



Storytelling: The Leader's Secret Weapon

Using “story” to inspire and drive change



David Riemer * Executive-in-Residence * November 8, 2020

“Every leader needs to have 100 stories...”

- **Your company story**
- **A product story**
- **Your origin story**
- **Your purpose story**
- **A leadership story**
- **A vulnerable story**



Let's tell a story

October 17, 1989



Me

EXERCISE X2

EXTRA EXTRA EXTRA
San Francisco Chronicle
The Largest Daily Circulation in Northern California
125th Year No. 236 ***** WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1989 415-777-1111 25 CENTS

HUNDREDS DEAD IN HUGE QUAKE

This three-story apartment house at Beach and Divisadero streets lay broken in the roadway as the big Marina District fire burned in the background

The Experts' Advice on How to Cope

By Edward Epstein
Chronicle Staff Writer

As a stunned Bay Area comes back to life today, millions of residents will start trying to cope with the aftermath of the area's worst earthquake since 1906.

The advice from government and corporate leaders is that non-essential workers should stay home today from their jobs in the city. A spokesman for the State Office of Emergency Services said, "If you don't have to be here stay away."

Bill Newburgh added that roads and bridges into the city are expected to be clogged with as many as 300,000 East Bay residents coming to work in the city and unable to use the damaged Bay Bridge and Interstate 880.

San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos also said, people should not go to work unless they absolutely must. If workers feel they must go to their jobs, Agnos suggested they call ahead to find

Oakland Freeway Collapses — Bay Bridge Section Fails

By Randy Shiltz and Susan Beard
Chronicle Staff Writers

A terrifying earthquake ripped through Northern California late yesterday afternoon, killing more than 200 people, injuring hundreds more, setting buildings ablaze and destroying sections of the Bay Bridge.

The quake was the strongest since the devastation of the great 1906 shock, measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale and shaking the state from Lake Tahoe to Los Angeles.

The tanker erupted from the treacherous San Andreas Fault and was centered in sparsely populated mountains 16 miles north of Santa Cruz.

Late last night, Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy estimated damage at "well over \$1 billion" and predicted, "It will climb much higher in the light of day."

McCarthy said he had talked with White House Chief of Staff John Sununu who had activated 20 federal agencies to provide emergency relief.

The earthquake brought the newspaper's computer and main printing facility to a halt.

The papers were printed at the Chronicle's Army Street printing plant and at its East Bay facility in Union City.

The news accounts were placed on Macintosh computer disks using an emergency generator.

This special edition of the Chronicle was produced despite a complete power outage at the newspaper's headquarters at 9th and Mission streets.

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30 minutes away from the first pitch at Candlestick Park. The game was abruptly canceled.

The heaviest fatalities came about two miles south of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge when the upper deck of a mile-long section of two-lane Interstate 880 collapsed onto the

