

SONIC BRAND

Storytelling

Using Sound to Cut Through, Connect Deeply,
and Make Brand Messaging Memorable



THE SONIC BRANDMASTERS™

Introduction ●●●●●●●●●●

With so many visual content creation tools at marketers' disposal, it's getting harder to create distinctive brand content that stands out. There is one overlooked tool that is probably not yet in your brand storytelling toolkit: **sound**.

The truth is, sound goes way deeper into the human brain than visuals alone can. **Sound bypasses logic**, is stored in echoic memory (longer than visuals' iconic memory), taps the limbic brain, and speaks to consumers in the language of emotion. Sound gets into the human brain so quickly that it modifies all other input and sets the stage for it, according to neuroscientist Seth Horowitz.

That's why the sound you pair with visuals and brand messaging is a much bigger deal than you may think.

If you're tapping into cookie-cutter stock sound and music libraries, be aware that other brands are also accessing those repositories. As a result, your brand sounds a lot like those other brands. And that's killing your ability to tell your brand story in a distinctive, highly memorable way. It's also causing massive customer confusion.

Instead, we recommend **sonic brand storytelling**—the use of bespoke music, sound, and voices in brand communications. At ChromeOrange Media, we call that trio of custom auditory brand elements the **Brand Symphony™** (the subject of another one of our eBooks)—a brand asset trio designed to align with your brand's voice, values, and personality to amplify brand messaging and uniquely differentiate your brand.

The Brand Symphony forms the basis of your brand's Sonic Brand Blueprint™.

This ebook is for marketers and brand managers who want their brands to be **felt** as much (or more) than they're seen. It's your guide to using sound to tell a richer, more resonant brand story—one that your target customers will hear, feel, and remember.



“Sound gives you sensory input that is not limited by field of vision.”

Seth Horowitz

[The Universal Sense: How Hearing Shapes the Mind](#)



Sonic Branding vs. Sonic Brand Storytelling

It's important to note the distinction between sonic branding and sonic brand storytelling. Sonic branding is the creation of an audio representation of the brand (aka sonic brand, sonic logo, audio logo, sonic identity). It is merely one component of **sonic brand storytelling**, in which the full gamut of sonic brand assets (sonic brand identity, playlist of bespoke brand music and sound design, signature voices, and signature sound effects) work synergistically with visuals and brand narratives to tell highly memorable, engaging brand stories that shape customer brand experience across touchpoints, marketing channels, and brand activations.

A sonic identity ("sonic brand") merely identifies the brand via sound. On its own, it is incapable of taking consumers on an emotional brand journey. To do that, the sonic identity must be used in conjunction with bespoke sound, music, sound design, voices, and sound effects—what we call the **Brand Symphony**.

The objective of **sonic brand storytelling** is to deliver a consistent auditory brand experience that creates and constantly reinforces brand familiarity and an emotional connection with the brand. Distinctiveness is the key. Every sound, every piece of music, every voice, and every sound effect used in conjunction with brand messaging must clearly and uniquely identify the brand, work together to take consumers on an emotional journey, and transform every brand narrative into a memorable brand experience.



“Sound profoundly impacts consumer behavior... evokes specific emotions and creates a mood that resonates with the brand's message.”

Gray Group International





••••• The 5 Pillars of Sonic Brand Storytelling

1. Voice: The Personification of Your Brand

Voice tone, timbre, age, pitch, and accent become the personification of your brand. Choose your brand voice the same way you'd cast a film.

2. Music: Your Brand's Emotional Score

Music creates mood and evokes feelings. What do you want customers to feel when they hear your brand story? Every note, tone, and sound effect defines the emotional perimeter. That's why effective brand stories have distinctive sonic backdrops. We recommend bespoke music (custom composed and exclusive to your brand). Avoid stock music that is readily available to other brands, including your competitors.

3. Sound Design: The Layer of Shine

Subtle sound cues like the click of a button or a transition swoosh aren't just functional. They're emotional triggers that add polish, depth, and memorability to brand messaging.

