



What's the Story?

MAY 2018

What have we learned?

In celebrating our 21st Anniversary last month, we were reminded of several other lessons we've learned, which are worth passing on. So here goes:

What's in it for the audience? Write this line at the top of your document and before you write anything else, answer it. Whether it's a proposal or a presentation you will have taken one giant step forward in focusing on your target and giving them something worth listening to. **Communication ends where boredom begins.**

A single message: If you throw 3 balls at a person they may not even catch one. If you throw one ball, they will almost certainly catch it. It's the same for delivering a message, have one strong simple message and everybody will get it. **Ask Donald Trump!**

Beginning, Middle & End: Presentations are like books, films and stories. They need a structure we can follow. Peter Ustinov, the famous actor, said: "Good presentations have excellent beginnings, fine endings and as little as possible in between." **What can you cut without loss?**

You are the message: An audience judges your message in the way they judge you. Do they feel you're interested in them and their problems? Have they learned something new? If they don't think you care, they're unlikely to like your message. **Make them glad they heard you.**

Start a Storybook: The fastest way to engage an audience is to start with a story, preferably one about you – funny, sad, surprising, authentic. When you next hear a good story, whatever the source, write it down in your Storybook. **Fortune favours the better prepared.**

European Speechwriters' Conference - Cambridge

We went to the European Speechwriters' Conference in Cambridge last month at King's College – world famous for its chapel and choir.

The speechwriters came from all parts of Europe (and elsewhere) including 3 speechwriters to Prime Ministers and an ex-speechwriter to President Obama.

As you might expect their speeches were full of stories, jokes, metaphors and aphorisms - with very few slides.

Stephen Krupin, Obama's speechwriter, told us about the strong emotional feeling of working in the Oval Office at the White House. He talked about putting photos of audiences up on their office walls to see the people they were writing for. He was in no doubt that every word he wrote should be written with that audience in mind.

He told a story about a man weeping at the funeral of Franklin Roosevelt.

He was crying so much that a man standing nearby said "Did you know the President?"

Still sobbing the man replied "No, but he knew me!"

Hear a podcast of these speeches via this link <http://europeanspeechwriters.podomatic.com>

A plug for Trinity College - Wren Library

If you visit Cambridge you must visit the Wren Library. As its name suggests, it was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and completed in 1695. It's a beautiful building which houses a unique collection of original manuscripts and printed books by some of Britain's most famous scholars and writers, including Shakespeare! Plus John Milton, Isaac Newton and A.J.Milne. (author of Winnie the Pooh) The latter two attended Trinity College.

Quality not Quantity

Since there was a chance of giving an impromptu speech at the Speechwriters' Conference we borrowed a short joke from The Penguin Dictionary of Jokes by Fred Metcalf. (First the joke then the story).

The managing director suddenly remembered he had to make an important speech that evening at a high-level conference, so he called in his assistant and asked him to write it for him.

"How long are you intending to speak for?" His assistant asked.

"About half an hour," the MD replied.

The following morning, as the managing director arrived at his desk, the assistant brightly asked him how the speech had gone.

"It was an absolute disaster!" he replied. "Half of the audience crept out and I could hardly hear myself speak because the other half was snoring. It would have been fine if it had lasted for half an hour, as I told you, but you gave me a speech that lasted a whole hour."

"No, I didn't." said the assistant. "I gave you a half-hour speech. But for safety reasons, I gave you two copies!"

We are grateful to the late Fred Metcalf, who spoke at several Speechwriters' Conferences, for compiling this outstanding dictionary of jokes. A good book to have at hand when you're looking for an appropriate right joke or story.

It's all in the mind.

We're keen tennis fans - and enjoyed a lovely day at the Monte Carlo tennis tournament watching one of our favourites, Rafa Nadal, who gave an extraordinary exhibition of clay court tennis.

He went on to play in Barcelona and again won the competition. His opponent in the Final was an unknown young Greek player - a player who had never competed against a top 20 player, let alone the number one seed.

His name was Stefanos Tsitispas. Stefanos tells the story of how recently he was swimming in the sea in Greece with his father. Suddenly he found himself in trouble and thought he was seconds away from death.

Luckily his father came to his rescue. Stefanos said that this taught him what true fear really is and that now he no longer fears any opponent on the tennis court in quite the same way.

Of course, next time he faces Nadal on a clay court he may be less foolhardy!

But there is definitely a lesson to learn from this story - like Stefanos, next time you're facing something fearful get excited and embrace the opportunity.

Good luck with your presentations, pitches & stories

Barry Graham & Sally Clare

