Stories for success guide

To help you create, document and tell your product provenance story

Provenance storytelling for success

Honey&Fox

AgriFutures™
National Rural
Issues

Storytelling for success

This document is part of a suite of information and resources that aim to assist agricultural and food producers develop and tell impactful provenance stories.

The 'Provenance Storytelling for Success' package comprises a number of resources. These are all available on the AgriFutures Australia website at: www.agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling

Consumer trends, technologies & platforms

Consumer trends and storytelling technologies report

This report details recent research about why consumers are interested in provenance stories and the technologies and platforms that are available to help communicate them.

This document includes short case studies illustrating how the technologies have been used by food and agriculture producers to support their provenance stories.

## Case Studies

Provenance storytelling case studies

These case studies demonstrate how six Australian food and agriculture producers have created impact in their businesses using provenance storytelling and technologies. Each case study details why the business created their provenance stories (business goals) and an assessment of the impact that storytelling has had on their business.

Provenance technologies videos

These detail why four food and agriculture businesses chose the technologies they used for their provenance stories and how they did it.

Provenance Storytelling Guide
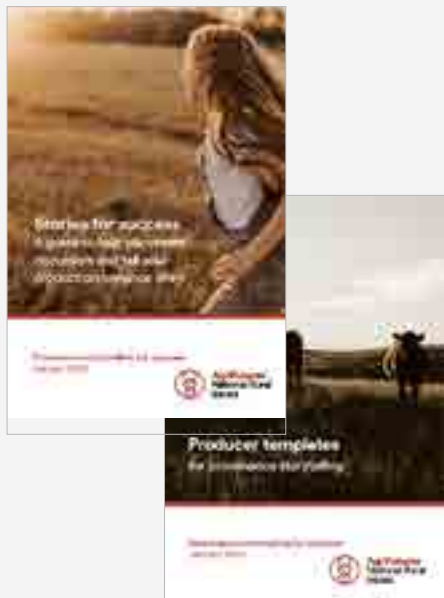
Stories for success (this guidebook)

This handbook provides a decision-making framework to assist businesses to determine how and where to tell their provenance stories, taking into account their target market and audiences as well as their level of expertise and available resources.

Producer templates

These templates provide guidance to individual businesses on how to construct their stories and use them with impact. The templates relate to the decision-making framework in the handbook.

A guide to the 'Storytelling for success' resources

To navigate around the various resources, please look out for these symbols.

Each symbol will appear throughout the resources and provide a link through to other relevant or interesting information.

More information that explains this trend
agrifutures.com.au/consumer-trends

More information about this technology
agrifutures.com.au/consumer-trends

There is a case study explaining this
agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling

There is a video to show how this technology has been used agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling

An easy to use template to help do this here:
agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates

Storytelling guide for producers to tell their story
agrifutures.com.au/provenance-guidebook

_____

Authors:
Jayne Gallagher, Helen Johnston, Emily Mantilla, Genevieve Drury

Correspondence:
Jayne Gallagher, Honey and Fox Pty Ltd
Email: team@honeyandfox.com.au

"Those who tell the stories rule the world"

- Native American proverb

Contents

Why should agriculture businesses tell their story?

The best way to persuade someone is to tell a compelling story.

The descriptive power of stories affects us deeply, influencing both the sensory and motor cortex of our brains.

Stories are a powerful tool in human communication. From childhood we read, listen to and tell stories and our brains learn to file, store and retrieve information in the form of stories, as they are more easily remembered.

At a social level, stories make us relatable and intelligible to others.

In any business there are many stories to tell. Customers are hungry for them. This is particularly so for food and agribusiness. Customers are keen to discover the provenance of the food they buy and then use this information to make choices when shopping and dining.

