



# Provenance storytelling for success

**Case Study 3: OBE Organic**  
February 2020



**AgriFutures™**  
National Rural  
Issues

## Storytelling for agribusiness

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This case study is one of a series produced for an AgriFutures project to investigate product provenance storytelling used by agriculture producers and businesses.

In addition to the case studies, a Consumer Trends and Storytelling Technologies report is available analysing existing and emerging options and technologies to support the development and communication of provenance and storytelling.

A storytelling guidebook and useful producer templates to assist with platform selection are also available to help Australian agribusinesses tell their own stories.



Learn more [agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling](https://agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling)

**“At OBE Organic we want to be as transparent as we can. It’s part of building trust.**

**We really want to show our audiences that we as a company give back and when we say we are family farmers - we really are, and when we say you can trust us - you really can. We want to show we walk the talk.”**

- Dalene Wray, Managing Director, OBE Organic

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# Company overview

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OBE Organic produces high quality, grass fed organic beef through a company established and owned by pastoral family farmers.

## Location

**OBE Organic's heartland lies in the Lake Eyre Basin - one of the world's great inland river systems.**

OBE Organic HQ is located in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

OBE Organic sources livestock from family farmers in Australia's Lake Eyre Basin.

## Products

### Certified organic beef

Certified organic beef that is not retail ready (eg: beef primals and beef trimmings).

Product is presented as chilled and frozen boxed beef.

## Other details

### Annual Turn-over

Not supplied

### Employees

11 FTE at OBE Organic HQ  
+  
About 30 farming families as part of the OBE Organic network and this is continually growing.

## OBE Organic Investment in Storytelling Assets

Over the years the company has invested heavily in social media and communication consultants. This was needed to build brand recognition when OBE Organic was too small to effectively market itself, and now these activities are done in-house for the cost of an annual salary and a small operating budget.





# The story

**OBE Organic began operations in the 1990s as Australia's first and only organic meat exporter. They are dedicated to the production of certified organic beef, founded on century old traditions of raising cattle the way nature intended - that is no chemicals, pollutants or hormones.**

OBE Organic have now been successfully exporting for over 20 years - a testament to their product, their passion and their people. As OBE Organic is run on cooperative principles, this maximises returns to all family farms that supply the company. By creating an organic beef value chain in Australia, OBE Organic have opened up a new market for cattle producers, supporting producers to run flourishing farms for generations to come.

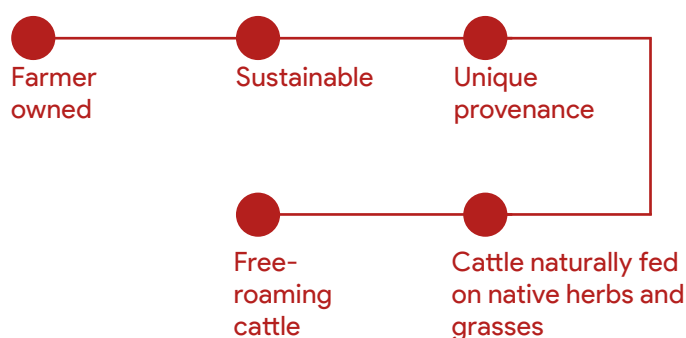
Established and owned by family farmers, OBE Organic's free-range production operation is impressive. The family farmers who supply OBE Organic own millions of hectares of certified organic grazing land. They are united by a shared respect for the environment, and their animals and a commitment to produce the best possible organic beef.

OBE Organic's cattle are sourced from remote properties in the pure heart of Australia. A land of ancient purity, where river channels flow across vast floodplains peppered with natural watering holes.

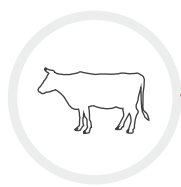
On farms with few fences, OBE Organic's cattle follow nature and roam across millions of hectares of certified organic grasslands. With minimal human interaction, they forage freely all year round as nature intended. OBE Organic's cattle choose their own diet from a range of 250 species of natural native herbs and grasses. This installs a unique flavour to the beef that is appreciated by customers all over the world.

OBE Organic are also very active within the outback community through initiatives such as mentoring programs (for young women), hosting university and TAFE students to create pathways into the industry and for OBE Organic as a company, supporting DFAT export programs and promoting regional events or activities.