Page A-8 Col. 5

Page A8 Col. 2

You can't *tell* a good story

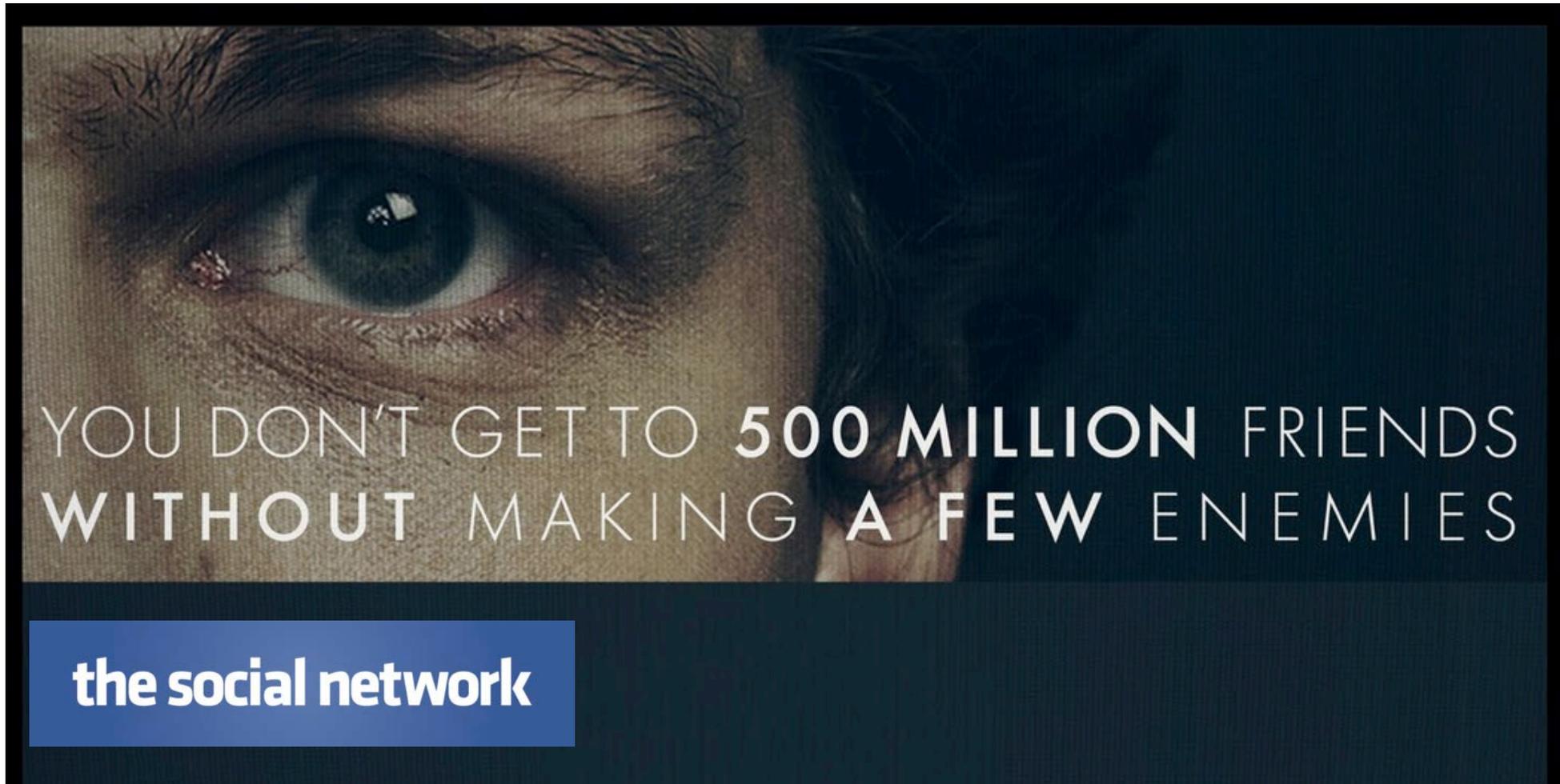


If you don't *have* a good story to tell.

Video



New ideas have a narrative too



YOU DON'T GET TO **500 MILLION** FRIENDS
WITHOUT MAKING **A FEW** ENEMIES

the social network

Video



Story finding vs. story telling



Customer

Insights

Problem

Solution



The story

Touch them



Be clear

**Narrative
Storyboard**

Make sense

Act 1



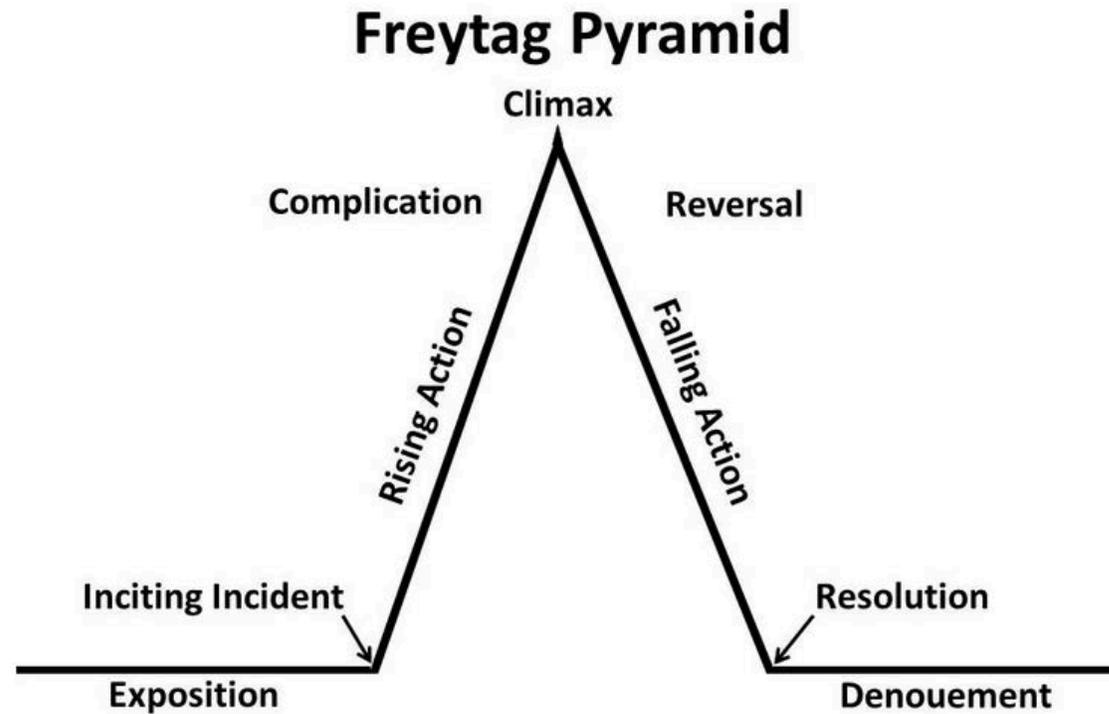
Act 2

Act 1



Finding your narrative

Story structures



Another story framework

Story Spine:

