

**April 2008 | From status symbols to status stories.** Ah, storytelling, yet another holy grail in the wonderful world of marketing. What's new in this field? How about companies no longer inundating consumers with their 'brand stories', but instead helping customers tell a story to other consumers. Not to promote that particular brand, but to make those customers more interesting to others. Curious?

# "STATUS STORIES"



*Wild Bunch premium fruit juices, available in home detox sets, only in Singapore.*

Brands have been telling their stories for decades now. Typically, in a mass-advertising, mass-branding world, the 'telling' has involved reaching (and impressing) as many consumers as possible. Those who literally bought into these storied brands then gained the respect and admiration of other brand-exposed consumers.

Example: if you're Jaguar, and your (expensive) story is about old money with a dollop of English eccentricity and the whole world is aware of this, then consumers craving recognition from anyone impressed with this kind of lifestyle only need to buy one of your cars to bask in the glow of their peers' admiration.

However, while well-known, storied and very visible STATUS SYMBOLS will dominate consumer societies for years to come, they will face increasing competition from STATUS STORIES:

**STATUS STORIES:** As more brands (have to) go niche and therefore tell stories that aren't known to the masses, and as experiences and non-consumption-related expenditures take over from physical (and more visible) status symbols, consumers will increasingly have to tell *each other* stories to achieve a status dividend from their purchases. Expect a shift from brands telling a story, to brands helping consumers tell status-yielding stories to other consumers.

# STATUS STORIES: why now?



Belgian Dinner in the Sky: what people will do for bragging rights ;-)

STATUS STORIES are an answer to some of the major shifts and trends taking place in the consumption arena, from uniqueness, to visibility, to 'alternative status sources':

## 1. Uniqueness



Wanting to be unlike the Joneses

**No longer do consumers want to be like the Joneses, the Mulders or the Li's.** When individuality rules and conformity is frowned upon, owning something no one else has is hot.\* The 'mass' that consumers are willing to put up with is either the stuff they don't really care about—and can get on the cheap at the Wal-Marts and Aldis of this world—and some remaining objects of mass desire like the iPhone or the Mini Cooper. However, even these are likely to be customized and personalized the moment they leave the warehouse, website or store.

The shift from mass to unique explains the surge in niche or even one-of-a-kind products and services. So brands will increasingly *not* want to, or will not be able (if only for financial reasons) to tell their story to the masses. Which in turn means that **consumers buying from these brands will no longer be able to rely on the product or service to provide them with that instant recognition and admiration from their peers.** It is thus up to the cus-

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tomers to tell a story, any kind of story, with the brand providing the ingredients.

\* *Interesting side effect: consumers moving away from familiar, trusted mass brands may soon find themselves truly addicted to everything niche. Consider this statement by the ever-inspiring [Chris Anderson](#): "We equate mass market with quality and demand, when in fact it often just represents familiarity, savvy advertising and broad if somewhat shallow appeal. What do we really want? We're only just discovering, but it clearly starts with more."*

## 2. Visibility



*Old, physical status symbols won't disappear overnight, but preferences are shifting.*

Besides the shift from mass to uniqueness, mature/prosperous consumers now predominantly live in experience economies. Experiences not only are inherently more unique, they also do a better job of providing instant gratification: they're often more affordable, and thus more numerous than old-world status symbols. For more on the experience economy, do re-read our [TRANSUMERS](#) and [SNACK CULTURE](#) briefings.

However, when it comes to experiences, status can only be derived from being seen by others—while experiencing the experience, which may be a relatively brief moment—or by **telling others** about the experiences **afterwards** (which can go on for years ;-). Hence STATUS STORIES becoming more attractive and prevalent.

Oh, and don't dismiss the shift towards an online, virtual world, which means yet another challenge for visible, physical, real world status manifestations.

### 3. Alternative status sources



*There's more in life than shopping...*

Whether it's participating, donating, showing off **skills**, giving or caring, there are now multiple **STATUS SPHERES**, as mass consumption as the sole defining characteristic of societies is starting to feel tired (if not hazardous).

**As societies are slowly starting to bestow recognition and respect on those straying off the beaten consuming-more-than-thy-path, 'new' status can be about acquired skills, about eco-credentials, about non-profit activities, or about the number of visitors to an online presence.** Due to their mostly non-physical, non-visible and often obscure nature, these new types of prestige rely on STATUS STORIES to deliver a status fix to their followers.