Morgan, Marsden and Murdoch (in McKibbon 2018) identified three dimensions of food provenance that consumers are interested in. They refer to these as the spatial dimension (place), the social dimension (methods of production and distribution) and the cultural dimension (perceived qualities and reputation). See diagram below:

1	2	3
Spatial	**Social**	**Cultural**
Place	(Methods of Production)	(Quality perception and reputation
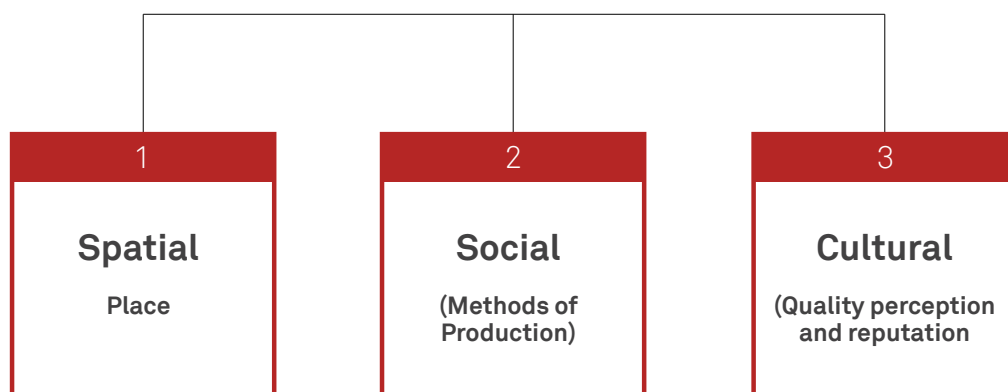
McKibbon, 2018

Provenance stories that include all three dimensions help **build consumer trust** in products and services.

"We are much better storytellers than we are logicians."

About this guide

In this guide we have created a step by step process for agriculture businesses to follow, to help identify and tell their unique stories.

It steps businesses through how to collect and create stories, deliver them in ways that are informative, entertaining and engaging, so they resonate with customers and consumers.

Remember to follow the symbols to help navigate to useful resources and templates.

Storytelling platform decision making journey

Start here to make decisions about storytelling and authenticity platforms to achieve business objectives.

Identify 1

Define purpose and objectives

Identify the audience

Build foundations 3

Understand your resources

Build your website and consider other assets

Build trust 5

Investigate authenticity technology

Choose a platform

Create new stories and content

Collect existing stories and content

Gather and create 2

Plan your content

Choose your platform

Share and connect 4

Build your monitoring systems

Set up KPIs

Measure the impact 6

Step 1: Identify

A business will have many stories, the first step is to think about what the business wants to achieve with its story and then to start harvesting them!

Define purpose and objectives

Define why the company exists, what the purpose of the business is, and why the people involved get up every morning and pursue the business?

"To make money" is not going to cut it with the consumer!

Consumers want to connect with the people in the business and the product on an emotional level.

Customers are asking "why should I buy from you?" If a business can answer that question with an authentic story, the trust of that customer can be gained.

Story objectives

Before a business makes a start on creating their provenance storytelling assets, they should think about what they want to achieve, in line with their business objectives:

Take action: Buy a product or sign up for a mailing list.

Change behaviour: Encourage customers to imagine how a different product or way of doing things might work in their situation.

Communicate who you are: Reveal past strengths or vulnerabilities to inspire and engage others.

Communicate who the brand is: Provide references to the product or service through customers or credible third-party word of mouth.

Share knowledge: The objective is to generate understanding rather than action.

Tame the grapevine: Highlight aspects of a rumor that are untrue or unreasonable.

Share: Describe a situation that audiences have also experienced and prompt them to share their own stories about the topic.
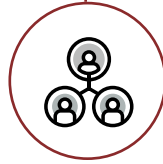
Identify the audience

It is important to think about and understand who the customers/audiences are so the stories resonate with them. Businesses should identify who they need and/or want to tell the story to.

