



JANUARY 2016

We've been in business for 18 years and sending out a newsletter quarterly for 15 of them. We have decided that it's time for a relaunch! Not only have we re-named it but we're also changing the frequency of its publication.

"What's the story" will be published monthly. We plan to include stories that resonate with us. And we will continue to give tips on best practice for not only writing and telling your business stories but also to help you make persuasive presentations and winning pitches.

What's your story worth?

Significant Objects, a US Research company, decided to test the value of sales stories written to describe and enhance the value of a number of items they planned to sell on e-bay. All the items cost just over \$128 but after putting a story behind each item, they eventually sold them all for \$3612 in total – a staggering 2,700% increase on the cost price!

We may not ever have the opportunity to achieve comparable results, but we can all tell a story that adds real value to our proposition. So where do you start?

Begin at the Beginning

My story started some years ago with an advertising client I had never met. His name was Bob and he was the Marketing Director of a car rental business.

I went to see him and the first thing he said was "Barry, tell me a story. Tell me about yourself." He caught me off-balance, but I knew I had to come through his test. I had stories - I just had to bring them to mind. What seemed to me like minutes was only seconds in fact and I was off.

When I finished he was ready to start the meeting but I stopped him. "Bob, you have the advantage, I want a story from you". He laughed and readily told one. Every meeting after that we always started with a story. We got to know each other well and socialised outside the office.

As time went on his stories would often relate to what was happening in the business. Problems they had – depots not operating fully, customer complaints, PR issues. Whenever they were relevant, I took the problems back to the agency and we came up with solutions.

Bob was very pleased with our pro-active attitude and the help we were giving him. Over time, the stories helped his bottom line ... and ours!

I often think if Bob had never asked me to tell a story, we would never have achieved these results.

Always include a strong Story in every Presentation

In 2015 we were reminded again and again how powerful stories are. If you want a fact to be remembered put it in a story. Research suggests it is then up to 20 times more likely to be remembered!

Surprisingly the majority of presentations we heard didn't include stories, so here are 10 tips on writing and telling stories to ensure that you are remembered.

You can find stories every day from your personal experiences. One sure sign of a potential story is if it makes an impact on you – an emotional connection which excites you.

So think of yourself as a journalist, with a notebook. Look for stories daily to bring your presentations alive.

“Great stories build relationships and make people care.” Shane Snow

10 Storytelling Tips

1. You must own the story you tell – it must be your story and it must matter to you (if it doesn't matter to you, why are you telling it anyway?)
2. You must feel the story is the right story for your audience. One they can identify with and which shows them a solution to a problem they have or could have.
3. Your story should make just one point. So identify the point you're trying to make in your presentation. This will give you a single-minded focus for your story.
4. Your story should show how you overcame [or not] a challenge or hurdle which stood in your way to achieving [or not] your goal.
5. Your audience needs to be put into the right frame of mind. So set the scene, let them imagine and place themselves in your story

6. Introduce the key players against a colourful background. Bring them alive – use their language and actions.

7. Develop the plot. Keep it short – ideally 2-3 minutes. Provide essential detail using powerful imagery wherever possible.

8. Ask yourself one important question: “Is there anything I can cut without loss?”

9. Tell your story to a colleague and ask them to give you feedback on what they remember of your story, what they think it was meant to 'say' and any particular imagery and words that stood out. Listen and learn and edit.

10. Give your story a title. Naming it can provide the theme for your presentation.

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but now it's too late.

Over recent years, BBC Radio 4 has been running the “Listening Project” in conjunction with their local radio stations and the British Library. They invite 2 people to speak to each other to talk, often about something that they have been reluctant to talk about before.

The BBC has a mobile booth that travels around the country. They record 45 minutes of conversation and this goes into archives at the British Library. The BBC producers select a 3 minute section to play to the Radio 4 listeners. We recommend you listen to some of them.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01cq3b>

They'll remind you of the value of 'having that conversation, even those difficult ones' – with colleagues, clients, friends, parents, – even with yourself.

Successful business owners have such conversations at the start of each New Year – a great resolution for us all.

“Listening is a positive act - you have to put yourself out to do it.” David Hockney

You only have to be brave for 3 seconds

If you have any doubts about what 2016 may hold for you, we want to share a piece of advice a father gave to his son about having the courage to ask a girl out. It was in the 2011 film “We’ve bought a zoo”. It struck a chord with us and is a mantra we now repeat in moments of self-doubt.

“I only have to be brave for 3 seconds.” Simple!

Good luck with your stories, presentations and pitches in 2016

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