [Radical] new marketing rules for a connected surge in effectiveness.

## **Starting Gate: Your Personas**

Have you researched and defined your audience(s)?

If you haven't already, we invite you to leverage a little A.I. help with this exercise:

Using Perplexity or ChatGPT, ask: "For \_\_\_\_\_ bookstore in \_\_\_\_\_(your city), where the following are the top 20 best selling books in the (month of June, past year, past three months – your choice): List your books here by title, what are the likely personas?"

What did it say? (just the names of the personas will do)

Now let's try some follow up questions:

How does this track with who you see in the store?

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Who attends our author events?

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Who buys books from us?

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Who goes to our website?

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Who receives and opens our newsletters?

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Using the above information to qualify what you saw on your A.I. search, what is your primary target audience at this moment? (Pick one for an initial focus – we can add more later) This is tough – because you know you want and have more than one persona. But when we're thinking about marketing and connecting with one "character," we want to think about that character fully before moving on to others and connecting their quests together.

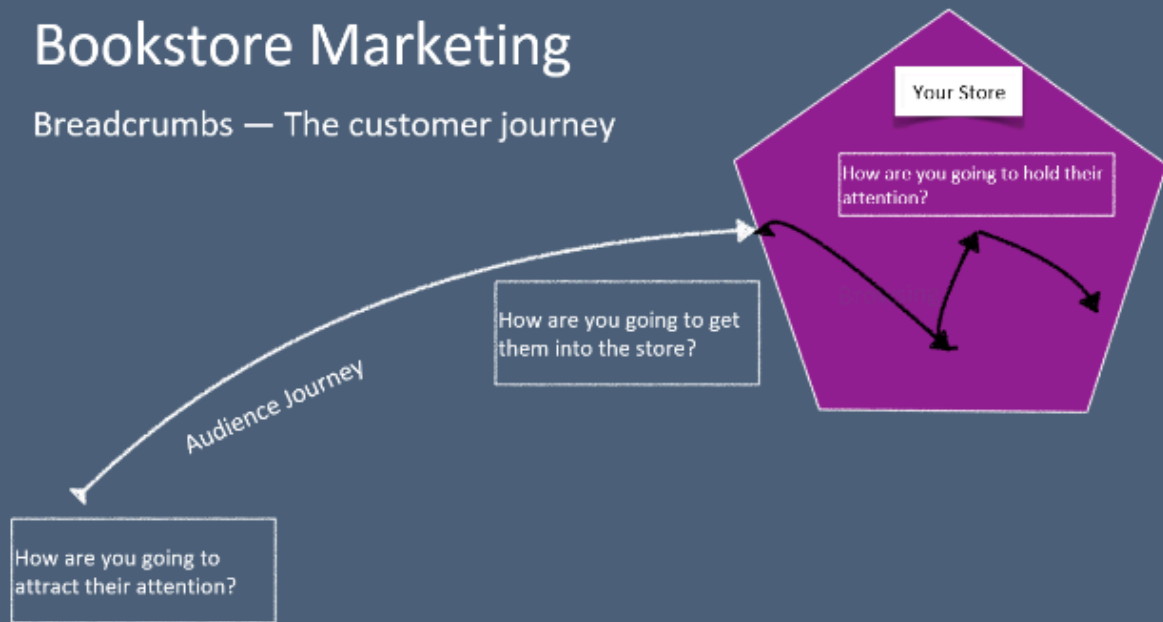
My target persona is: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, the marketing questions:

1. How are you going to attract their attention?
2. How are you going to hold their attention?
3. Your audience is looking for a story, a journey they can take. How are you going to provide it to them?
  - a. A Bookstore is full of thousands of rich stories, all of them hidden behind covers. How are you going to get those books to talk to your audience?
  - b. Meanwhile, how are you getting your audience to come into the store? What are you going to do to attract them? What are you going to promise? How will you spark their curiosity?
  - c. You've already created an attractive front window, right? How is it targeted to this persona?
  - d. If they walk in, what will they see that will entice them to move further?

# Bookstore Marketing

## Breadcrumbs — The customer journey



## How are you going to motivate them to BUY?



We said before that we're not selling books. Selling books is a transactional thing, which is fueled by convenience and price point. Generally, we will be outdone in the transactional space by the phone in every hand. Unless, like some of our savvy classmates, we've inspired our people (our personas) to use those handheld devices to order from our bookstore. But even there we are doing something different: even in the online order process for our bookstore, we are part of a different aim, a different community.