The Consumer Trends and Storytelling Technologies Report examines consumers and what influences them. All of these factors can and should be considered when developing provenance stories for food and agriculture products.

Use the 'Step 1: Knowing the audience' template to describe the customers/audiences and what their motivations might be to buy the products.

What do you think they want to know about the products and industry? What is important to them, what do they care about?

It can be useful to think of real people during this exercise. Ask people around you – people of different ages and backgrounds may give different perspectives.

There may be one audience group, or there may be many.

Businesses can use their digital channels to assist in the process of defining who their audiences are, to understand customer behavior and preferences. Understanding what part of a business story they engage with and how they are engaging with it can be drawn from analytics data, as well as locations and other demographics like age, gender and peak shopping times.

Well resourced businesses may consider engaging a market research company, especially if the target market is difficult to access or there are cultural and language barriers to consider.

An easy to use template to help do this here:
agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates

More information that explains this trend
agrifutures.com.au/consumer-trends

Step 2: Gather and create

Collect existing stories and content

It is time to collect information to contribute to a content library, critical for good storytelling. Produce a bank of interesting stories to tell that are in line with your business objectives.

Some key areas to focus on while collecting content are suggested below.

Use the 'Step 2: Gather and create' producer template to start building stories around these areas.

It is important for businesses to make this a collaborative process, workshopping with staff, as well as family, friends, colleagues and customers.

Set up a shared space (like a dropbox) to gather photos from everyone in the business.

Key people

Business history

Product/ service

Production environment

Production process

Company values

Family

Partnerships

Community
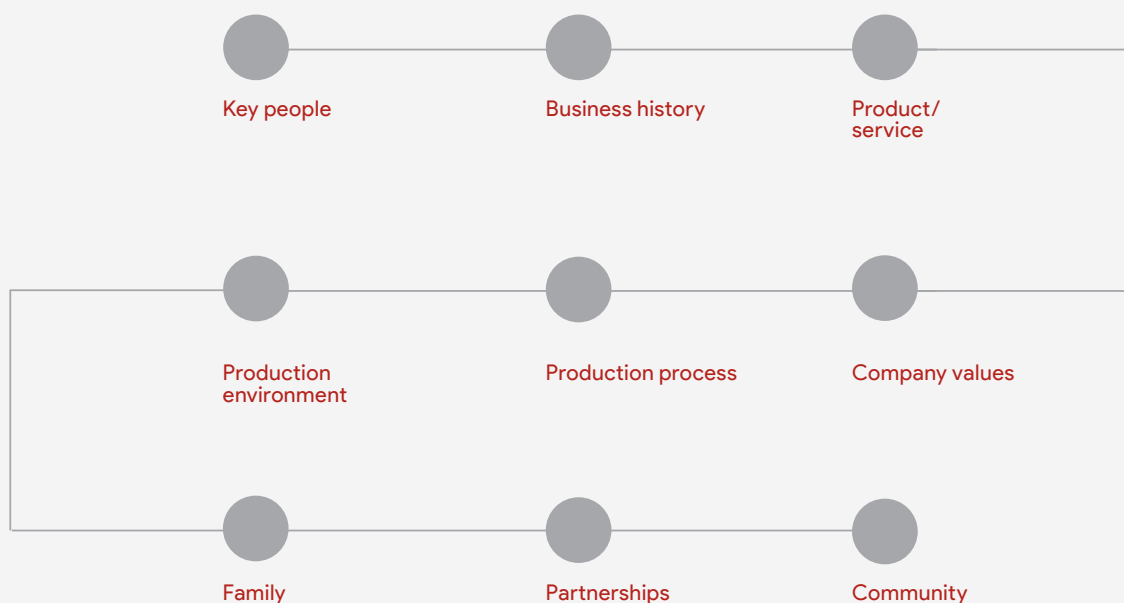
An easy to use template to help do this here:
agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates

Create new stories and content

All engaging stories have some tension or drama. Get comfortable talking about company challenges because they are an essential part of every great story.

