



## Your Strategic Story in 5 Days

---Storytelling That Gets Results---

### Discovering an “Important” Message Isn’t Enough

The first time I stood in front of an audience, I made every presenting mistake you can make. I was boring, confusing, rambling, and I’m guessing, easily forgotten. Eyes glazed over, pens clicked and toes tapped while I tried to deliver what I thought was an important message.

I realized if I was going to get my audience to connect with my message, I was going to have to figure out how to get them to connect with me. So I spent years studying and implementing the methods of storytellers, stand-up comedians, motivational speakers, and coaches. **The results have proved to me that messages don’t truly connect because they’re important – they connect because they’re memorable.** With a little preparation, you can make the depressing uplifting, the boring engaging, and the overwhelming - actionable.

I noticed that often when we face an audience or potential client, we share our expertise. Perhaps a job title, the number of years we’ve been in our field, or an example of the extent of our knowledge. We try to be impressive.

This is a mistake if it gets in the way of us sharing our humanity as well -- something humble, relatable and not designed-to-impress. **The truth is - we don’t connect to experts. We connect to human experts.** If you only check either the human box or the expert box in their minds, you create a half-connection with them.

### **Before they listen to what we say, they listen to who we are.**

The most important data point in your whole message is you, and the most influential argument you can make is to share why you care about the work you do.

So let’s revolutionize the way we pitch ourselves and our services to others. Let’s write a Strategic Story that gets results.

There’s no greater tool in your communication arsenal than storytelling, and the great news is that storytelling is a totally learnable skill. A story is a container for meaning. It’s a way of injecting a message into someone else’s brain without them knowing it. In other words, a story is a lesson in disguise.

A Guardian study found that after a presentation, 5% of attendees could recall a statistic that was shared, but 63% of attendees could recall a story that was told. Stories result in amazing retention. So this isn’t just to fill time or distract from your point. It’s actually to help the listener better remember it. Storytelling enhances your message.



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Great stories don't come out of nowhere. Great stories are shaped, edited, and rehearsed. More importantly, they are designed to influence the exact action you want your listener/audience to take.

**Great stories aren't spontaneous - great stories are designed.**

### **Your Strategic Story in 5 Days:**

- 1) CHOOSE -- your most desired response**
- 2) WRITE -- out your story idea**
- 3) SHAPE -- into Hook Scene Point**
- 4) TEST & EDIT -- utilize feedback & 4 Story Elements**
- 5) PRACTICE & SHARE -- till it's precise + casual**



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### DAY 1. WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO NEXT

In this guide, I'm going to teach you the 4 elements of every great story (aka your pitch), how to add humor, and how telling the story of your own relationship to your work can open conversation, create connection, and empower others to act on your information.

But first, I want you to articulate the #1 result you're hoping to get from your listener:

As a result of hearing my pitch, I want this person to...

Care? Donate? Remember? Recruit others? Something else?

Okay, great!



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### **DAY 2. WRITE A DRAFT! (Don't worry about shaping it just yet.)**

Here's a main prompt to get you writing...

**Tell us HOW you came to care about the work you do.**

**The most important data point in your whole message is you, and the most influential argument you can make is to share why you care about the work you do.**

**And some other prompts if you get stuck. Remember, pick one or two and see where they take you.**

#### **You as a Person**

*What was an obstacle that you had to overcome in your life to get where you are now?*

*Growing up, what is something your family taught you (or didn't) about being an adult?*

*What is something you wish you'd learned sooner about adult life?*

*What is something that people don't know about you?*

*Who was a big inspiration for you growing up? Why?*

*What was your first job and what's a skill it taught you that you still use today?*

*Describe a moment where "making a difference" truly resonated with you.*

#### **Your Organization/Message/Service**

*What is it about this work that you care most about?*

*What is something you identify with in the people your programs serve?*

*What's the most fun thing you've done as part of your job?*

*What is an embarrassing moment you've had while doing this work?*



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*What is something about your work that makes you feel frustrated or excited?*

*How has a participant's life improved after your org got involved?*

*What is a situation this org made possible that wouldn't have happened otherwise?*

**TIP: To connect your personal story to your professional story, choose a universal theme (i.e. Alone, Challenges, Hope, Kindness) both have in common.**

MY STORY:



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### DAY 3. SHAPE IT into a story.

Let's check in with what we already know intuitively: every story has a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. But to get more value from these familiar terms, let's think of them as a Hook, a Scene, and a Point. Shaping your story as a Beginning (Hook), Middle (Scene), and End (Point) makes your personal experience motivating and memorable to others.

#### BEGINNING / HOOK: Start with a question or an interesting sentence that pulls them in.

The Beginning is the Hook. It's a sentence or powerful question that draws you in, gets you to nod, because it's a statement about you. You are the hook. Most people don't do this. Most of the time we get right into our information, leaving the listener to wonder idly about your personality and qualifications as a source. They may connect much less to your message as a result. Before your audience listens to what you say, they listen to who you are.

#### Example hooks:

"What is a service you believe more people should have access to?"

"What's a class you believe should be given to all young people?"

"How many of you felt unprepared for life after graduation?"

"How many of you felt alone when..."

"The coolest thing I've ever done as part of this organization is..."

"Something few people know about me is..."

