



UNITING AN ASSOCIATION & A BRAND AROUND WHAT MAKES THEM DIFFERENT

The Relais & Châteaux Story

BB&Co
Strategic Storytelling

Started in 1952 with six establishments on the road from Paris to Nice, Relais & Châteaux has grown into a collection of [525 of the world's finest restaurants and hotels](#), each of them completely independent and utterly unique. Behind each of these exquisite properties are the equally unique members of the association — chefs, hoteliers and hosts who have a deep passion for hospitality and the simple art of living well.

The Back Story

“What do the world's finest chefs, hoteliers and hosts have in common?”

Throughout its history, [the Relais & Châteaux brand had always taken a back seat](#) to the individual brands of the member properties and of the members themselves, some of whom are the most celebrated chefs and hoteliers in the world. There was a reason that Relais & Châteaux attracted these unique, dedicated, award-winning individuals, and there was a [deep bond that held them together](#), yet no one had been able explain what that was: to their guests, their staff, the media, the world.

Relais & Châteaux knew that to move towards a brighter future, it [needed to fully uncover, define and share its brand story](#), and in doing so strengthen its ability to use that brand to further unite its members, attract guests and drive reservations to properties. Relais & Châteaux also needed to use their brand story as [a springboard for new strategies, plans and activities](#), using thought, word and deed to carve out a differentiated position for itself in the complex and crowded world of hospitality.

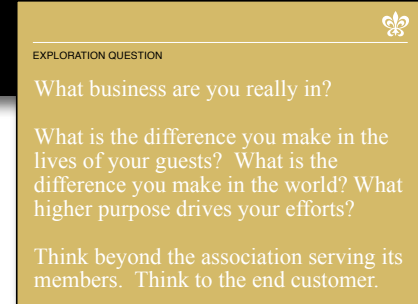
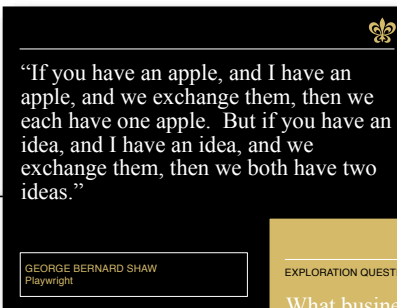
Uncovering Your Story



StoryFinding is a collaborative process that leverages the collective brainpower and experience of organizational leaders, trusted partners and relevant experts to help an organization define its brand, set a vision for their future and tackle key strategic challenges and opportunities. The outcome is a rich articulation of your brand's strategic story—e.g. what distinguishes it, the higher purpose that drives it, where it's going and why it should go there—which serves to align, focus and inspire your extended team and guide you as you navigate towards your future.

It begins by bringing the right people together

Developed and facilitated by members of the BB&Co team while they were still at Envisioning+ Storytelling (E+S), the session, held at a Relais & Châteaux property in Berkshire England, included executives and board members of the association, representation from their new ad agency Y&R, and key strategic partners such as American Express, Lancel and Moët & Chandon. Relevant experts were also recruited, such as the CEO of Butterfield & Robinson, the CEO of Expedia France and celebrated Irish poet John O'Donahue, who had just published his book *On Beauty*.



The space and time to uncover the true, defining purpose

Staying at a Relais & Châteaux property, we all experienced, first-hand, the hospitality and gastronomy that a million guests worldwide are able to enjoy each year. Over two full days, 21 people explored, played with and interpreted the aspects of the Relais & Châteaux brand that make it unique and meaningful. In addition, we collectively identified the philosophical elements that define and drive the brand and its members. In doing so we were able to create a deeply authentic statement as to what makes the brand so cherished by its members and guests.

Uncovering Your Story

A story as unique as the brand itself

Following this Envisioning session, we developed the Brand Storyline. This rich document articulates the key elements of the Relais & Châteaux brand story, serving as an enduring and comprehensive resource and “ultimate brand brief” for key staff, strategic partners and suppliers, such as their advertising agency.

In this document we defined the Five Ideals of Spirit for Relais & Châteaux, which capture the common beliefs shared by all members. We also captured the Five Unique Guest Experiences inspired by those Ideals, which clients can recognize and expect when travelling throughout the world of Relais & Châteaux.