They make the story relatable and tap into experiences and emotions that many people have. Businesses can encourage curiosity in the audience to learn more about the product, this can be interesting and educational.

Being genuine and authentic is memorable and the most important thing! The aim is to create a connection with customers. One that says "we understand you and we are like you".

There are five core elements of any story that will help capture the hearts and minds of customers so that when they buy a product, they buy the story.

5 Core Elements of a story

Characters

Characters bind us emotionally to the story.

You can have a main character or product that is the major focus of the story.
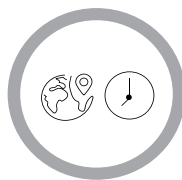
Setting

The setting is where and when the story takes place.

Using descriptive elements transports your audience into your world.
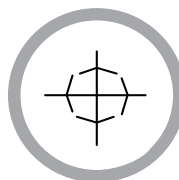
Focus

The narrative needs to have a focus. This is where key messages are important. Lead the audience on a journey. The journey typically has a beginning, a middle and an end.

Adversity

A story is engaging when it describes some difficulty that needs to be overcome. For a producer this can include weather, environment, isolation and product innovation. Reinforce how special the product is.
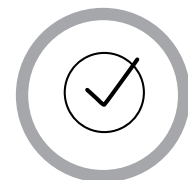
Triumph

Describing how a business deals with adversity brings opportunity for a deeper emotional engagement with the audience. It is this emotional connection that will lead them to find and buy a product.

Designing the story board

Now that the story outline has been determined, it should be told in a way that incorporates all five core elements and structured chronologically and logically into the beginning, the middle and the end.

The beginning of the story

The beginning of the story is very important because this is where the **context** is introduced. The context describes the background and the setting for the story. It is where the characters are introduced. Context is important because this is where people will start to build a connection to the story.

_____

The middle of the story

This is where the **challenges** are introduced. For example, the lead character worked for many years in difficult conditions trying to produce the perfect product, but could never get it quite right. Significant challenges produce bold action and bring the audience along on the journey. Again, use emotional and descriptive language about the characters (e.g. studying in the evenings while holding down a day job).

_____

The end of the story

Here is where you describe the results. Show the success solving the problem produced (e.g. awards for the quality of the product and that it is highly sought after by chefs).

Note: The story may not have an ending per say, if not it should suggest the beginning of a new story of success and continuation!

Story board design tips

There is a story board template that can be used to guide the story board development in Step 2: Designing the storyboard' producer templates. Below are some tips to get started:

1

Get the story ideas onto paper

Sometimes it can be hard to start! Pull together a team and just start gathering ideas, it doesn't have to start perfectly. Don't feel like the brainstorming needs to start at the beginning either, using the story board template, ideas can be dropped in anywhere and linked together at the end.

2

Get images together and shuffle them around

Customers respond to images. Gather images together and move them around throughout the storyboard until a balance is found. This will help identify any image content gaps that might need to be filled.

3

Don't drag out the beginning

Establish a crisp, clear, beginning - a good tone for the story from the outset. Audiences can lose interest pretty quickly if they are stuck at the start for too long.

4

Be flexible and embrace ideas

Try not to lock the story elements down at the beginning. Let the ideas flow and don't discount anything before it has been experimented with. Don't make the content too flat, it will become dry and boring!

5

Make every part count

It's amazing what can be told if the storyteller is restricted to a word count or a number of frames. Think of succinct and exciting ways to convey every frame of the story!

An easy to use template to help do this here:
agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates

Visual storytelling

Images and video are an important part of storytelling. They convey your message quickly and create an emotional connection. They can also be easily shared by other people and accessed by a larger audience.

Through the process of developing the stories in this guidebook, a library of photos and videos will be building. Ensure files are named properly, dated and categorised into story types. This will make it easy for the team to use them and save time if they need to be shared with any creative agencies the business may engage.