**TIP: To connect your personal story to your professional story, choose a universal theme (i.e. Alone, Challenges, Hope, Kindness) both have in common.**

MY HOOK:

#### MIDDLE / SCENE: This is where you share your story.

The Middle is the Scene. The Scene is the shortest and most visual version of the story you want to tell. This is where the hard work comes in, because you have to cut every detail that is unnecessary, even if it's good. (Tip: another person listening as an editor will help you find these cuts faster than you can.) You really want to trim any time and brain-consuming information here to a few sentences.



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### Example scenes:

“Not everybody knows this, but I was the first in my family to go to college. Whenever I thought about MY future, I felt extremely alone. It was my art teacher who planted the idea that I could go on to college and so something big with my life.”

“My grandmother was my first mento. She was 4’9”, had a British accent, and would greet everyone around us. She modeled for me how to build confidence -- mentors are so important because their example can open mental doors for us.”

MY SCENE:

### END / **POINT**: This is what you learned / the real lesson you want to teach them.

The End is the Point. This is the action you really want the listener or donor to take from the beginning. For example: “That’s how I came to see that by supporting this cause you’re actually part of the work we’re doing.” If I just say that on its own, it just sort of floats out of the listener’s brain. But if you say it in a story, you give the listener context. And when the point comes organically from the story, the listener is much more receptive and less likely to feel defensive or distracted.

### Example lesson enders:

“That’s why I feel so passionately about supporting important work. We help thousands of individuals each year learn skills that improve their lives.”

“How do we measure our own success? We hear from clients all the time who say how much our programs have changed their lives.”

“That’s when I realized the trick to build my confidence was to pretend to be courageous one minute at a time.”

**\*TIP: Segueing from your SCENE to your POINT with “That’s how I realized...” is very genuine and non-preachy!\***

MY POINT:

Now that you’ve given your story SHAPE, it’s time to...



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### DAY 4. TEST IT and EDIT IT.

#### TEST -- on others for feedback

The simple truth is: you can't think your way to a good story. You have to tell it and see how people react.

I first learned this while doing stand-up comedy. Humor is so important - it makes you human in the eyes of your audience. Stand-up comedy might be the most nerve-wracking way to learn how to be funny on purpose, but the good news is that there's a secret formula:

- Say what's FUNNY
- DON'T say what isn't
- PRETEND you just thought of it

The best way to add humor to your story is to tell it to others and watch their reaction. And ask them, "What was/could be funny about this story?" and "What don't I need?" A listener can tell you more quickly and clearly than you can how to strengthen your story. Then you know what's funny (or just really meaningful) and what to cut.

This practice for being funny is the same practice if you want to be inspiring, moving, memorable, or motivating. By trying out your ideas then asking an audience what to keep and what to cut, your story will be that much stronger that much faster!

**\*TIP: The best way to test your story is to say it aloud to someone else while standing. This forces you to deliver it as a final version rather than waffle around and say things like "and then I might say..."**

#### EDIT -- based on the 4 Elements

In addition to editing based on feedback, you can edit your story in advance by including the 4 key elements every great story should have.

##### The 4 Elements of a Great Story:

**SHORT:** Get it down to as few words as possible (A joke is a really short story.)

**CLEAR:** Have ONE single main point, and reinforce it with examples (This is making it listener-friendly).

**RELATABLE:** Smile. Be likeable. Laugh at yourself (Your humor makes you human.)

**RELEVANT:** Use references and language your specific audience will identify with.





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Here are some questions to ask yourself to achieve these qualities in your story:

**Short:** What is the most succinct way you can describe your work? In other words, what is one focus you have or one initiative you work on? Limit yourself - the human brain is much too busy to instinctively try to remember lengthy lists of programs and initiatives. You also want to limit the time you are speaking, so you can gauge your listener's interest level.

**Clear:** What is the #1 action you want your listener to take? Buy something? Care? Remember? Start there and work your way backward. Ask yourself if your recommended action is specific, measurable, and realistic. One small action is infinitely more valuable than no action at all.

**Relatable:** What is the most human and expert way you can describe yourself and your work? We connect most powerfully to people we know, like and trust. We know and like and trust you when you show us both your humanity and your expertise.

**Relevant:** How did you first become passionate about the work you do? Use an experience you had that's nearer to the interest level of your listener, rather than now that you have advanced much further into the subject. Is your message stripped of all jargon? Abbreviations intended to save time run the risk of creating a distraction, even a feeling of exclusion, for listeners unfamiliar with their meaning.

**\*TIP:** Have you ever heard someone tell a story and thought it could've been way shorter, way clearer, way easier to follow? In many ways, the best asset to telling your story is acting as though there is a time limit (whether it's a tangible pitch window of time or the invisible short attention span of your listener). A time limit forces you to make sure your story achieves those goals. Your goal should never be to tell them EVERYTHING, but rather to tell just enough to convince them to take action or express interest in learning more (or whatever goal you articulated at the beginning!)

**DAY 5. PRACTICE IT & SHARE IT.**



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You've spent time editing and incorporating feedback. Now it's time to practice in front of live audiences. I'm not talking about going to open mics. I'm talking about using your new story at your next presentation!

Here's the thing: You need to hold yourself accountable to using your new story. Make a pact with yourself when you go to say what you would usually say, take a breath and start with your new hook before you get into your content.

Which brings me to a really important challenge... you're going to have to get outside your comfort zone and tell your story in a new way. But the results you'll get from doing so will be worth it.

**For making it this far, I'd like to extend you a free call with me to discuss your story:**

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