

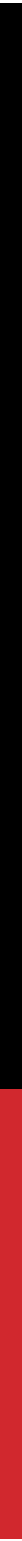
# **THE ART OF STORYTELLING®**

**FRITZ MCDONALD**

**CREATE20**

# ACT I

**STORY TELLING FUNDAMENTALS**



# STORIES ARE EVERYWHERE



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# WHAT IS A STORY?

- **Something told, recounted, written, sung, performed**
- **A chain of events that start in one place and finish somewhere else (R. Jarrell)**
- **Words, images, lyrics, that recreate real life or create imagined life**
- **A fundamental human activity**

# WHY WE TELL STORIES

- **We tell stories to discover each other**
- **We tell stories to express our history**
- **We tell stories to solve problems**
- **We tell stories to feel something**
- **We tell stories to give order and meaning to our lives**
- **We tell stories in order to learn how to live**

# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GOOD AND BAD STORY?

- **Credibility and Plausibility**
- **Emotional Impact**
- **Bigger Vision:**
  - **Stories tell us something about how we live now**
  - **Stories tell us who we are, what we are, why we are**
  - **Stories present our higher selves, ambitions, dreams**

# WHAT DO BRANDING AND STORYTELLING HAVE IN COMMON?

- Both are about persuasion
- Both seek to connect on a deeper, interpersonal level
- Both work in a communication framework defined by time
  - Story=narrative
  - Brand=launch

# WHY IS BRAND STORYTELLING SO POPULAR?

- **Social media, content and digital marketing have made marketing conversational, people-based**
- **Storytelling is the foundation for nearly all major media**
- **There's a natural connection between narrative and branding**

# WHY TELL BRAND STORIES?

- **A brand story raises your brand above the level of commodity, helps you differentiate because no one else can tell your story**
- **A brand story creates something people can invest in and care about**
- **A brand story creates relationships and builds loyalty**

# WHAT IS A BRAND STORY?

- **It's the essence of who you are (origin story)**
- **It's the whole picture of your institution, facts, feelings, details, emotions, all wrapped up into an attractive narrative**
- **It's about everything you do and how you communicate it**

# CAN YOU FEEL IT?

**Juniata College: Think about Who You Are**

<http://think.juniata.edu/stories/article/finding-another-home.php>

# WHEN AND WHERE DO BRAND STORIES START?

- Every audience member builds a relationship with your brand long before they invest in you.
- Your story starts with the connection an audience member makes when they hear your name for the first time.
- Your story succeeds by virtue of its relationship with your audiences.

# **DISCUSSION/EXERCISE**

## **PITCH PHASE I: (15 Minutes)**

**Write your institution's past, present and future history**

**Limit it to one paragraph or 100 words**

**Focus on:**

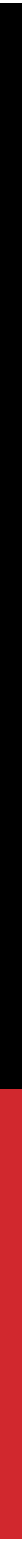
- **Why your institution was founded**
- **What is its purpose and dream**
- **Where it is going**

# **BRAINSTORMING RULES (IDEO)**

- **Defer judgment**
- **Encourage wild ideas**
- **Build on the ideas of others**
- **Stay focused on the topic**
- **One conversation at a time**