Depending on resources available and the target audience you are looking to reach there are various options for producing photo and video content.

Whether outsourced, or produced in-house, it is useful to work up a brief and develop a mood board. A mood board will ensure the images reflect the story, the company values, and feel part of a family of content. An example mood board and photography brief template are available in the producer templates.

An easy to use template to help do this here: agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates

Take your own photographs and video

Invest in good technology - camera, or smart phone.

Remember all the story elements: Take a series of photos that show different parts of the story or process.

Try and be original and authentic - capture something behind the scenes that people are not used to seeing!

Try a new angle or perspective, if you are photographing people consider cropping close to create emotion, or changing the focus on another element.

Consider buying stock photography and video

Select the images carefully. Some can look awkward and inauthentic.

Select images that complement your content and brand.

Select photos that your audience can relate to.

Don't use stock photos for everything you do - people will notice and you can lose trust.

If authenticity is important for your brand, consider hiring a photographer.

Engage a photographer/ film maker

Consider specialisation: Different photographers have different expertise. Get recommendations.

View their portfolio and consider if the style is a good match for the brand or story.

Think about the budget.

Don't just assume they know what the company wants - spend the time to develop a brief, include information about the company/product and values, clear goals of the project and a list of ideal shots to achieve.

Step 3: Build foundations

Provenance storytelling that will create an impact will require some resources to be devoted to it. Businesses often underestimate the resources that it takes to maintain and manage platforms.

The first thing to do in the build phase, is to review the resource definition and determine the level that the business is able to devote at this time. Note you can definitely change your mind later! In fact, many of the businesses showcased started at one level and then as their expertise (and businesses) grew they were able to devote more resources to provenance storytelling.

Understand resources

	Time	Money	Expertise
Basic level of resources	Can devote 1 to 5 hours per week	Can devote $5,000 per annum	Reasonable level of expertise
Intermediate level of resources	Can devote 5 to 20 hours per week	Can devote $15,000 per annum, and other resources	Have attended training course on digital media, can allocate staff time
High level of resources	Can devote 20-30 hours per week Can devote staff to manage storytelling (0.5 FTE or more)	Can devote $25,000 pa or more, and other resources	Can have someone on staff or engage a consultant with expertise

Website

Now you have developed your stories it is time to share them online. Storytelling is a huge aspect of the modern approach to website design.

The business website is a fundamental platform to tell your story as it has an effect on the perceived credibility and quality of your business. Whether the business or product already has a website, or needs to build a new one, here are some things to consider to turn it into a successful storytelling platform.

1 Develop a tone for the visual and written content that resonates with the audience.

2 Think about user experience - the journey the user goes on and what they feel about interacting with the website.

3 Map out the website to follow the story but also think about the usability - test that the site can be easily navigated and interacted with.

There are options for building a website at any level of resource. It is worth investing in this as a platform for your story. Here are some options for various budget/resource levels.

Basic

There are drag and drop template websites that with a bit of skill can be used to provide a company with an initial web presence.

Although this is a low cost option, they can be time consuming to build and produce content for. Template websites can be inflexible design-wise, and some have limited options for SEO (Search Engine Optimisation).

Intermediate

With an intermediate level of time, money and expertise a business could consider having a website built and managed by an agency. It is also possible to have the framework of the site built and updates managed in-house if internal resources and skills are available.

Companies should consider organic SEO when writing content, and investing in an expert to assist.

High

With a good budget and a range of resources, a company can invest in a full digital strategy. A content strategy can be produced and content specifically developed for SEO. Companies can consider a custom built website with their own branded imagery and content, or custom functionality like learning management systems of ecommerce.

Businesses should evaluate the costs against their business objectives.

**An easy to use template to help do this here:
agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates**

Step 4: Share and connect

The storytelling content has been developed and the foundations have been built, now it is time to share and connect with the customer! If done well, this can directly impact their purchasing behaviour.

