

What's Your Story?

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The Red Ball: One Message

If you need more than ten words to convey your core message, it's not clear or concise enough. If your core message is clear to you, it will be clear to your audience. You should have only one core message per interaction; most people have enough trouble concentrating on more than that as it is.

The 90-Second Rule

Your opening is vital- those first 90 seconds will determine the fate of your presentation. In this time, you need to convince your audience that they should keep listening and that what you have to say is important, new, interesting and most of all relevant to them.

How do you do that? Open with an intriguing question, a surprising insight, engaging data, an example, or a personal story. The audience will give you 90 seconds of undivided attention; after that, you've either won them over or you haven't.

Once Upon a Time

Remember what happened in *The Lion King* right after Mufasa died? Of course you do- who doesn't? That's because people remember stories, not facts or slogans. Find a story or vivid example to convey your message. A good story will have a dramatic or emotional effect on your audience and make your message more memorable. Find the specific moment that supports your claim or insight.

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The Tarantino Rule

Every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end... but not necessarily in that order. You should choose the best way to tell your story. Open with powerful data or a "mental picture" and continue to sketch your narrative from there (while pushing your "turn-off points" to appear only after you've made the audience interested enough).

WIIFM: What's In It For Me?

Your audience will always ask themselves "What's in it for me?" and "Why should I listen to this?"

Tell the story from their point of view, use analogies from their world, and put yourself in their shoes. If there are gaps between your world and theirs, don't ignore them- find a way to bridge them (even if it means researching your target audience; it'll be worth it).

The Day After

Think about the day after your presentation: How did your audience's lives change? Are they going to do something differently? Do they know something they didn't before? Do they feel something? Let this train of thought guide you in building your presentation.

What do you want your audience to...

- **Know:** In order to get your audience to do what you want, what data do they need? Do not overload them with information that doesn't serve your core message; share only what is relevant to the message and the audience.
- **Think:** What point of view are you trying to pass on? What opinion or state of mind do you want to leave them with?
- **Feel:** What feelings should my audience have to drive them to action? What should they feel about me, the topic, my ideas, or the organization I represent?
- **Do:** What is the specific action I want them to take? Be sure of your goal- the entire presentation is built upon it.

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Turn Your Data into a Story

Data should serve the story, not the other way around. First, try telling the story using only adjectives instead of numbers. Build a flow based on the "meaning" of the data rather than the nominal figures. Instead of "100,000" say "a lot". Once the story works and serves your goal, you can swap the adjectives back for real numbers. Additionally, remember to convert numbers into the audience's perspective. When Steve Jobs launched the iPod, he talked about "1,000 songs in your pocket" not "5GB".

The Bridge Model

Imagine a bridge across a river. On one side is the problematic reality: the **PAIN**. On the other side is the "promised land" or the anti-pain reality: the **IMPACT**.

When describing the pain, clarify whose problem it is and make it tangible using data and illustrative moments.

When describing the impact, make it promising but realistic. Your **PRODUCT** or solution is the bridge between the two. Describe it tangibly and ensure it matches the scale of the pain (don't describe a catastrophe only to present a tiny solution).

From a narrative standpoint, you can start with the pain, the product, or the impact- you can cross the bridge however you like.

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Storytelling is Like a Key... If you turn and twist your story in the right direction, doors will open.



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