### Status-less consumption?



*Luxurious home spa or cinema: wouldn't be any fun if you weren't allowed to tell anyone*

Think our obsession with status as the driver of, well, everything is somewhat far-fetched? Then consider the following: in mature consumer societies, is there really any kind of consumption or even behavior that is entirely devoid of status considerations?

An extreme (consumption) example: is installing a top-of-the-range home spa or cinema, for one's own pleasure and comfort, not to be seen or to be used by anyone but the owner, free of

status considerations? Or will the owner, at one point or another, tell peers about the fact he or she had this spa or cinema installed, and is using and enjoying it? What if the owner was not allowed to tell anyone about these assets?

Or how about this one: is the ultimate and ongoing value of going on an exotic trip discovering remote islands that other tourists haven't set foot on before—the experience itself—or is the real value to be found in the impressive stories a traveler can tell his or her peers on return?

So, for any good or service that is even remotely status-conscious (and we would argue that almost everything is), it may well be worth figuring out how to provide consumers with the tools and ingredients they need to tell a story about it.

As always, we've collected a number of examples from brands worldwide that are already benefiting from STATUS STORIES. Some have been around for a while, some are brand spanking new. We've divided the **manifestations** of STATUS STORIES into the following categories: conversation starters, prepping, and life caching/casting.

### 1. STATUS STORIES & conversation starters

What can be better for consumers hoping to tell peers an (impressive) story than to be *asked* for one? Take a look at the following goods and services that act as STATUS STORY **conversation starters** on behalf of their owners. Not surprisingly, they all revolve around the number one social trend of the last four decades: ME, MYSELF, AND I. In other words, showcasing one's—hopefully interesting and impressive—interests, looks, offspring, taste and so on will prompt a response, giving the owner a chance to tell the story behind the visuals. Feel free to call it the story of 'brand me':



- **Hubwear** sells t-shirts that display a wearer's favorite travel routes in airport codes (think JFK, AMS, MIA, HKG and so on). All shirts, as Hubwear likes to point out, tell a story: from amazing sabbaticals to crazy work trips to earth-saving internships.



- [DNA 11](#) creates personalized art from DNA and fingerprints. For DNA art, a simple method of non-invasive collection includes a mouth swab. The company then harvests a sample of the client's DNA to capture their genetic fingerprint and transforms it into an artistic representation of a person's life code. Prices range from EUR 299 to EUR 892. To get started, clients simply select a size and custom color. DNA 11 then sends out a Finger-Print collection kit that includes: a fingerprint collection card, easy-to-use ink strips, and step-by-step directions.



- Along the same lines, [My DNA Fragrance](#) makes individual fragrances by incorporating their clients' DNA. The company sends customers a home swab kit to collect the DNA sample, which they then use to create the perfume. The one-time DNA swab and lab test costs USD 99.99, while a 4oz. bottle costs USD 134.99. From the site: "The fragrance is subtle and explodes into your unique mixture of exotic smells. The fragrance is delivered in a 4 oz. aluminum bottle which preserves the freshness of your fragrant elixir." Soon to follow: lotion, bath products, and shampoo & conditioner.



- [Eleven Forty Co.](#) cuff links are individually modeled on photographs of a child, a loved one, a pet or a famous role model. They're available in a range of precious metals and are priced from GBP 225 (USD 7,500. Just kidding ;-). When they're not gracing a shirt cuff, the two halves cleverly snap together to create a miniature bust. This isn't the studio's first foray into high-end personaliza-

