

Stories

March 10, 2022

PMAP 3210: Introduction to Nonprofits
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies

Do your check-in!

What are your favorite stories?

Why are they so great?

Why do people like stories?

PAGE-TURNER

CAN SCIENCE EXPLAIN WHY WE TELL STORIES?



By Adam Gopnik

May 18, 2012

... And yet something interesting, even encouraging, is revealed in this ritual, all its humiliations aside. Stories, more even than stars or spectacle, are still the currency of life, or commercial entertainment, and look likely to last longer than the euro. There's no escaping stories, or the pressures to tell them. And so the pathetic story-pitcher turns to pop science—to Jonathan Gottschall's new book, "The Storytelling Animal," for instance—for some scientific, or at least speculative, ideas about what makes stories work and why we like them. Gottschall's encouraging thesis is that human beings are natural storytellers—that they can't help telling stories, and that they turn things that aren't really stories into stories because they like narratives so much. Everything—faith, science, love—needs a story for people to find it plausible. No story, no sale.

Stories

Stories are how we translate core,
essential **content**
to different **forms**
for specific **audiences**.

Purpose of stories

We understand the world through causal stories

Stories are how we construct our sense of self

Stories are crucial for making ideas memorable

Stories imbue our experience with meaning

Script-following

Stories motivate our actions

When we act we are often to a great extent *enacting*, we are acting out the story as the script demands, acting in ways that are meaningful in the context of some story and that are true to our character's identity.

Frederick Mayer, *Narrative and Collective Action: The Power of Public Stories*, p. 7

**Stories lead an
audience on a journey**

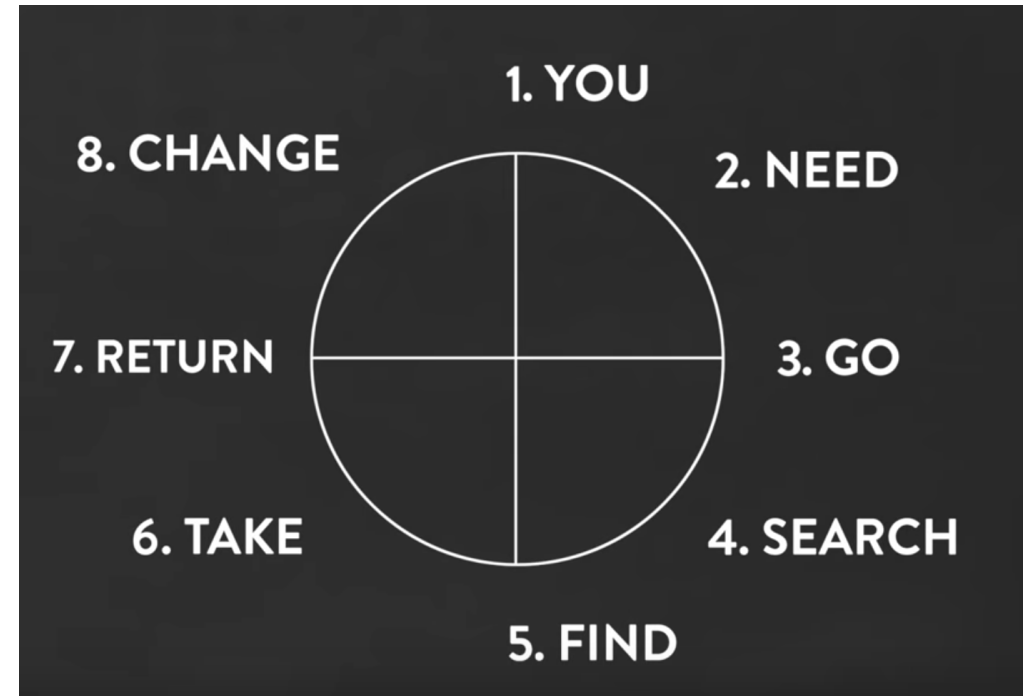
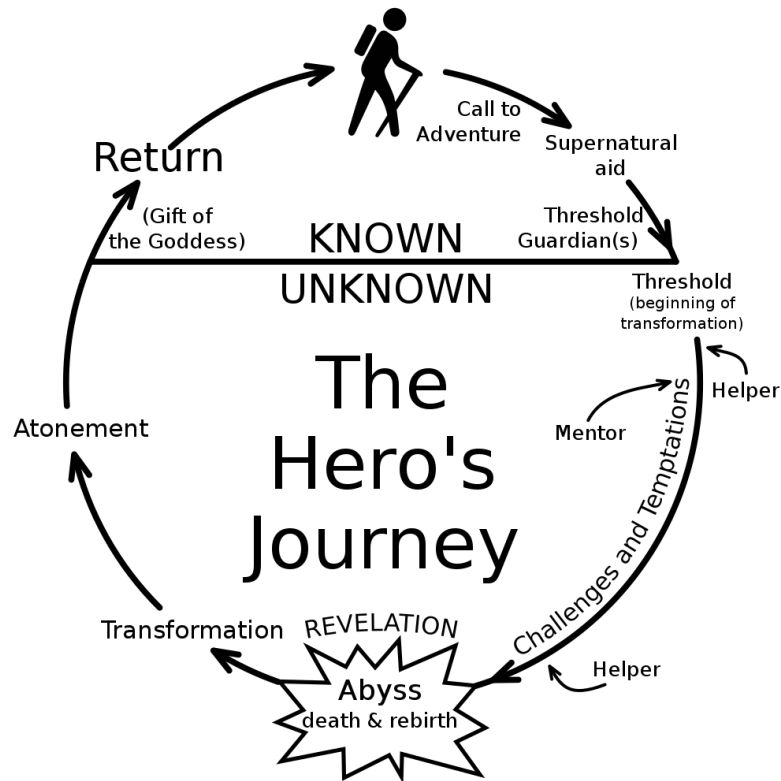
Story shapes