# ACT II

**HOW STORIES WORK: ELEMENTS OF A  
STORY**



# STORIES TAKE US SOMEWHERE



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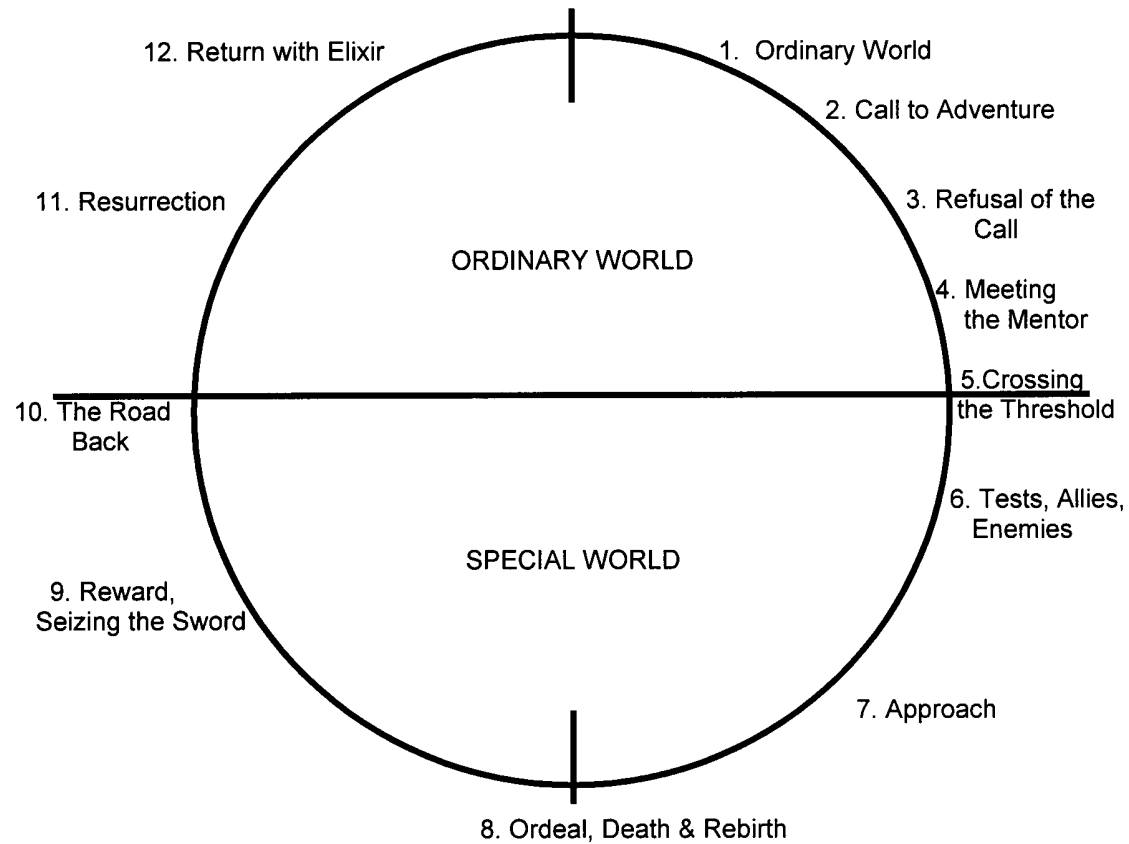
# **NARRATION**

- **The foundation for all storytelling**
- **Organizing device: The arrangement of events, an ordering of raw material from life**
- **Movement through time: it provides momentum, a through line people can follow**

# HOW NARRATION WORKS

- **Aristotle: 3 Act Structure: Beginning, middle, end**
- **Joseph Campbell: Hero's Journey**
- **Modernists: Joyce, Proust, Woolf and the narrative of consciousness**
- **Meta Freaks & Postmodernists: narrative about narrative**
- **Remember: there are many ways to tell a story**

## THE HERO'S JOURNEY



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# WHAT FUELS NARRATION

**Conflict: the driving force behind all stories**

**Conflict works on tension, mystery, suspense**

**Conflict isn't always negative:**

- **Stories about overcoming adversity**
- **Stories about personal and/or group triumphs**
- **Stories about standing up for causes**

# HOW NARRATION WORKS: COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

- **Big machine/entity with many moving parts**
- **University brand story similar to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Boccaccio's Decameron, Elizabeth Strout's Olive Kitteridge**
- **These are large multi-story ensemble pieces**
- **Challenge: what's the structure that pulls it all together**

# MANY STORIES

University of Washington

***BE BOUNDLESS***

<http://www.washington.edu/boundless/>

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# **BUILDING YOUR INSTITUTIONAL STORY**

- **Create a story that works through several characters and mediums**
- **Create a story that builds through continuous growth: one piece feeding off the next**
- **Create a story that leaves them wanting more**

# **FINDING YOUR NARRATIVE CORNERSTONE**

**Your narrative cornerstone anchors all of your stories by:**

- **Providing the starting point or origin**
- **Conveying the what, the why and the how of your identity**
  - **Story vs. plot: story=what, plot=why, structure=how**
- **The combination creates movement/momentum**

# WORKING THROUGH CHARACTER

- **No character, no story**
- **Character movement and growth drives narrative**
- **Character identification, attraction, fascination attracts audiences**
- **Character is defined by what he/she/they want and what they do to get it**

# **WE USE CHARACTERS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS**

- **Create a character or mascot (Flo, Mayhem,)**
- **Use real people: employees, students, faculty, alumni, friends**
- **Empower people to narrate stories in which they become characters**
- **Your brand's community are characters who tell your story**

# SHOWING VS. TELLING

- **We believe what we see more than what we hear**
- **What we see: visual imagery, textual detail**
- **What we see: people and things in motion**
- **Challenge: balance between verbal and visual**
- **Greater Challenge: how do we see what we say**