And IN the store, we're truly about a differentiated experience. Book sales are the byproduct of that great experience. You don't go to Disneyworld to buy food, drinks and keepsakes. And yet, Disney follows other park and amusement trends with about 45% of their revenue coming from those in-park purchases. That revenue contributes some 70% of Disney's operating income. Let's underscore that: 70% of Disney World's operating income comes from their in park sales.

Walt Disney famously said, "Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will bring others to show them how well you do what you do."

We're creating experiences that are story worthy – that people want to share. Disney's approach to customers is rooted in the idea that emotionally engaged customers are three times more likely to purchase, recommend and buy a product again. Positive experiences lead to sales and loyalty. Disney's theme parks have a 70% return rate for first-time visitors. Venture a guess: how many of your first time visitors come back? \_\_\_\_\_

When people are having fun, smiling, laughing or when they are emotionally engaged and curious, they come back for more. And as a byproduct of each of those experiences, they make purchases. That's what compels them to buy.

Getting there involves Radical bookstore marketing. Let's look at reinventing our newsletters, websites, and social media.

And let's start with our tools:

1. Our store's Personas
2. Analysis of our Dippers, Divers, and Skimmers
3. Think creatively about sparking curiosity
4. Leave a trail of breadcrumbs

We're going to work with the newsletter first, because that is one thing that almost everyone has in one form or another. Many of us fill it with content – new books and releases and information about everything that is going on. There's nothing wrong with that, but that's not how we make our way into most experiences, is it?

*Shelf Awareness* has some great data about their readership and they offer a free product that is helpful in getting regular content to a broad audience. The regularity of it is useful, but if you are using this, you'll still want to make it a better breadcrumb by personalizing it. And you may find that the answer is "yes, I want to use that... and also this."

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For your newsletter to be a really good breadcrumb, we want it to tell your story in a way that stands out and differentiates the experience you're offering. Best practice in newsletter marketing involves being consistent (check) and offering something that pulls people forward. We are doing them (and ourselves) no favors when we are simply offering information.

Information is useful, but flat:

Mary Laura Philpott is coming to our store this Thursday at 6 p.m. for an author event talking about *Bomb Shelter* and *I Miss You When I Blink*.

We have the basics, but unless someone else has sold us on this book and author, we're not likely to be packing up our life and heading over to the bookstore. And if everyone should attend, then no one is really targeted.

Let's make it stronger by connecting to the experience we're offering for the target audience (persona)?

**Target audience:** Busy Moms

**Information about this audience:** 40ish, partnered, professional, educated, lives within 10 miles of the store

Knowing this, it would be wise to tie our **marketing strategy** for this author event around a message that speaks to the **desires, fears, frustrations of the target audience of busy moms**.

We asked AI for a little help, using Plenty Bookshop in Cookeville as the example and requesting a table of likely fears, frustrations, desires and motivations particularly around the specific book *Bomb Shelter* and the persona of busy moms.

Note: It's important to put the specifics in there when we ask for AI help and if we ask the right questions, this resource can help us put together something useful as we construct our newsletter and other media.

We like to ask AI to organize things in table format for ease of reference and use. Here's our table from asking the question about busy moms and this author.



Based on the information provided about Mary Laura Philpott's book "Bomb Shelter," here's a table showing what a busy mom might connect with.

Aspect	Busy Mom
Frustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Balancing multiple responsibilities (parenting, work, self-care)</li> <li>- Feeling overwhelmed by life's uncertainties</li> <li>- Struggling to find time for personal interests</li> </ul>
Desires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To keep loved ones safe and protected</li> <li>- To find moments of joy and humor in daily life</li> <li>- To maintain a sense of self while caring for others</li> </ul>
Fears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health crises or emergencies involving family members</li> <li>- Inability to control or prevent bad things from happening</li> <li>- Children growing up and leaving home</li> </ul>
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To be present and supportive for her family</li> <li>- To find ways to cope with anxiety and worry</li> <li>- To embrace life's experiences, both positive and challenging</li> </ul>

*This table reflects themes from "Bomb Shelter" that would resonate with a busy mom, including the author's experiences with her son's epilepsy diagnosis, reflections on parenting and aging, and her attempts to balance worry with hope and humor. The book's exploration of life's fragility and the author's self-described status as a "lifelong worrier" would likely strike a chord with many busy moms juggling multiple responsibilities and concerns.*

Now we have something to bring to our newsletter! Instead of a flat line of information, let's tap into those motivations with a message like this:

*If you have the idea that you can keep bad things from happening to your children through the sheer force of love and will; if you're trying to find a sense of humor in a sea of worry; if you're not quite ready for your children to leave the nest — you may need a bomb shelter. (Or at least a turtle's shell.)*

*Mary Laura Philpott is bringing Bomb Shelter to Cookeville this Thursday at 6 p.m. Enjoy a night of laughter (and homemade pimento cheese) in the presence of others trying to do the impossible: embracing life's most unexpected moments.*

### **A look at your Newsletter:**

Think about an upcoming author event. Who is your persona?