Every story is the same



Heroes and structure



**When marketing something,
who is the hero?**

You are not the hero

- About us
 - Company history
 - Market cap
 - # employees and # locations
- About our product and service
 - What it is
 - How it works
 - Why it's better than the alternative
- Call to action (ideally)

XYZ Co. Equity Partners, LLC

- Founded in 1988 in Anchorage, Alaska
- Invest in companies who:
 - Provide professional IT services
 - Offer exceptional technical and project management expertise
 - Deliver complex data and information management solutions as systems and/or applications integrators
- Average annual revenue: \$51.5M

XYZ Co. Software

- Established in 1984
- Headquarters: San Francisco, CA
- Integrated P&C Insurance software and services
- Focused on Alternative Risk & Self-Insured markets
- Recognized leader in risk management solutions
- Over 100 customers in U.S. and Canada

From Cole Nussbaumer Knaflic, *Storytelling with Data: A Data Visualization Guide for Business Professionals*

The audience is the hero

This is why we care about personas so much!



RSPCA 

My name is
FRANKLIN.
I watched them pull
out of the driveway.
They never came back...

Without you this is the end of Franklin's story.
Donate what you can at RSPCAstory.com

**Do not treat those you serve as
helpless, incapable, opinion-less objects**

**If the audience is the hero, those you serve are characters.
Don't mistreat them**

**Treat people
(and their stories)
with dignity**



Dignified Storytelling

dignifiedstorytelling.com

It's not my story.

Amplifies contributors' voices and experiences, honouring their wishes on what story is told and how it is told.

[→ READ MORE](#)

I do no harm.

Applies a "do no harm" ethic to all actions.

[→ READ MORE](#)

We are all multi-dimensional.

Treats each individual as a whole and every community as dynamic and multi-dimensional.

[→ READ MORE](#)

Consent is more than paperwork.

Obtains informed, full, and freely given consent from contributors.

[→ READ MORE](#)

I am biased (repeat).

Acknowledges and mitigates biases, stereotypes, social stigmas, and power differences.

[→ READ MORE](#)

I do my homework.

Values local social, moral, and cultural norms.

[→ READ MORE](#)

I am empathetic.

Considers the impact of stories on individuals, communities, and the natural environment.

[→ READ MORE](#)

I protect others' data like it's my own.

Processes and manages content responsibly in line with existing data protection guidance and laws.

[→ READ MORE](#)

Truth over headlines.

Depicts realities and change prospects with accuracy and authenticity.

[→ READ MORE](#)

A story can change the world.

Empowers and inspires both contributors and audiences to work towards positive change.

[→ READ MORE](#)