

# WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

## A POCKET GUIDE TO STORYTELLING

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# LET'S BEGIN

Stories inspire. They speak straight to the heart.

To captivate, persuade or galvanise: tell a story.

We've been telling stories ever since we were seated around the campfire, when our ancestors used stories to build communities, to set the tribe's moral code, to keep themselves safe, to strengthen bonds.

Stories are one of the most powerful forms of communication. Humans have an innate understanding of stories. Stories engage us, move us, connect us. They can disrupt the status quo, change hearts and minds. Stories light up our imagination into seeing new possibilities and visions of the future.

It's not data and numbers that move us to act. It's stories.

# WHY STORIES MATTER

In these days of information overload, a good story cuts through the noise. It grabs you, holds your attention, inspires you, excites you. A good story is sticky, staying in the mind and easily shared. Stories make the complex simple. They compel us to care and help us remember.

In the world of work they act as a wrapper for the message you wish to share: your values, ethos, successes, failures, how you coped with adversity, how you triumphed. Stories act like beacons, drawing us in.

News, announcements and press releases alone won't grow long term relationships with your audience.

People forget data, but remember the story. It's the best vehicle we have for communicating.

# WHAT STORIES SHOULD WE TELL?

There are many kinds of stories within an organisation that are ripe for picking: customer stories; employee stories; leader stories; origin stories; career stories; personal stories.

And you can serve them up: in-person, face to face, in a presentation or all hands meeting, via video, a post on LinkedIn, a company blog post, on social media. Anywhere your audience is waiting to hear from you.

# OUR SIX-POINT STORYTELLING FRAMEWORK

1. The resulting action (you want your audience to take)
2. Set the scene
3. Make it human
4. Zoom in tight
5. Keep it simple
6. Lift the lid

ONE

# THE RESULTING ACTION

What do you want your audience - team members, colleagues, customers, investors, the outside world - to feel? What action do you want them to take? What is the message you want them to understand? For example, do you want the support of your peers? Or to change the behaviour of your team? Or do you want your customers to trust you, so they buy from you? Whether it's B2B or B2C, we always talk person to person, not company to company. So consider: who is your audience and what action do you want them to take? Tell a story to get your audience - whoever they are - to feel something. When you feel, you act.

## TWO

# SET THE SCENE

Painting a picture for the audience brings your story to life. A factory in Wales. A community in Brazil. A coffee shop in Brooklyn.

Adding in a few details of time, place, location, weather and people. Details aren't trivial - they make stories more relevant, interesting and memorable and help us visualise what's going on.

## THREE

# MAKE IT HUMAN

Human beings are interested in human stories. That's as true in our working lives as it is outside of the 9-5.

Who are the heroes? We want to hear when people have experienced something that changed their outlook, when they overcame a challenge, when they had a problem and found a solution. Always, there's a moment of transformation, a lightbulb moment, a revelation. Sometimes it's a big a-ha moment, other times more subtle. When we hear such a story, we can empathise. It gives us a hook to hang onto and by which to measure our own experience.

So shine a light on the people. Those who got the company started. Those working in the engine room, propelling the organisation along today. Customers who love what you're doing. Leaders who can share moments of vulnerability.

Find the human angle: engaging content is people-centric not product-centric.



## FOUR

# ZOOM IN TIGHT

Whether it's a customer success story or about how your team is guiding company culture, zoom in tight. Keep the field of distance short by choosing a specific focus over a high-level, overarching view. Throw the spotlight on a small handful of characters. Making it specific and including details will make the story more gettable than if you talk about a huge cast of people we can't get close to.

## FIVE

# KEEP IT SIMPLE

Communicating our stories simply and effectively means being clear and concise, avoiding complexity, technical terms and acronyms. Don't make the audience work too hard to keep up. Lose the jargon, or at least unpack and explain it. Everyday, conversational language is best.

**SIX**

# LIFT THE LID

We are surrounded by stories but sometimes we need to get curious to identify and unearth them. We need to lift the lid on where we work, on the figurative boxes - the structures of an organisation - we and our customers operate within.

What goes on beyond the surface of your boxes? Whether that's your brand, business or organisation, a product, a department or a project - good stories lie within waiting to be discovered. Be curious, ask questions and lift the lid to tell the stories of what's inside.

# OUR 6-STEP STORY CANVAS

<b>1</b> <b>WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?</b>	<b>2</b> <b>SET THE SCENE</b>	<b>3</b> <b>MAKE IT HUMAN</b>
Who is your audience and what do they care about? Think about what you want them to feel, do or think after hearing your story.	Paint a picture. Sprinkle in details to bring your story to life.	Focus on people not products. Create empathy and connection.
<b>4</b> <b>ZOOM IN TIGHT</b>	<b>5</b> <b>KEEP IT SIMPLE</b>	<b>6</b> <b>LIFT THE LID</b>
Who is/ are the hero(es)? Keep your action tight to retain the audience attention	Ensure the story is single-minded. Lose the jargon. Make it easy for your audience to understand.	Dig deeper to unearth new stories. Shine a light into the dark corners. Get curious and ask smart questions.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

We partner with heart-led and purpose-driven individuals and teams as we help evolve their leadership, communication and organisation's culture through the humanising power of storytelling. A husband and wife team, we value building strong relationships with those we work with. We like to do things a little differently from a regular storytelling agency or training company, treading a path guided by a spirit of curiosity and creativity. We pour into our work our own passion for the role stories play, and how they shape both our individual and collective direction in life. Human behaviour, organisational culture and the future of work fascinate us. We work out of our studio overlooking the Thames estuary or in our garden cabin with our border terrier.

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