Now think about what would entice that persona to be interested in that particular author. You can do like we did and ask for a quick AI table if you're stuck.

### **Based on your thoughts:**

What is an enticing question you can ask readers?

What's your creative concept?

What's the audience's context?

What's the analysis needed to figure that out (use personas)?

What is the key action you want them to take?

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When it comes to your marketing, you're competing with the movie theater, the restaurants, the sports events and a plethora of choices at home. What's going to inspire someone to leave the comforts of their home and join you for this author event?

And how are you connecting your displays around this same messaging?

To carry forward the example with Mary Laura Philpott and busy moms, we could have a sign that says "No matter how much we love them, it's hard to keep them safe. We need a bomb shelter. Or at least a turtle's shell."

That's too much for a sign, but it is in the right direction. If we were writing the newsletter, we'd be wise to connect this author's message with a personal experience, making it more relatable and authentic: like this weekend when our grandson's car stopped working, he headed down our grassy hill and jumped out before his car crashed into the trees, where it became a mangled mess. He wasn't hurt. But his Mom's heart stopped for at least a few beats.

If we put that into our newsletter – a picture of the mangled car in the trees – it will be riveting. And if we connect it to the wonderful work of Mary Laura's book, it becomes something to see and explore. Add pimento cheese – homemade pimento cheese – and you have a solid hook for a southern audience.

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Let's extend this example even further to start connecting all the aspects of marketing into an aligned whole.

**In the window:** Carrying the book for the upcoming author event is our logical inclination. But what if we thought about the larger context of our persona – and had a message that spoke to that persona's desires, fears and frustrations? This is an area for real creativity, hanging display and out of the box thinking. If the book *Bomb Shelter* is about having the equivalent of a turtle's shell... what could we do in the window to echo that idea?

**In the store:** If we know we're going to have homemade pimento cheese for this author event with Mary Laura, what other books will work with that experience? What other books should we have stocked and prominently displayed for our persona of busy moms?

It's summer time, and for many that means an easy "beach read" (which may or may not involve actual trips to the beach, but an "easy" read may be the order of the moment.) In our "things to make that look like you know what you're doing" cookbook section, we may have a book of easy summer cocktails or meal prep for two for an empty nester.

**In other social media:** Plenty has a podcast called the Life of Plenty. It would be a great connection to spend that week's podcast talking about the needs, desires and fears around family and children – and the books that help us find our way through. A mention of Mary Laura Philpott's book would be easy in this context.

Extending the reach, Plenty also has a weekly column in the newspaper that should connect with those same frustrations, desires and fears shared by busy moms.

Finally, there is a weekly video reel in the instagram feed called "Books make the best gifts" where it would be in alignment to talk about beach reads, summer fun for families and other concerns of the busy mom – of course mentioning the *Bomb Shelter* book in paperback at the same time.

A newsletter with a personal message that connects to a coming author's book +

(Social media messaging around the persona's interests in that book x something different but connected on each social media format) +

An enticing message in a shelf talker or display +

A window display that speaks to the book's subject and the persona's motivations

=

A cohesive, aligned marketing message.

Don't worry about over-saturation of a single message. It used to take people 7-8 exposures to think about a product, event or service. In today's fight for attention, that number has doubled. One mention in social media has little hope of facilitating a successful event or connecting to an in store experience.

Connectedness is key: whether one person is doing the buying, event planning, social media and store displays or thirty are doing those things — it is still part of one bookstore experience for your key characters (aka personas).

**Let's try this – Fieldwork:**

Key persona: \_\_\_\_\_

Key motivations as chosen focus: \_\_\_\_\_

Upcoming author event: \_\_\_\_\_

How does your persona's motivations intersect with the content in this book?

\_\_\_\_\_

What personal story can you tell in your newsletter that would connect with your persona's interests and motivations related to this book?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other social media platforms will you use to extend this marketing campaign?