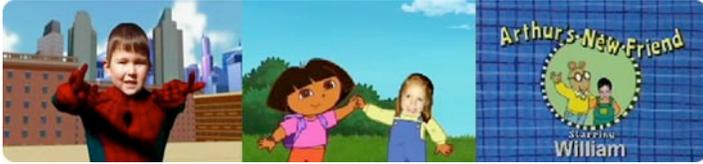
tion. A few years ago, Eleven Forty Co. introduced [Opus](#), an uber-premium football table that's made to order. Customers pick their teams, which can feature friends, family, celebrities or real football players. Each player's head is cast in 3D from a photograph supplied by the customer.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  <p><b>MY VEGGIE TOO</b><br/>CRUST: 4<br/>INGREDIENTS: BROOKLYN CRUST, BLACK OLIVES, CHEESE, GREEN PEPPERS, MUSHROOMS</p>           |  <p><b>DOMINICAN SIDEKICK</b><br/>CRUST: 875<br/>INGREDIENTS: THIN CRUST, CHEESE, EXTRA LARGE PEPPERONI, ITALIAN SAUSAGE, PROVOLONE</p>   |
|  <p><b>MATTY B'S MUNCHIES</b><br/>CRUST: 8<br/>INGREDIENTS: BROOKLYN CRUST, BACON, BEEF, CHEESE, EXTRA LARGE PEPPERONI, SAUSAGE</p> |  <p><b>DAVID REUTIMANN</b><br/>CRUST: 3488<br/>INGREDIENTS: HAND-TOSSED CRUST, CHEESE, PEPPERONI, SAUCE<br/>PH: Carlo pizza, Through Four Pizza.</p>  |
|  <p><b>THE LUCIA</b><br/>CRUST: 4<br/>INGREDIENTS: HAND-TOSSED CRUST, CHEESE, SAUCE</p>   |  <p><b>PLAIN JANE</b><br/>CRUST: 823<br/>INGREDIENTS: BROOKLYN CRUST, CHEESE, SAUCE<br/>PH: We like them to eat, AJR (@ajr) on the way, The Reader Pizza, Pizza Wks, PhillyJewelry.com...</p> |

- Domino's Pizza's new [BFD builder](#) (short for Big Fantastic Deal) lets consumers create the pizza of their dreams—specifying the type of crust, the amount of sauce and cheese, and unlimited toppings—for a flat rate of USD 10.99. The STATUS STORIES twist? Consumers can name and register the pizzas they design in Domino's BFD database, where they can be viewed and ordered by other consumers. Nearly 12,000 pizzas have been registered so far, including the "Happy Birthday Aaron" and "Rhonda Half Doug Half." The site even tracks how many people have ordered each registered pizza so far, and consumers can view the database with the most popular pizzas first, as well as by newest, oldest or alphabetically.



- [Flattenme](#) has developed a line of storybooks that can be personalized with a child's photo, making them part of the story. In addition to their photo, a child's name is also incorporated in the text and illustrations, creating a highly personalized product that children seem to love. How it works? Customers simply upload their child's (or pet's) photo to flattenme.com, indicate their name and gender, and select a book. Books are delivered 10-14 business days later. Flattenme has released four titles since it launched in August: *Tuesday Mushroom King* (about wood sprites), *Here There Be Pirates* (for aspiring Johnny Depps), *The Potty Dance* (for those who refuse to go) and *My Little Monster*. The latter can feature pets as well as children. Books are hardcover and full-color, and sell for USD 33. Also check out [Printakid](#) and [Alphakid](#).



- More kids' stuff: children can now watch themselves interact with their favorite cartoon characters, thanks to Kideo's personalized videos. Customers either upload a photo of their child to [kideo.com](http://kideo.com), or go to a Lucidom retail photo kiosk and scan or upload it there. The photo is cropped down to a head shot, which is then attached to a cartoon body. Which results in a DVD with an animated movie that shows the child alongside popular cartoon icons like Dora the Explorer, Spiderman and the Care Bears. Besides featuring a child's image, his or her first name is spoken by the characters throughout the video and also appears on the packaging.



- Japanese [Yosimiya](http://Yosimiya) is selling bags of rice printed with a newborn's photo, name and date of birth. The bags are shaped to resemble a swaddled baby. But the key feature is that the bags contain the baby's exact weight in rice. Holding the bag will therefore feel like holding the baby. The personalized, made-to-order 'dakigokochi' are priced from JPY 3500 (USD 32 / EUR 22).



- [Requiem for You](http://Requiem for You) is an Austrian firm that can compose a personal requiem on demand. Just launched last year, Requiem for You offers services on three levels, the most basic of which is the composition of an individually tailored requiem. The firm represents a network of composers, librettists and musicians who will write an individual requiem in advance, capturing the client's unique personality and accommodating preferences for balance among vocal, instrumental and textual components. Styles available include baroque, classical, romantic, jazz or Broadway musical, with text in German, Latin or English. A personal laudatio is also available. In addition to composing the piece, Requiem for You can also produce

an audio recording using a team of freelance artists, orchestras and recording studios. Finally, upon request the company can arrange a performance of the requiem. Prices reportedly range from EUR 20,000 for the requiem's composition to EUR 400,000 for the all-out live performance. Truly a STATUS STORY that will turn heads before and after departure to greener pastures.