4. Brand Story: Amplified and Punctuated by Sound

What are the brand narratives that will connect with target customers beyond simply promoting your products or services? By sharing compelling, cohesive, relatable stories, your brand can engage and deeply connect with consumers, foster a stronger relationship with them, and increase their loyalty to your brand. Sound helps amplify and punctuate those stories.

5. Context: Where Sound Meets Life

Sound should be tailored to the context in which it lives—Instagram Stories, retail spaces, phone IVRs, YouTube pre-rolls, etc. The setting determines how the story should feel, not just what it should say.

“The fourth screen is audio. We're seeing that start to evolve as a key strategic thought process for brands and agencies.”

John Trimble
CRO, Pandora

The 4 Rules of Sonic Brand Storytelling

1. Understand Your Audience

Before crafting your story, analyze your target audience—their needs, desires, values, opinions, attitudes, preferences, perceptions, and expectations. In market research, this is known as psychographic analysis. The goal is to use sounds that will resonate and create strong emotional connections with them.

2. Choose Sounds That Echo Brand Values

The sounds and music you use to in your brand storytelling must clearly echo your brand's values and authenticity. When used consistently over time, the sounds and music you pair with your brand messaging will spark instant brand recognition and recall without consumer exposure to visuals.

3. Convey a Consistent, Authentic Sonic Brand Story

Ensure your sonic brand story is consistent across all audio-enabled touchpoints, from audio and video advertising to social media to phone-on-hold—all the places where consumers interact with your brand. Your brand sound must deliver a consistent, authentic sonic brand story that reinforces brand identity, value, and credibility. Over time, this helps build consumer trust and loyalty.

4. Personalize the Sonic Brand Story

As with any other kind of storytelling, your brand's target audience must be able to relate to the sounds and messaging they hear and must be able to see themselves owning and using your brand.



“When you hear a signature sound, your brain creates an image, puts the sound in context, and makes it very personal.”

Stacey Lynn Schulman

The Myers Report





Martin Lindstrom

Author of *Brand Sense: Sensory Secrets
Behind the Stuff We Buy*

Cross-Channel Sonic Brand Storytelling

Video & Ads

Use music and sound design to underscore key brand story elements. Let your voiceover talent **act**, not just read. Strip the visuals and assess whether the piece still moves you. If it does, you've nailed the sound.

Podcasts & Audio-Only Content

Podcasts are pure storytelling through sound. Invest in narrative pacing, character, and sonic branding. Music transitions and voice tone are your entire canvas.

Retail, Events, & Spaces

Create a sonic atmosphere that matches your brand's values. Think of how Apple stores *feel*—spacious, sleek, quiet. Now imagine how your brand should **sound** in physical spaces.

Digital Products & User Experience (UX)

Micro-sounds in apps and websites are often overlooked. But smart sound design in these surfaces can create moments of delight, reduce friction, and reinforce your brand personality.

Why Sonic Brand Storytelling Matters

Increased Engagement

Engaging stories can captivate audiences and keep them interested. In the classic AIDA buyer journey model, interest is the “make it or break it” point that leads to one of two outcomes: 1) the consumer’s interest is sufficiently piqued to spark the decision to purchase the brand, or 2) the consumer’s interest falls flat as they experience competitors’ content and brand activations, which sways their decision in favor of the competition. If the competition is **using sound to drive engagement**, you should be able to guess who is going to win the battle.

Enhanced Brand Loyalty

Over time, consumer engagement leads to brand preference that is fueled by an emotional connection with the brand. **Sonic brand storytelling** can forge that emotional connection faster than visuals or words alone can, and, over time, can lead to brand loyalty and repeat purchase.

Unique Differentiation

Used consistently and purposefully, **bespoke sonic brand assets** create a unique, memorable brand experience that distinguishes the brand from the competition, even in a crowded market.

Heightened Brand Awareness

Sonic brand stories shared across the full gamut of audio-enabled channels raises brand awareness, creates instant brand recognition, helps brands reach a wider audience, and bridges demographic and psychographic gaps.