## The story elements

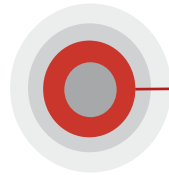


# Summary



## Industry sector

Beef (meat)



## Business size

Small Business  
(because of staff size, not turnover)



## Customers

Wholesalers  
Retailers



## Key markets

### Domestic:

Small market for domestic  
(chilled and frozen)

### International markets:

Americas

Asia

Middle East

## Platforms used to tell their story



Social Media



Website

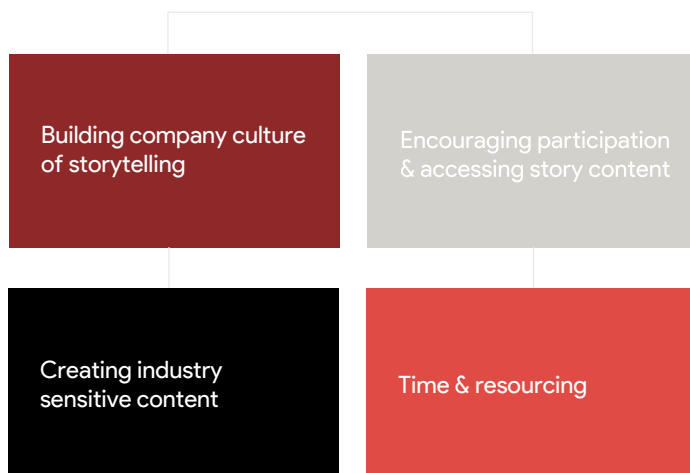


Newsletters



Blogs

## Challenges



# Business goals

**OBE Organic sells to retailers and wholesalers rather than direct to consumers, so storytelling is B2B focused and aims at giving tools to wholesalers and retailers to help them communicate their story to the consumer.**

Due to the remoteness of farms where OBE Organic sources their livestock, it has been important to have platforms that allow their customers to access the OBE Organic story and connect with their product. Consumers are increasingly asking provenance questions and in order to support and expand their position in the market, they need to answer these questions.

OBE Organic tells stories about the product source, provenance and their farmers, to differentiate their product from competitors. This is done through producing stories and images of production regions that focus on animals roaming freely.

Images used in their stories are always authentic - stock photos are rarely used, staying true to their story and being transparent with the consumers is an important value of the company.

Storytelling is an essential part of their marketing strategy to support expansion to new markets. The company will spend a lot of time engaging

with the target market, such as chefs, butchers, or nutritionists and getting them to engage with the OBE Organic story via sharing, following and creating stories and content.

Storytelling promotes OBE Organic as a reputable brand that is trustworthy and one that stands for high quality and natural production of organic beef, thereby ensuring the company enjoys longevity and success well into the future.

Storytelling is also about building OBE Organic's community of people who like and support the company, building a network of people that know the OBE Organic story, get their message out, love and trust OBE Organic and intrinsically know about OBE Organic and as a result, many opportunities come back to the company in-kind.

OBE Organic uses their platforms to demonstrate they are industry leaders - not just in production but in the initiatives they undertake. Participating in their industry and community helps build their success, sharing local and indigenous stories to cast a spotlight on the people who have contributed to the Australian beef industry is an important company value.



Build relationships and trust with our customers



Increase in sales



Educate customers about how it is produced and where it comes from



Differentiate product from the competition



Support market strategy/positioning



Support expansion to new markets



Establish themselves as an industry leader

**“Our stories must encapsulate our understanding of the problems our customers are trying to fix and show how they can do that by having OBE Organic products on their shelves. We communicate how our product can meet their needs.”**

- Dalene Wray, Managing Director, OBE Organic





# Provenance storytelling platforms

OBE Organic use a variety of digital platforms and customer touchpoints to communicate their provenance story. The following pages describe how OBE Organic use the platforms highlighted in red below.



## **Social Media**

Facebook and Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter



## **Video**

YouTube channel embedded to website, including farmer stories



## **Website**

Information rich website with powerful and authentic imagery, including farmer stories



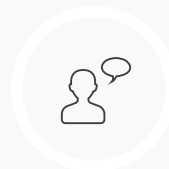
## **Newsletters**

Every two months OBE Organic put out a newsletter using tailored content from blog posts on OBE Organic website



## **Blogs**

Sharing their company, industry and market news



## **OBE Organic's Employees**

In person every time an OBE Organic employee or director speaks to someone outside the company is a moment of truth - it is an opportunity for the company to say who they are and what they stand for

# Platform deep dive social media



**Facebook**  
9,665 Followers  
*August 2019*

OBE Organic engage with their customers (wholesalers and retailers) and the end consumer through their Facebook platform. It allows the company to be specific with who they speak to around the world.

## Impact

Facebook is very effective for OBE Organic, especially when entering new markets as engagement from the audience is very good.



**Instagram**  
2,325 Followers  
*August 2019*

Instagram is used for more visual storytelling aspects.