\_\_\_\_\_

For each social media platform you'll use, choose an angle or approach that fits the book and the persona's motivations:

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In the store, how will you make this book enticing to your target audience?

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In the window, will you have any plans for elevating this book or speaking directly to the target audience?

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**Event + Newsletter + Window + Display + Socials = Cohesive Marketing Plan**

## Why, What, How

We're busy. Pragmatists. We often gravitate toward the quick "how" – the doing. You've invested yourself in slowing that down so that your doing will have more power. You've invested in thinking about the why and the what... before trying things in the "how" category. That makes you rare. It's where the radical parts are – because few people will take that time.

We started with "why do you exist?" (aka "What's your big idea?") in workshop one. Simon Sinek, in his famous 50 million view Ted Talk on inspirational leadership, started with the same question, using examples from Apple to Martin Luther King, Jr. to the Wright brothers. He famously said "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

He puts the same message we've been following in different language:

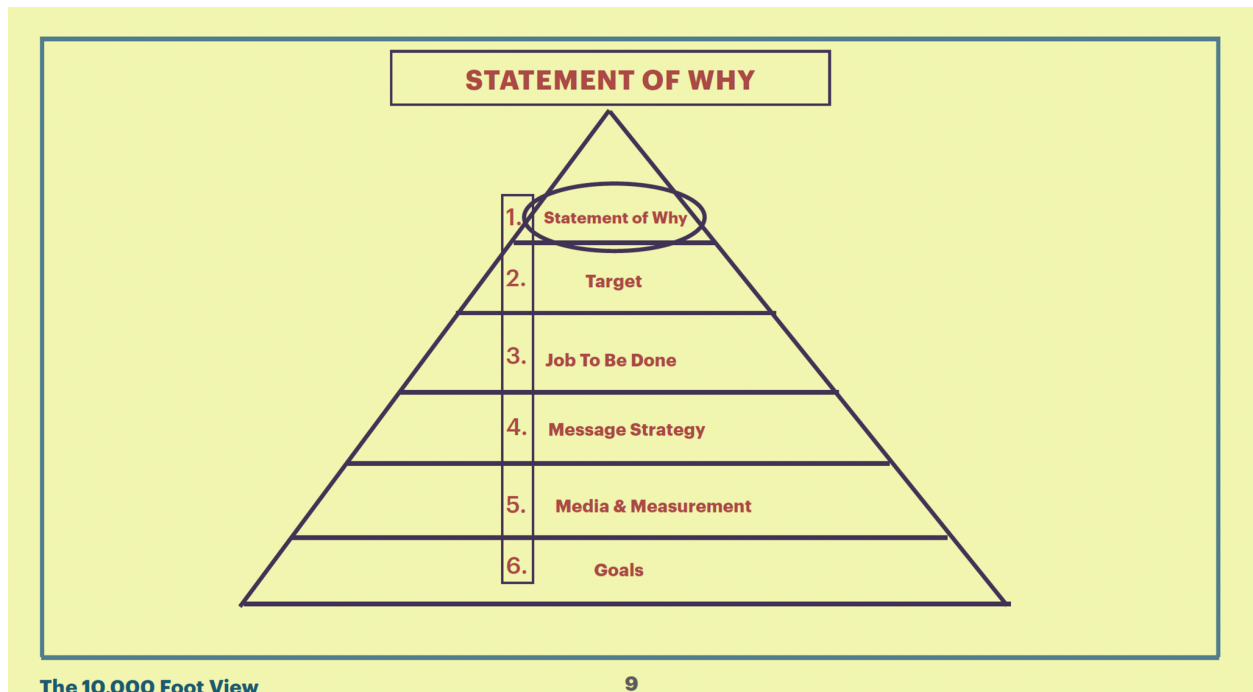
Who's our target?