“Your story is a symphony, not a note.”

Seth Godin

Author of [All Marketers Are Liars](#)



Sonic Storytelling Pitfalls



Joe Herrington
Principal Media Designer
Walt Disney Imagineering

The #1 pitfall of sonic brand storytelling is **choosing sounds based on your own personal tastes**. Personal opinion should never come into play when you're searching for music to pair with your brand's sonic identity.

And, your brand's sonic identity must be paired with music and sound that **appeal to your brand's target customers**—to *their* preferences, not yours. Objectivity and research are therefore your most trusted, loyal collaborators.

Sound must fit the brand.

Other serious pitfalls include:

Inconsistency: Random voices and music—create confusion, not clarity, and are to be avoided.

Overproduction: Creating music and sound (or a sonic identity) and other audio elements that are just “too much.” Sometimes, the most powerful moment is silence.

Ignoring Context: What works in a TV ad might not work in an app.

Using Music from Production Music Libraries: The use of generic music from production music libraries is, perhaps, the worst pitfall of all. Those cost-effective tracks are more than likely already being used by other brands, including your competitors. While this may be an inexpensive way of populating your campaign with music, it will undermine your ability to showcase brand uniqueness and will quickly lead to consumer confusion.

Your brand sound must sound like your brand.

Getting Started ●●●●●●●●●●

Audit Your Current Brand Sound

Where does your brand use sound today? Where should it use sound? Map out every channel and touchpoint. Listen for patterns and gaps.

Define Your Brand's Sonic Personality

If your brand were a musical composition, what would it sound like? Warm and welcoming? Bold and dramatic? The sound you pair with your brand must exude your brand's personality.

Create a Sonic Brand Style Guide

Just as your brand has a brand messaging framework and a visual brand style guide, your brand should also have a sonic brand style guide. The guide should include voice tone, music references, a playlist of brand-fit music, and usage guidelines. Treat it like the sonic counterpart to your visual brand book.

Partner With Sonic Brand Storytelling Experts

If all this seems daunting or just plain outside your wheelhouse, that's okay. Sound isn't an afterthought—it's a craft. Professionals with experience in sonic branding and sonic brand storytelling have the ability to understand your brand story and have the ability to bring it to life through sound.



“In sonic brand storytelling, we have to find the sweet spot — the bridge between brand narratives and customer emotion. That's where demand takes root.”

The ChromeOrange Media
Sonic Brandmasters™





Shahram Heshmat Ph.D.

[Psychology Today, Science of Choice](#)

... A Sound-First Future For Branding

With smart speakers, voice assistants, podcasts, and short-form video dominating consumer attention, we've entered a golden age of sonic brand storytelling. The next generation of brand loyalty will be rooted in sound that will make brands *heard* long before they're seen.

The brands that will win tomorrow are using sound with *intention* today.

The future's most successful brands are *already* telling sound-enabled brand stories that cut through, differentiate uniquely, connect deeply, and last longer. These are brand stories that are *felt*, not just seen or read.

ChromeOrange Media uses **sonic brand storytelling** to help startup, growth-stage, and small-to-medium-sized brands elevate visibility and brand recognition, tell a unique, memorable brand story, differentiate in a more meaningful way, and create sonic brand experiences that ignite customer emotion—so trust and memory scale as fast as revenue.

Our **Sonic Brandmasters** can help you:

- Tune your brand's **voice**.
- Craft its **soundtrack**.
- Shape your **sonic brand story**.

It's time to let your customers *hear* your brand.

SONIC BRAND *Storytelling*

Headquartered in New York, [ChromeOrange Media](https://www.chromeorangemedia.com) specializes in sonic branding, sonic brand storytelling, audio brand strategy, and audio UX and CX for brands in the SMB and small batch economy sectors. Our [Sonic Brandmasters](#) have over three decades of experience in marketing, branding, advertising, music composition, audio recording/mixing/mastering, and strategic business planning to build and grow companies and brands.



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