OBE Organic use their Instagram platform to differentiate their product visually through images of production regions and that are focused on animals roaming freely. The images are authentic, no stock photos are used.

Instagram creates very good conversation and engagement with other businesses as a result of posts and stories. The Instagram Stories function works well to generate audience questions so they can understand what consumers are interested in.

## Impact

For OBE Organic, Instagram is the most effective sales enquiry platform and the best in terms of creating engagement.



## Investment

OBE Organic schedule social media content with Sprout. Content is designed in-house using a program called Canva, which is free.

Learn more

<https://www.facebook.com/obeorganic>  
<https://www.instagram.com/obeorganic/#>

# Platform deep dive social media



**Twitter**  
2,753 Followers  
*August 2019*



**LinkedIn**  
877 Followers  
*August 2019*

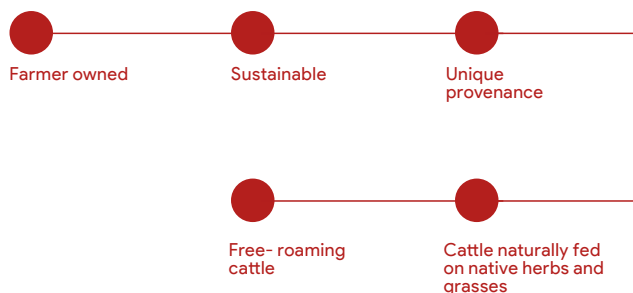
Twitter and LinkedIn are used by OBE Organic to share stories and speak with peers in the Australian beef industry and interested communities.

Twitter and LinkedIn are very effective tools for engagement with their peers. Here OBE Organic uses subtle messaging in their stories to show the company's values.

## Impact

Both of these platforms have been integral to assisting OBE Organic to establish themselves as an industry leader and to connect with their community.

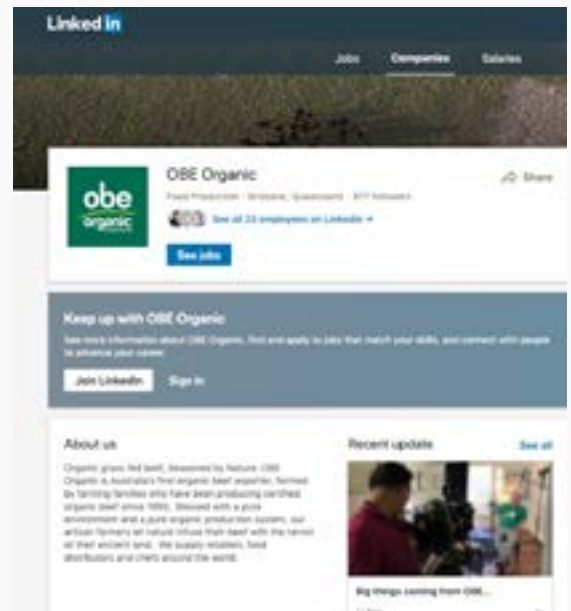
## Story Elements



Learn more

<https://twitter.com/OBEOrganic>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/obe-organic/>



## Investment

OBE Organic use Screen Crowd - a cloud-based platform which displays their audience's messages, photos and video at any event, on any screen at \$35 per month.

**“It might take you a while to find the right people to help manage your social media and initially you might spend between \$500 - \$1,000 per month but it is such a good investment of funds.”**

- Dalene Wray, Managing Director, OBE Organic

**“Customers are asking us questions about provenance, not just about taste.... questions like “Is your beef really grass fed, is OBE Organic farmer owned, can I come and have a look?”**

- Dalene Wray, Managing Director, OBE Organic

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# Platform deep dive website

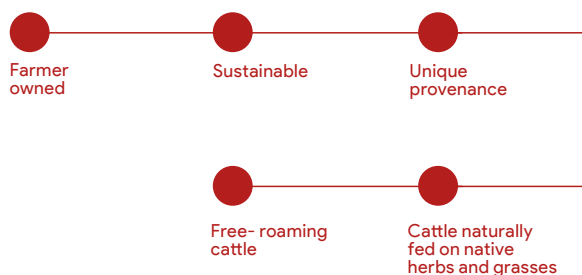


OBE Organic use their website as a hub for people to find easy to access information about their products, farmers and sustainability, as a place to put consumers in touch with their distributors and retailers, and as a sales enquiry channel.