- [My Kleenex](http://My Kleenex) provides users with the opportunity to get their favorite unlicensed photo or drawing printed on their Kleenex box. Customers can create their own designs and styles with the help of the website, and they can choose from dozens of backgrounds, add their own personal digital photo, and then generate a 3D preview to see what the box will look like. The boxes are USD 4.99 each, and customers can develop multiple designs and multiple addresses. Hey, if even Kleenex can play this game, surely so can you?

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## 2. STATUS STORIES & PREPPING

While, per the above, it would be nice if every product or service could be an instant conversation starter, the majority of offerings (and the accompanying STATUS STORIES) will need a fair bit of prepping on the side of the owner. After all, the moment the focus is purely back on a unique/little known product or invisible experience, **it will be the storyteller who somehow has to initiate and capture his or her audience's interest and respect.** Hence the prepping: brands providing customers with the necessary details if not ingredients for a STATUS STORY. From a product's provenance to its uniqueness to its eco-friendliness. Some random, cross-indexexamples:



- **Function Drinks**, a fusion of clinical science and all natural beverages, is the brainchild of Dr. Alex Hughes, an orthopedic surgeon at UCLA. Drinks come with names like House Call, Vacation and Light Weight, and promise healing, mood improvement or weight loss. The founder's expertise and naming instantly add a story to what could have been just another health drink. In the same vein, check out (and learn from) **Firefly Tonics**: all-natural drinks made in the UK, containing herbal extracts, fruit juices, as well as 'magical' New Zealand honey, "famed for its digestive and antibacterial properties." Expect the beverage sector to be a source of STATUS STORY inspiration for years to come.



- What has more value: the actual dining experience at Amsterdam's **De Kas** restaurant, or the story about De Kas that guests can tell others after they've been? (De Kas' story, by the way, is that although they're located in the city of Amsterdam, they have their own nursery, where they grow herbs and Mediterranean vegetables in the summer, and various kinds of lettuce in the winter. ('Kas' is Dutch for greenhouse). Next? How about letting guest pick their own vegetables? ;-)



- Taking a cue from the travel industry, hip stroller manufacturer Bugaboo has mapped out 20 **Bugaboo-friendly daytrips** for adventurous parents. From their site: "Discovering foreign countries, making new friends, tasting exotic dishes. After becoming a parent, this doesn't need to stop. (Re)discovering a city together with a child can be an inspiring experience. Strolling through New York or Berlin with a Bugaboo Daytrip you will discover new aspects of a city: a funny elevator, a little known park or a hidden gem of a shop." Trips/maps can be downloaded for free as PDFs.



- Ian Schrager's **Gramercy Park Hotel and Residences** in New York offers guests an exclusive key to the city's only private park. Which above all makes for a great story upon return.



- The Financial Times is launching a GBP 1,700-a-year (USD 3,350) membership for three new networking sites. The service, called **FT Executive Membership Forums**, will allow execs to “maintain contact with peers and luminaries [...] and to stay in touch with the key issues facing fellow members.” There will be forums for technology and media executives, for CEOs, and for executives from luxury industries. The cost includes a free subscription to FT.com, admission to any of the FT’s conferences, 20 percent off further tickets and face-to-face members’ events. (Source: The Guardian.)

Needless to say, 'exclusive access' is the next big thing for anything related to status, and thus for STATUS STORIES. Stay tuned for a dedicated briefing on ACCE\$\$ later this year.

## Local and authenticity still rule

Need more STORY PREPPING inspiration? You can't go wrong with local and, yes, wait for it, authenticity! After all, local is authentic, local is trusted, local is often eco-friendly, local is quality and BEST OF THE BEST, and thus a rich source of stories. This is of course what firms like Italian Ermenegildo Zegna (9 factories in Italy), Swiss Rolex or British Vertu (luxury phones are assembled by hand at the company's headquarters in Church Crookham, UK) have been selling for a long time. And millions of consumers will gladly continue to pay a premium for these goods as they tell a story of authenticity, of connoisseurship, of the owner knowing where in the world to source the best of the best for each product category.