# SEE IT

**University of Melbourne: Where Great Minds Collide**

**<http://collision.unimelb.edu.au/#layer-video>**

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# VOICE & TONE

- **The central authority or intelligence through which the events of the story are related, the narrator(s)**
- **Tone of your communications and writing style**
- **Brand stories have singular and multiple voices**
- **Brand stories work through changes in tone, style, manner and format of speaking**

# HOW TO DEFINE YOUR INSTITUTIONAL VOICE I

- Describe your voice in 3 personality words: bold, down-to-earth, warm
- Set 3 words in opposition to define them:
  - Bold but Approachable
  - Down to Earth but Intellectual
  - Warm but Real

# HOW TO DEFINE YOUR INSTITUTIONAL VOICE II

- **Determine how your audiences communicate:**
  - **Formal**
  - **Casual**
  - **Conversational**
- **Find POV matches the story you're telling and is consistent within context**
- **“We” vs. “you” vs. “they”**

# HOW TO DEFINE YOUR INSTITUTIONAL VOICE III

- Check for authenticity
- Check your competition for tone and attitude
- Test your tone on strangers: how does it sound to people who don't know you?
- Review your content
- Create a voice bible, chart, dictionary

# DISCUSSION/EXERCISE

## PITCH PHASE II: (15 Minutes)

Based on the history you've written, tell your brand story in a single sentence using this format:

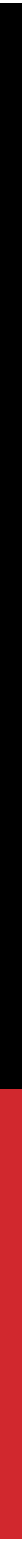
This is a story about a \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Translation: This is a story about (your character) who (does something about what it wants) and (which results in). To do this:

- Define your institution as a character
- Articulate what your character wants
- Tell us how your (institution) character will get what it wants and what will happen when it does.

# ACT III

**THE POWER OF STORYTELLING**



# EMOTIONAL IMPACT



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# STORY VS. FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Brand stories connect with your core audiences in ways that go beyond facts, figures, and grand pronouncements**
- **Brand stories address thoughts, feelings, actions**
- **Brand stories make data meaningful**

# CREATING EMPATHY

- **Who are you creating stories for?**
- **How does your story connect to the prospective student? Donor? Alum?**
- **At what point in their stories does your story connect?**
- **How do you convey empathy for your audiences?**

# **CAPTURING AUTHENTICITY**

- **Strong brand stories are honest and transparent, rooted in the reality of your institutional character**
- **Strong brand stories are consistent**
- **Strong brand stories persist across a variety of avenues and mediums**
- **Strong brand stories stand up for the right things**

# **THIS IS REAL**

**Western Sydney University: Stories of Unlimited**

**[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/unlimited/stories\\_of\\_unlimited](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/unlimited/stories_of_unlimited)**

# IMPORTANCE OF DETAIL

- **Brand stories depend on detail to convey character, setting, action, drama and strategy**
- **A world described in such detail, in other words, that the reader never once doubts the created reality--the reader is never once awoken from it until it ends.**
- **Colleges and universities have a lot of detail: how to use it**
- **Detail is a differentiating factor**

# **BRAND STORYTELLING TO-DO LIST**

- **Integrate data into storytelling, not the other way around**
- **Get help: use influencers to help tell your story**
- **Word of mouth: strongest marketing there is. GenZ big influencers are family, friends, classmates—how can you get into that circle of influence?**
- **Depend on perpetual marketing tactics, transmedia marketing, etc.**
- **Make sure brand strategy and story work together (Paul Redfern, Inside Higher Ed)**
- **Find brand stories that intuitively fit the right channels**
- **Take advantage of every opportunity for a brand story.**

# PRINCIPLES OF STORYTELLING

- **Be Interesting**
- **Be Memorable**
- **Be Engaging**
- **Be True**
- **Be Powerful**

# **DISCUSSION/EXERCISE**

## **PITCH PHASE III: (15 – 20 Minutes)**

**Pitch your institutional brand story. To do so:**

- **Keep it to a single sentence**
- **Choose your best pitcher**
- **Sell us**

# **CAMPAIGNS WORTH LOOKING AT**

**Stony Brook University: Far Beyond**

**<http://www.stonybrook.edu/brand/>**

**California State University, Fullerton: Titans Reach Higher**

**<http://reachhigher.fullerton.edu/>**

**Southeast Missouri State University: The Will to Do**

**<http://www.semo.edu/>**

**UCLA: The Optimists**

**<http://www.ucla.edu/optimists/>**

**University of Florida: For the Gator Good**

**<http://gatorgood.ufl.edu/>**

**“NO ONE BUYS THE FEATURES.  
THEY BUY A STORY.”  
SETH GODIN**

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**THANK YOU!**

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