They use their website to tell stories that differentiate their product and share their unique selling propositions. The website is also the platform they use to blog about industry and company news. These blogs are linked to their social platforms and newsletters to drive traffic back to the website where they can find further information about:

- Family farms
- Natural grass fed cattle
- Fence-free, free roaming animals
- Not much human interaction involved in OBE Organic's beef production
- Working with their customers as a united group
- How OBE Organic can solve customer business problems

## Story elements



## Target audience reached

Wholesalers, retailers, customer's customers (the consumer), chefs (depending on markets - South East Asia and Middle East only)

## Impact

The website is the back-bone of OBE Organic's communications, a place to showcase their story, where their product can be found and how they can be contacted. Enquiries do come through their website, as well as multiple other channels.



Learn more  
<https://www.obeorganic.com>



# OBE Organic's Top Tips for storytelling online



- OBE Organic have created an “open-door policy” where audiences can always pick up the phone or contact the business to talk about their concerns so there can be a genuine conversation about it. It is easy to accidentally make a mistake with content that might offend people or others in the industry sector without meaning to. However, it is important to commit to acknowledging the person's concerns and respond or apologise if necessary.
- Keep story content on brand - aligned with brand values, including the people and companies the business connects with. OBE Organic are mindful that posts/stories shared need to also align with brand and company values. People see everything online!
- OBE Organic encourage staff and employees to have their own online presence so company story content can be shared between all and go as far and as wide as possible. Doing this can also boost everyone's professional profile.
- OBE Organic suggest to create stories that showcase company values, without actually saying “our company values are X, Y, Z”. More subtle messaging is powerful and authentic and it is possible to build a more genuine community through this form of storytelling practice.
- OBE Organic try to use every social media technique available - Hashtagging, tagging, linking with accounts that like to feature farming and Australian photos, engaging with comments, conversations and questions in a very timely manner etc.
- OBE Organic puts less emphasis on ‘vanity reporting’ on big social media numbers like reach and engagement, and instead focus on what is most important to the objective. (e.g. reach is important for brand awareness, but engagement is important for motivation to buy). It's important to access the numbers that matter, not just the numbers that look good.
- OBE Organic always use words to describe their products in their stories that are genuine and that can be backed up by evidence.
- OBE Organic utilise as many free resources as they can to learn about digital storytelling - there are a lot of free webinars, YouTube tutorials and podcasts that can be accessed.
- OBE Organic use both digital and face to face storytelling. They use a combination of digital and traditional storytelling, sharing stories online but also during market visits and events - face to face is still important.

# Summary

## Impact against business goals

For OBE Organic, the impact of storytelling has reaped both tangible (sales and strong brand recognition) and intangible rewards (such as this case study!)

Goal	Description	Impact (star rating 1-5)
	Educate consumers to value products, understand how it is produced and where it comes from	★★★★★
	Increase sales	★★★★☆
	Get higher prices	★★★★☆
	Support market strategy/positioning	★★★★★
	To differentiate the product from competitors	★★★★★
	Support expansion to new markets	★★★★★
	Grow market share	★★★★★
	Establish themselves as an industry leader	★★★★★

★  
Low to no  
impact

★★  
OK impact

★★★  
Medium  
impact

★★★★★  
Valuable  
impact

★★★★★  
High  
impact





# Summary

## Platform effectiveness

As OBE Organic's customers are not typically millennials the company has not investigated technologies such as AR, VR and AI but would include them in the mix if their audiences/markets demanded it.

Their website and social media are the most highly engaged platforms and allow them to communicate their story effectively to their different target audiences.

Platform	Description	Impact (star rating 1-5)
	Website	★★★★★
	Facebook social media	★★★★★
	Instagram social media	★★★★★
	Youtube	★★★★☆
	Twitter	★★★★★
	LinkedIn	★★★★☆



Low to no impact



OK impact



Medium impact



Valuable impact



High impact

# Future plans

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**OBE Organic will continue to tell their provenance story - it is working for them!**

OBE Organic plans to further engage with their farmers to provide content for their social media, find budget for photography and video content, and will continue to have dedicated people in-house to engage with customers and the community through social media.

Proudly telling the OBE Organic story not only benefits them, from a sales point of view, but creates a proud company culture and helps them build a community around them of committed and passionate OBE Organic fans.

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**Thanks to OBE Organic and Dalene Wray  
(Managing Director) and Hilary Hastings  
(Marketing Assistant) for their time and  
contribution to this case study.**

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*All images in this document are provided by OBE Organic*

## More information

More information about storytelling and a step by step guide to help producers tell their 'Story For Success' is available on the AgriFutures website [agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling](https://agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling)

This Case Study can be viewed at: [agrifutures.com.au/obe-organics](https://agrifutures.com.au/obe-organics)

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