But luxury brands aren't the only ones to profit from local STATUS STORIES:



- **LocalChoice Milk**, sold by UK supermarket giant Tesco, is a new line of milk that is produced by local farms and sold at local Tesco stores. Responding to customer requests to make it easier for them to buy food which is genuinely local to their area, Tesco has started paying a premium to smaller local farmers which is above the rate they are paying to farmers who supply their standard milk. This means that farmers supplying new 'LocalChoice' milk will receive up to GBP 0.22 per liter, which is one of the highest prices paid to any producer in Britain. The company assures their customers that LocalChoice will not only reduce food miles but will also provide confidence to shoppers that if they buy a local product, they are helping their local economy and local suppliers, in particular small, independent family farmers. The milk packaging is branded as LocalChoice, instead of as Tesco, and uses simple handwriting on the labels to underscore the regional value message.



- **Unto This Last** is a miniature Ikea, situated on Brick Lane in London's East End. Like Ikea, prices are low and many products are sold as flat-packs (pre-assembly optional). Unlike Ikea, everything is manufactured locally, and the designs aren't overly familiar. The workshop uses the latest 3D modeling software to design and produce innovative and inexpensive furniture, which it sells directly to the public. Orders are manufactured to measure, within a week, at mass-production prices. And since pieces are made to order, customers can choose from various finishes and sizes, like adapting chairs to fit specific seat height requirements. Needless to say the furniture, besides beautifying customers' homes, provides the owner with plenty of STATUS STORIES to impress friends and family. Also check out German company **Manufactum**, which sells 'old school' quality products with original stories attached to them, from all over the world.



- And let's not forget apparel: knitwear brand **Flocks** gives customers details about the individual animals that provided the wool for their sweaters and mittens. Every item in young Dutch designer Christien Meindertsma's collection can be traced back to its source. Since one sheep supplies exactly enough wool for one sweater, each sweater is tagged with a specific animal's ID number, and comes with a certificate: the animal's passport. Information provided includes breed, weight, year and place of birth, and a picture of the sheep. Sweaters are priced from EUR 475.



- Swiss **Netgranny** is a collective of 15 grannies recruited by Swiss fashion label **Tarzan**. The grannies knit socks on demand and sell them online. Customers can choose their favorite granny by picture, pick the color of their socks, or opt for a granny 'surprise' design. It will take a granny approximately two weeks to knit a pair of socks, which costs EUR 26, delivery included. Oh, and some breaking news: some grannies now also make wrist warmers ;-)

## Eco

STATUS STORIES and eco-concerns are a match made in heaven. As consumers' desire to find out (and tell others) about the origins of a product becomes a given (carbon footprinting,

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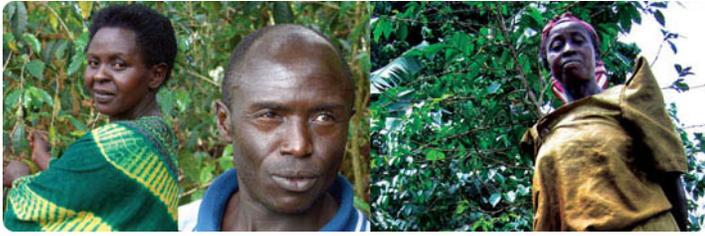
anyone?), companies will have to take STATUS STORIES to the next level. Questions no one ever asked a few years ago will become an integral part of any purchasing process. How was the product made? By whom? How did it get to its point of sale? What effects on the environment will it have after purchasing? Learn from:



- **Tree-Nation** is an ecological project with a focused objective: to plant eight million trees in the Sahara to fight desertification, as large-scale plantation of trees will increase the land's productivity and regenerate the soil. Set up as an online community, members can buy their own tree and become the guardian of a tree that Tree-Nation will plant in its park in Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world. Every tree is grown from seed and, before being planted, spends a minimum of three months in Tree-Nation's nursery. Members can play an active role in the development of the project online: contributing suggestions, sharing photos and gathering ideas in the Tree-Blog or creating their own projects. Prices range from USD 10 for an acacia to USD 75 for a baobab tree. So far, over 25,000 members have raised money to plant almost 12,000 trees. The story doesn't end here though: the end goal is a park of eight million trees in the shape of... a giant heart, visible from space. From a 'giving' STATUS STORY angle, it hardly gets better than this.