THE IDEALS WE SHARE	THE EXPERIENCES WE CREATE
Fellowship	A Passport of Friendship
Personal Generosity	The Soul of the Interloper
Sense of Place	A Taste of the Land
Harmony	A Celebration of the Series
Being	Awakening to Art de Vivre



The internal rallying cry

From this session and Brand Storyline came the key realization that Relais & Châteaux is much more than just a collection of the world's finest hotels and restaurants. Rather, it's a fellowship of the world's finest hoteliers, chefs, restaurateurs, each of them utterly unique, but all of them united by shared beliefs, passions and an approach to hospitality. "United by what makes us different" became their internal rallying cry, capturing their cherished and shared distinctiveness.

An enduring story to hold in your hands

Bill Baker and the creative team at E+S captured the brand story in two oversized print pieces that weaved the story's distinctive language with the brand's evocative imagery. These two stunning publications were developed for distinct audiences — those inside their association (members and their staff); and those outside their fellowship (media, partners and guests).



Films to capture hearts and minds

Two brand films were also developed and produced. “The Soul of the Innkeeper”, a 12-minute piece, is used for internal purposes, orientating new members and their staff, helping everyone understand the ideological underpinnings that shape the brand and the association. The “World of Experiences” is a shorter film used at openings and press events. It speaks more to an external audience of customers and media and celebrates the Five Unique Guest Experiences that Relais & Châteaux offers around the world.



Telling Your Story



Bringing the story to the world

The Brand Storyline served as a springboard for a new global advertising campaign developed by Y&R Paris, with the tagline, “All Around the World. Unique in the World.” This external language builds on their internal rallying cry, giving a public voice to the members’ communal beliefs.

Living Your Story

StoryActivation helps leaders take the core concepts inherent in their brand story and connect them to the tactical plans for their business and operations. The process helps them to develop and deploy a strategic plan that will assist them as they navigate through change and, in doing so, bring their brand story and strategic vision to life. StoryActivation makes real your brand story and creates a tangible impact that will resonate and endure.



The story brought to life for every employee

BB&Co helped the association develop “Relais & Châteaux Days”, where senior leaders from the association spend a day at a member property and fully orient the staff to what it means to be part of Relais & Châteaux. These interactive workshops help ensure each employee is able to not only tell the Relais & Châteaux story, but also embody that story through the experiences they create for their guests.

Planning for the future

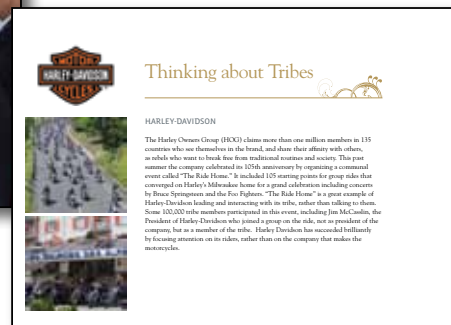
BB&Co helped the International President of Relais & Châteaux craft a Four-Year Strategic Plan that took the key tenets of the brand story and projected them into the future. This plan was presented at the 2008 International Congress in Vienna and unanimously accepted by the members of the association.



Living Your Story

Ensuring the story and its impact are realized

Through subsequent StoryFinding processes, BB&Co has helped Relais & Châteaux tackle various strategic challenges, address opportunities and develop new programs, products and initiatives. One StoryFinding process helped the association identify and determine the role of Cuisine in the world of Relais & Châteaux and the role of Relais & Châteaux in the world of Cuisine. Another StoryFinding was focused specifically on developing marketing strategies that would enable the brand to “activate its tribe,” connecting more people around the world to the exquisite pursuit of art de vivre and living well.



The power of the right story

**5 annual
congresses**

during which the
membership came
together around their
story

**25,000
staff**

now with a
clarified direction
and understanding
of the story and
their role in it

**62
countries**
in which the
brand story is
brought to life
each and every
day

**4 years of
strategic
planning:**
developed
and being
implemented

**1 cherished
brand**

that is now living its story
and capturing its right place
in the world of hospitality

**525
members**
all working
towards a
collective
vision

**1,000,000
guests**
around the world each
year who experience
the story first-hand

“This work has truly enlightened us all as to what makes our brand, our properties and the experiences we create for our guests so unique and meaningful. Our story has enabled us to fully unite our members, engage our staff and explore and develop new paths for our future. We are aligned and inspired like never before and deeply excited about where our brand and our business are heading.”

Jaume Tàpies, International President Relais & Châteaux

Storytelling, when applied strategically, can connect people to ideas, to each other and to a future that is achievable and worth achieving. If you would like more information on how BB&Co can help you uncover the one true story of your brand, set a strategic vision for your future, and then engage and align the human energy needed to bring that brand story to life and make that vision real, contact us at **+1 604 868 1924** or **bill@billbakerandco.com**