There are many platforms and technologies available to help businesses share and connect thier provenance story with a customer or target audience. These have been explored in the 'Consumer Trends and Storytelling Technologies Report' and a list of potential platforms is available in 'Step 4: Producer Templates'.

An easy to use template to help do this here:
agrifutures.com.au/producer-templates

Social Media

This step focuses on social media as a widely used and easy to execute and evaluate platform on which to share provenance stories.

Using social media creates an intimate engagement with the customer, it humanises the brand and provides a platform to convey all of the elements of the company story, personality and values.

Businesses can use what they have learnt in the first steps of this guidebook to develop and align their storytelling content with the values of the target audience.

It is important for a business to clearly identify the niche target audience/s and then develop a strategy for communicating the brand directly to them.

1 ——— Who is the audience and what do they want to know?

2 ——— What parts of the company story are they interested in?

**3** ——— How is the company or product different from the competition?

More information about this technology
agrifutures.com.au/consumer-trends

Choose your platform

The social media platform/s the company chooses depends on the target audience, budget and the amount of time and expertise available.

It is important to align the investment in social media with business objectives and to select the platform best suited to the audience type/s.
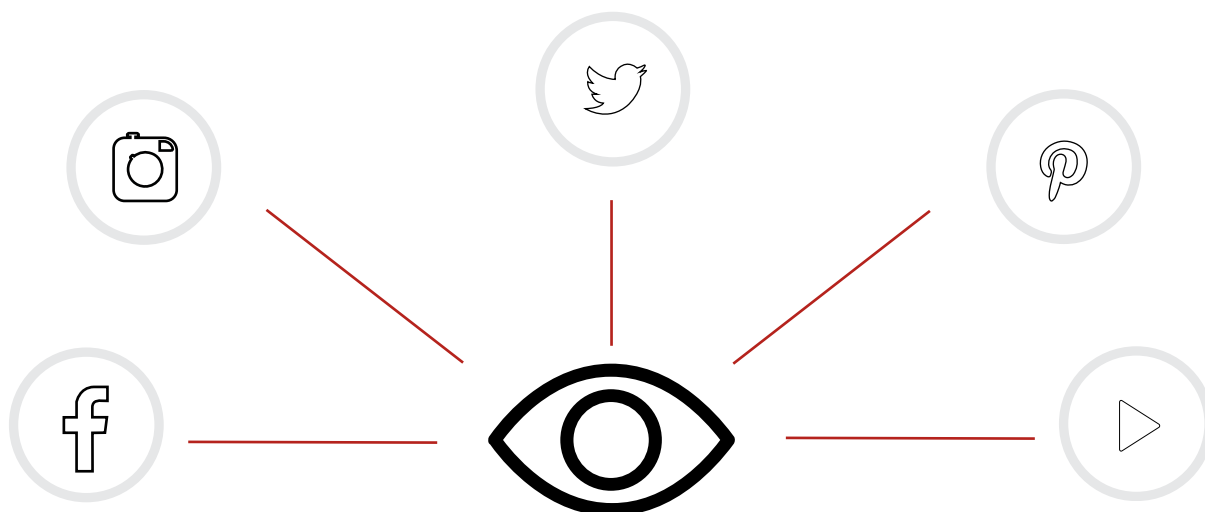
Facebook
Biggest
A large demographic enabling targeting of messaging

Twitter
Interact
Platform for announcements, and conversing with customers

Youtube
Video
Now the most popular storytelling format

Instagram
Creative
Focus on inspirational quality photography and video

Pinterest
Inspirational
Inspire, provide how-to tips and position products

Step 5: Build trust

Consumers are demanding more transparency from the food and retail industry. Using an authenticity platform can provide a business and their customers with the assurance that it is genuine product that they receive.

Authenticity platforms provide another channel for businesses to tell their story and to collect information about the customer.