- **Dole Organic** lets consumers "travel to the origin of each organic product". By typing in a fruit sticker's three-digit Farm Code on Dole Organic's website, customers can find the story behind their banana. Each farm's section on the website includes background info, shows photos of the crops and workers, and tells consumers more about the origin of Dole's organic products.



- **Crop to Cup** buys directly from African coffee farmers and represents them in consumer markets. Through Crop to Cup's website, consumers can trace their coffee back to the farmers who produced it and interact with them (along with roasters and other drinkers) through message boards, forums, ratings and reviews. The result is that drinkers of Uganda Bugisu AA coffee, for example, can read profiles of the farmers who produced the beans, including Bernard Walimbwa's 17-member family, which manages roughly 30,000 coffee trees in the Bugisu Region of Uganda. Crop to Cup's site is still rough around the edges, but its approach is a promising one, from both an ethical and a marketing perspective.

| Our Footprint  | Notre Empreinte                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Environmental Impact</b>                              | <b>Impact sur l'environnement</b> |
| Energy to Produce: (per pair)*                           | 3.1 kWh                           |
| Energie utilisée (par paire)*                            | 3.1 kWh                           |
| Renewable energy (Timberland-owned facilities):          | 5%                                |
| L'énergie renouvelable (sites appartenant à Timberland): | 5%                                |
| <b>Community Impact</b>                                  | <b>Impact sur la communauté</b>   |



- Footwear manufacturer **Timberland** now places a "nutritional label" on each shoebox, educating consumers about the product they are purchasing, including where it was manufactured, how it was produced and what effect it has on the environment. Nice touch: messaging inside the box asks customers "what kind of footprint will you leave?" and provides a call to action for them after purchase. Hey, it takes two to tango!

## Story labels



Next? Add even more info (of the multimedia kind) to these various 'story prepping labels' by adding any kind of interactive code to products. Keep a close eye on (or better yet, experiment with) SMS codes, QR codes, RFID, UPCODES and so on, especially as more and more phones will come with code reading software installed. In fact, expect infinite STATUS STORY prepping (includ-

ing images, videos, micro-sites) to be 'attached' to products in the years to come. A few examples:



- **ColorZip** lets phone owners access large amounts of data from anywhere. Much like the old black-and-white barcode, users can point their phones at the multi-colored square, and view an enormous spectrum of information. Advertisers can use the code to insert a movie trailer on a 2D movie poster, place a full menu on a delivery van, or provide the latest sports news on the back of a sweater or t-shirt. Or add STATUS STORIES prepping of course.



- Dutch fashion brand **Wickd** calls itself 'tech fashion.' Wickd combines clothing and 2D barcodes technology to allow wearers of Wickd shirts, longsleeves or jackets to take their favorite websites with them. Every Wickd product has a unique **Shotcode** logo printed on it, which the wearer can link to his or her website. Using a cellphone camera, people can take a picture of the logo and the phone browser will open the related website. This can be a Wickd-hosted website, a user's MySpace page, their blog, Flickr account, etc. Besides targeting consumers, Wickd also sells shirts to companies for events. Prices range from EUR 29.75 to EUR 40.

More on this online/offline interaction in our **INFOLUST** briefing.

## More participating, more doing

And on and on it goes. The following examples deal with participation, creation and **MAKE-IT-YOURSELF**, rather than one-way consumption, meaning yet another 1001 ways for brands to actively involve consumers (if not co-create), including the unavoidable bragging rights and STATUS STORIES:



- We've featured music industry innovators **SellaBand** before: fans sponsor unknown bands and artists by buying one of the band's shares, or parts. Once a band has raised USD 50,000 by selling 5,000 parts, SellaBand sets up a professional recording session. The recorded songs are sold to new fans, and both the artists and owners of their parts (Believers) receive a share of the income generated through music sales and advertising revenues. Recently, believers who own parts in Cubworld, Neme-sea, Second Person and Maitreya received their first modest payout (in SellaBand's words: "enough to buy a beer at the pub, or maybe even a round or two"). More interesting than the financial gain is of course the accompanying STATUS STORY.



