

# True Story...

Shaped by our deep brand experience with many of America's greatest retail companies, we created True Story, a boutique branding consultancy, to meet the unique challenges of retail brands – an area of focus unaddressed by both traditional brand consultants and advertising agencies.

We have personally participated in the 'go to market' process season after season (in wholesale and retail companies) and are obsessed with making the brand work we deliver inspirational and useful for everyday decision-making across the company – including design, merchandising, marketing and stores. We bring both a strong point of view and an empathetic approach to each assignment, and are sincerely invested in our clients' success.

Retained by CEOs, Presidents and CMOs, we have a proven track record in igniting brands and driving sustainable results.

# Some True Story clients

eBay

Levi's Global

Nike Global Women's Training

Bare Escentuals

Dockers

Cole Haan

Food & Wine Magazine

Carmel Valley Ranch

Loft (Ann Taylor)

Old Navy

Stride Rite

Method Home

New Zealand Tourism

Jimmyjane

Travel + Leisure Magazine

Alonzo King Lines Ballet

Real Simple Magazine

# What we believe

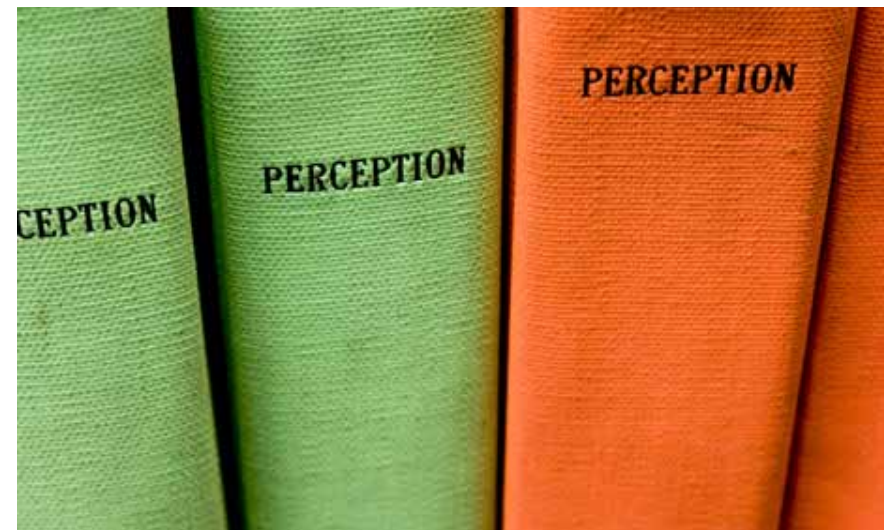
A brand's true story must first and foremost be excavated and sculpted from the inside out. Research won't tell you what you should believe in. Consumer insights alone won't build a successful brand.

A brand is not something that is applied on to a product but rather precedes it and drives its full expression in the marketplace.

The marketing department alone does not create the brand. The whole organization does. Every decision made – from product design to merchandising, stores to consumer communications – is an opportunity to amplify the brand or derail it.

Analytic vs. creative, strategic vs. stylish, these are false dichotomies, 'old think' constructs that don't recognize the unique dynamics of a retail brand.

A successful retail brand must be both enduring and constantly creative. Even the best brand positioning is not enough to inspire and guide the countless people who touch the brand season after season, delivery after delivery.



# How we're different

We've lived the pace of retail, met its inexhaustible demand for newness and handled the relentless pressure of 'comps'.

We've seen up close the full power and leverage of an aligned retail brand. We also know the myriad ways the train can fall off the tracks... and the cost of getting it wrong.

We understand and value the key role that image, style and design play in retail. Our hands-on experience gives us credibility across all product-related parts of the business.

Our work does more than inspire; it directs and insists on action. Everything we do is designed to lead the consistent ongoing creative expression of a brand, from product design and strategic merchandising to the retail environment and consumer messaging.



# What we do

While we customize our work to meet each client's needs, True Story's singular expertise is providing the critical through line from brand positioning to execution – a unique mix of deliverables that is specifically built for retail brands. These include:

## Brand Story and Positioning

Infused with a consumer, product and retail point of view, these are the cornerstone ideas around which the brand is built.

## Look & Feel

A brand's unique and ownable aesthetic and emotional territory that aligns all disciplines in execution and sharply differentiates the brand.

## Creative Brand Platform

An overarching idea designed to amplify a brand's positioning in a creative and actionable way. It definitively articulates the brand's sweet spot and gives the team both a mantra to rally around and a platform from which to consistently execute.

## Global Brand Image Brief

Grounded in the Look & Feel, this work defines proprietary executional guidelines and guardrails for the brand image. Our clients use this as a strong brief for agencies and internal creative resources.

## Integrated Brand Retail Brief

Key brand, merchandising and consumer insights are used to develop a cross-disciplinary brief that drives a powerful brand experience at retail – both 'bricks and mortar' and e-commerce.

Built into the scope of every True Story project (following our deliverable) is an advisory period during which we provide guidance and counsel to top management and beyond on how to optimally embed and integrate our work throughout the organization.

# Who we are

## Amy Schoening

The hallmark of Amy's career has been her ability to see the larger potential of an idea and to inspire product design, merchandising, marketing and the consumer experience to exploit it. Prior to starting True Story, among other high profile marketing jobs, Amy held the positions of Chief Marketing Officer at Gap, Inc. and Executive Vice President, Banana Republic where she was responsible for Brand Strategy, Marketing Communications, Direct Marketing, Visual Merchandising and Store Design. She spent the first half of her career at Hill Holliday working on a range of businesses including Reebok and Hyatt Hotels.

## Laura Jacobs

Laura brings a unique combination of retail, fashion and strategy to her branding experience. After an early career in advertising for brands like Levi's, Reebok and Lever Brothers, she spent over ten years in senior marketing roles at Banana Republic. As Vice President Marketing, Laura led the expression of this highly successful retail brand through all aspects of the customer experience using a blend of positioning and marketing skills, creative direction and communications expertise.

## Carl Byrd

Carl Byrd, True Story's creative partner, is an award winning creative director and the talent behind many groundbreaking and iconic campaigns for Gap and Target. Over the past 15 years, he has helped shape the modern look of fashion advertising. With his insistent optimism, sense of style, love of music and graphic designer's eye, he is creating commercials and imagery for a roster of new clients including Macy's, HSN and the Children's Place. ByrdBarlage was created in 2007.





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