What's their need? (their job to be done)

How do we talk to/with them? (message strategy)

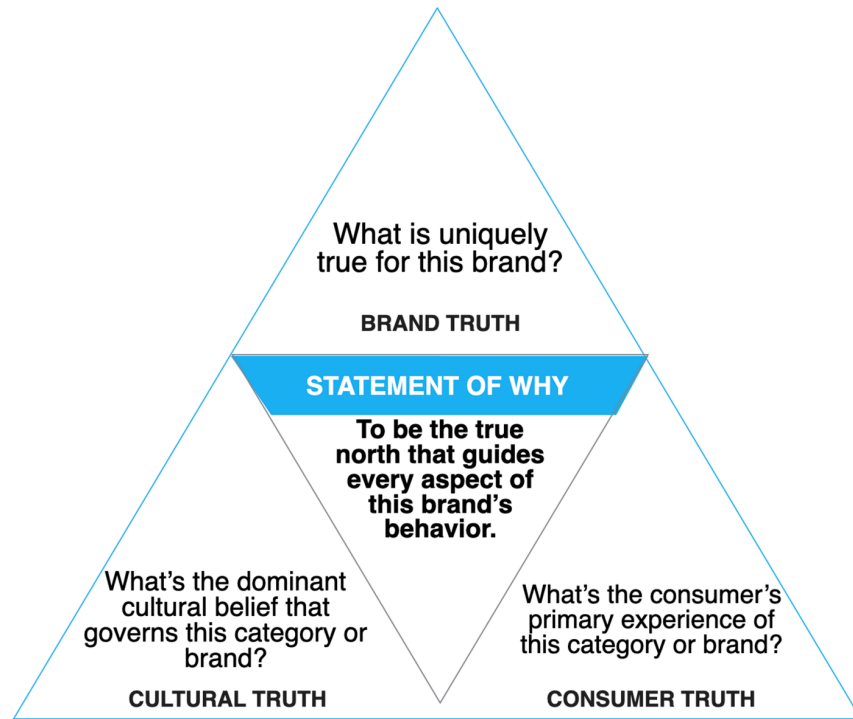
Where do we reach them? (media, measurement, in store data)

What do we want to achieve? (our engagement goals and measures of success)





This is the brand's reason for being. Its mission. It's why it has a right to exist. It is completely unique to this brand. It rarely if ever changes.



Try this for your own brand:

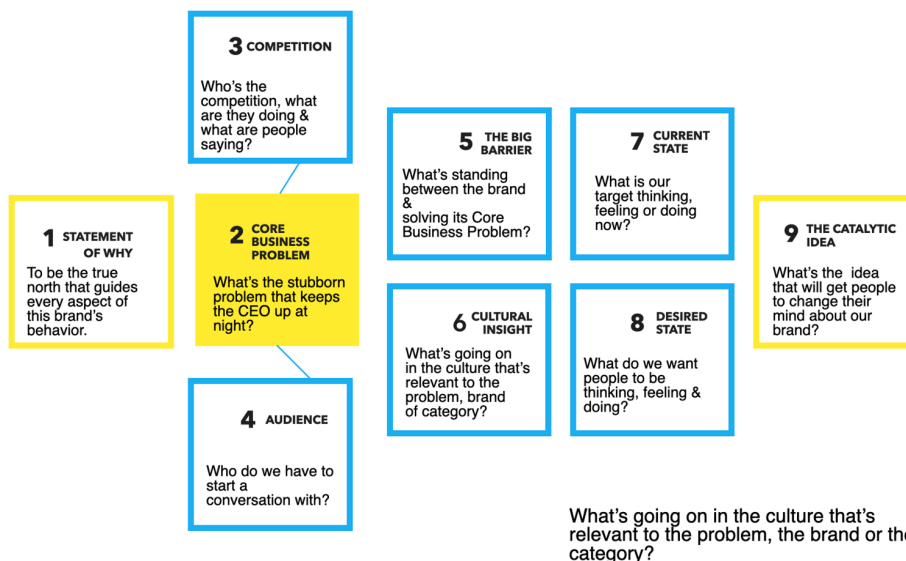
Statement of why:

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Unique Brand Truth		
Statement of why (true north that guides our behavior)		
Cultural Truth (dominant cultural belief that governs this brand)		
Consumer truth (consumer's primary experience of the brand?)		

## STATEMENT OF what

This is our process for figuring out what we want to communicate about the brand. The result is the catalyst that sparks the idea for the program or campaign.



That leads us to the statement of What – what we want to communicate about the brand.