- StyleShake** lets creative customers design their own duds, picking from a selection of quality fabrics and putting together dresses from virtual pattern pieces to create truly personal pieces that can be delivered to their doors (in the UK, western Europe, North America or Australia) in as little as 10 days, with prices starting at GBP 99 (USD 197). What's more, the garments are produced in London, so customers needn't worry about the use of sweatshop labor. Also check out **freddy&ma**, which lets customers design their own handbag for between USD 200-400.



- Oh, and then we haven't even looked at STATUS STORIES originating in the online world, from one's digital status (check out British **Qdos**) to one's gamerscore(G), a measure that corresponds to the number of Achievement points accumulated by an Xbox Live user.

### 3. STATUS STORIES: life caching and casting



If telling and sharing the story is the (status) experience, then our **LIFE CACHING** trend falls neatly into place, too. We first spoke of life caching a few years ago, at that time pointing out people's need to collect and store memories:

*"July 2004 | LIFE CACHING: collecting, storing and displaying one's entire life, for private use, or for friends, family, even the entire world to peruse. The life caching trend owes much to bloggers: ever since writing and publishing one's diary became as easy as typing in [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com), millions of people have taken to digitally indexing their thoughts, rants and God knows what*

else; all online, disclosing the virtual caches of their daily lives, exciting or boring.

Now, as we've often argued, trends are a manifestation of new enablers unlocking existing human needs. For life caching, the enduring need is collecting. Human beings (fueled by a need for self-worth, validation, control, vanity, even immortality) love to collect and store possessions, memories, experiences, in order to create personal histories, mementos of their lives, or just to keep track for practical reasons. And in an economy in which many consumers favor the intangible over the tangible, collecting, storing, displaying and sharing experiences is exciting, and even necessary."

**With status stories becoming more important, some life caching services take on a new role: helping to recall and illustrate the stories that consumers want to share to entertain and impress others.** So anything you can do to help your customers 'cache and cast', i.e. keep track, store, show and share the experiences you've supplied them with, may meet with a warm welcome. You don't have to do this all by yourself. There are dozens of life caching/casting platforms to partner with these days, from [Dandelife](#) to [Justin.tv](#) to [MyBabyOurBaby](#) to [Ustream.TV](#) to Apple's [Time Machine](#) to Pickl... And yes, this list includes Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, Photobucket and YouTube, too. **Expect (especially younger) consumers to become comfortable with storing and sharing everything they do, create and experience, reaping some status dividends in the process.** Which should provide you with plenty of innovative ideas on how to assist them.

## Opportunities



*Now, however you choose to apply STATUS STORIES, do make sure your customers don't bore others to death!*

Plenty of opportunity to be had here, but first (and one more time) let's look at what STATUS STORIES are not:

- This is not about brands telling their story to the masses, but helping individuals to tell stories.
- This is not about buzz or word of mouth. We're talking about consumers first and foremost telling stories about their experiences or purchases in order to get a status boost, not consumers recommending or badmouthing a brand. Word of mouth as a side effect will of course occur, but cannot be the primary goal when assisting or prepping customers with stories.
- STATUS STORIES will not replace STATUS SYMBOLS, but they will become increasingly important, and may compete with some of the more tired, mass status symbols.
- STATUS STORIES are not barred from becoming mass status symbols. Successful niche brands can of course still become big and well-known, eventually losing the need for STATUS STORIES and moving into more traditional branding spheres. From [innocent drinks](#) to [Crocs](#).

With that out of the way, a very simple way to get started with STATUS STORIES—if you haven't done so already—is to come up with at least one existing and one new product/service that incorporates a conversation starter, or some kind of story prepping, or an element of life caching/casting. Or all three. For some quick inspiration, study the examples in this briefing, or ask colleagues and friends about their personal STATUS STORIES (obscure holiday destinations! extreme hobbies! surprise concerts! language classes! new restaurants! new books! dating conquests! 3 day workweeks!) to get creative juices flowing.

In fact, if you're really serious about this—why not come up with a nice matrix (conversation starters, prepping and caching/casting to the left, and uniqueness, visibility and alternative sources to the right)—and dream up an innovation for each combination? If you do, be sure to tell us ;-)