Investigate authenticity technology

A summary of some of the major authenticity technology and platforms is provided in the Consumer Trends and Storytelling Technologies Report.

The technology ranges from relatively inexpensive and easy to use, like QR codes, through to more complex, high cost technologies, like supply chain track and trace systems, using blockchain.

New technologies are emerging all the time, take some time to do some research to identify potential technologies suitable for the company and products.

Choose a platform

Deciding which authenticity platform to use comes down to 5 key issues. Each business will need to consider these issues in the context of the individual business operations.

Here we have listed the 5 key issues and what needs to be considered when deciding.

Issue: Business objectives

A business may consider using authenticity technology to support storytelling, for one or more of the following reasons:

1 **Meet government regulations**
The platform will likely need to meet government specifications and enable the business to demonstrate compliance.

2 **Meet customer requirements**
The platform should support the business to demonstrate that they meet customer standards and specifications.

3 **Product differentiation**
The platform should help businesses stand out from competitors and support ongoing engagement with customers and consumers.

More information about this technology
agrifutures.com.au/consumer-trends

Issue: Benefit cost

The value of the product and the costs of implementing and managing an authenticity platform will influence the level of investment. Some platforms are relatively expensive so if the product is a lower value product the benefit cost may not be acceptable to the company.

Businesses should consider the costs to implement and manage the platform, the expected pay back period, return on investment, and any investment in training that might be needed (see below).

Issue: Supply chain risk

The level of risk within the supply chain is a key issue in deciding which platform to use. Businesses need to understand the risk that their products might be tampered with and/ or fake products substituted for their genuine ones.

This should be done systematically, reviewing the journey that the product takes to reach customers and consumers. Each step that the product changes hands, is transported, stored and/or repacked should be examined. Many authenticity platforms have resources to help.

Issue: Product format and packaging

This is a fundamental issue. Individually packaged products and products that are sold in bulk have different requirements. There are different platforms suitable for each type.

Individually packaged products can use platforms that use tags and codes that can be scanned from the packaging itself. This is not the case for products that are sold in bulk. In the case of bulk/unpackaged products the business will need to decide how to "batch" the products so that they can be tracked to provide a basis for providing authenticity guarantees.

Each platform provider should be able to advise on how to apply it to the product type.

Issue: Barriers to use

Businesses need to consider whether the platform requires the purchase of special equipment, implementation or modification of new or existing systems and processes and/or training to implement, use and manage it.

Businesses should consider how much time, money and staff resources the business will devote to implementing and managing a platform. This includes fixing it if something goes wrong.

Also consider potential barriers for the customer and/or the consumer. How easy is it for them to use the platform to access the company or product story.
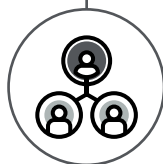
Step 6: Measure the impact

Establish the KPIs

Investment in storytelling is a business decision, and like all business decisions impacts should be measured.

Individual business may have their own Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Businesses should start with their goals for telling their provenance story.

Some suggested goals to measure the impact of storytelling against have been provided here.

Examples of measuring storytelling activities against these goals are available in the Provenance Storytelling Case Studies, where other producers have measured the success of various platforms against their business goals using a simple star rating.

There is a case study explaining this
agrifutures.com.au/provenance-storytelling

Business goals

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

Build relationships and trust

The great thing about a story is that it lives on. Real stories keep on telling, keep on going, and keep on connecting with people.

Build monitoring systems

As part of the storytelling journey it is important to undertake regular reviews and keep the story fresh. Businesses should look at customer feedback and act on it.

Examples of where to find/capture your customer feedback include:

1 Comments and interaction with social media platforms

2 Feedback forms on the business or brand website (put the website url or a QR code on packaging so that customers know where to leave their feedback)

3 Website and digital media analytics (ask the website manager to add analytics to the website if not already done, and report on it regularly)

4 Face-to-face interaction at farmers markets or in-store demonstrations