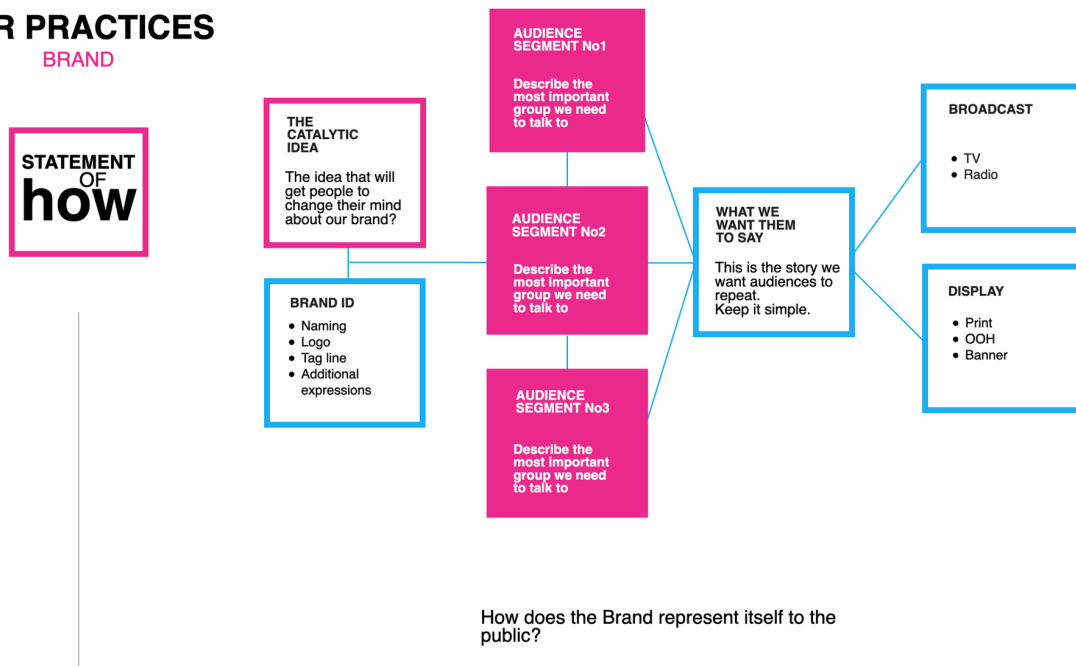
### Let's try it:

**Statement of What:** (what we want to communicate about our brand – the spark or catalyst for the program or campaign – you can think small, like an author event, or broadly about your next year as a store)

1 Statement of Why		2 Core problem	
3 Competition		4 Audience (persona)	
5 Big barrier		6 Cultural Insight	
7 Current state		8 Desired state	
9 Catalytic Idea			



## OUR PRACTICES BRAND



Let's try the statement of How:

Catalytic Idea		Persona 1		One message		Broadcast:
Brand ID		Persona 2		(same message for all three)		Display:
		Persona 3		Keep it simple		Media:

## Skimmers, Divers and Dippers in Marketing

When Steve Wax and his cohorts thought about Skimmers, Divers and Dippers originally, they were thinking about marketing behaviors. In particular, they were thinking about the ways that people engaged with marketing messages (or didn't) and targeting those messages to each level of interest.

In the marketing world, a **skimmer** is not interested in your message or event. They are not particularly interested in your brand but skimming for things that might inspire them. They need repetition and a wide variety of influences before you can break through their thought barrier into a form of conscious awareness.

A **dipper** is someone willing to watch part of your reel, take a few seconds to read your message and possibly give it a social media like. A dipper might watch you for months without comment, casually exposing themselves to your message.

A **diver** is ready to take some action. Their curiosity is sparked, their interest is piqued, and they may hold excitement and enthusiasm for your message. These are folks who become torch bearers and sharers in the social media space. These are folks who make your events viral and your messages widely known.

We want to feed steady and consistent messages to the skimmers in hopes that they'll follow and become dippers. And for the dippers, we want to amuse and engage in little brief interactions, building confidence and trust.... Building relationships.

For our divers, we want to reward them, love on them and make them feel like the special people they are. They need sneak peaks, insider tracks and fun stories to relate to others.

In our marketing work, think about each of these groups with different strategies in mind.

How are we sparking the skimmers?

How are we enticing the dippers?

And how are we including the divers?

Recap:

**Radical ideas for marketing include:**

- **Strong Foundations:** Starting with the fundamentals of why, what and how
- **Doing One Thing:** Creating a cohesive marketing plan for every theme or event in which you invest your store
- **With One Brain:** Connecting all the functions and factions so that everyone is working together
- **From a Person:** Keeping it intensely, uniquely personal
- **To a Person:** Personas lead the way and their motivations inform our actions
- **Consistently, Repeatedly:** Using repetition and consistency

As a sentence, that reads: Radical bookstore marketing is about strong foundations, doing one thing, with one brain, from person to person, consistently and repeatedly.