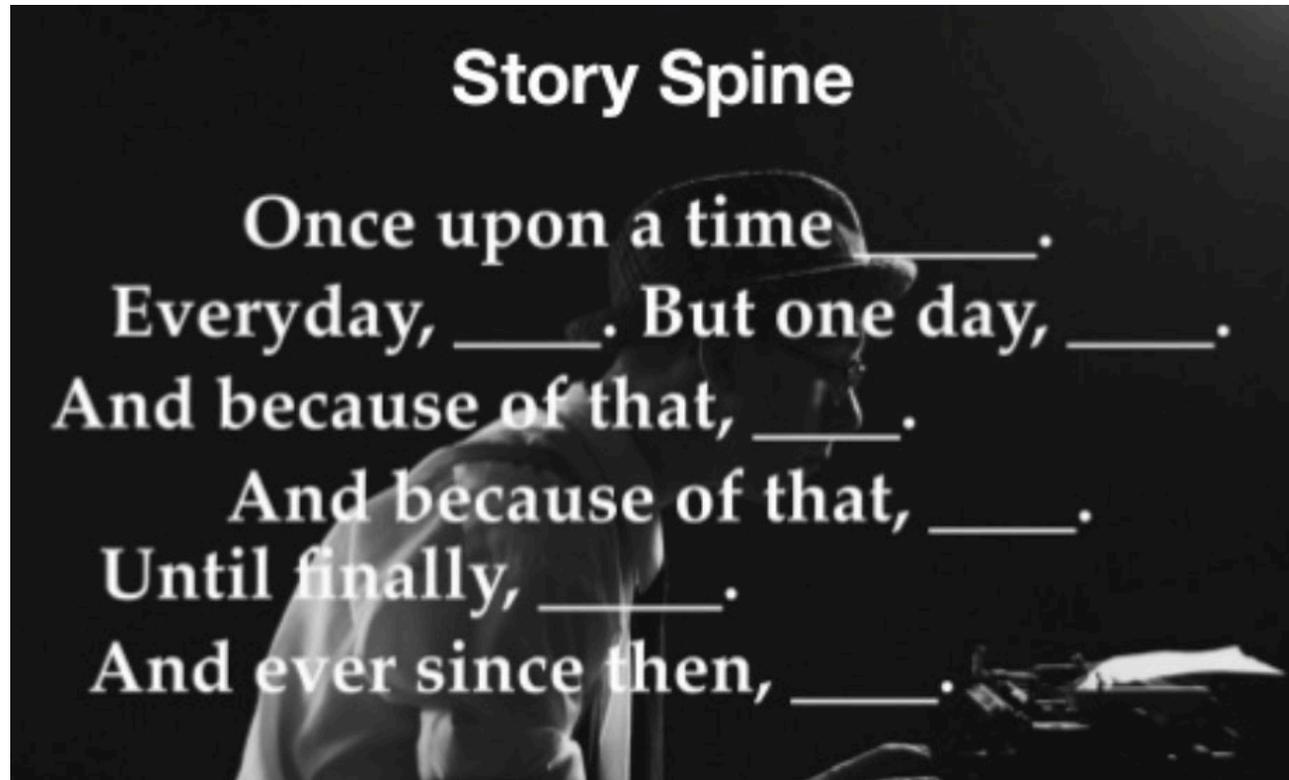
1. Once upon a time...
2. Every day...
3. Until one day...
4. Because of that...
5. Because of that...
6. Because of that...
7. Until finally...
8. And ever since then...

The moral of the story is....

Using the story spine

EXERCISE

Build a story. Use the story spine.



Finding the narrative – Spark Microgrants

“Intention and obstacle form the drive shaft that creates the friction and tension essential for drama.”

Aaron Sorkin, Screenwriter, A Few Good Men



Video

Story structure

Characters

Customers



Intention

Insights



Obstacle/
Resolution

Problem/
Solution



Symbols

Icons





Storyboarding

Story building can be a puzzle



Andrew Stanton



Source: Pixar in a Box

A storyboard can help you solve it



Source: Pixar in a Box

Finding your narrative:

Example: Spark Microgrants, Sasha Fisher



Customer



1 Villagers in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi

Insight



2 Feel left out of improvement process & don't have necessary \$

Problem Definition



3 Villagers don't have skin in the game so projects die

Value Proposition



4 Development efforts that last

How it works



5 Sparkgrants:
1. Empower decision making
2. Crowd-source funding
3. Own the project

Context and Tone



6 Underfunded projects
NGO led projects

How might we fund & create vested community improvements?



Customer (character)	Insight (motivation)	Problem Definition (conflict)
1 _____	2 _____	3 _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Value Proposition (aspiration)	How it works (plot)	Context and Tone (setting)
4 _____	5 _____	6 _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Building your storyboard

EXERCISE

Customer
(character)

1 _____

Insight
(motivation)

2 _____

Problem
Definition
(conflict)

3 _____

Value Proposition
(aspiration)

4 _____

How it works
(plot)

5 _____

Context (Alternatives)
(setting)

6 _____

Finding your narrative:

Example: Spark Microgrants, Sasha Fisher



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Act 2



How to *tell* a compelling story

The art of storytelling



Video

How to become a Mad storyteller



Find the emotional hook.

Get personal.

Tell an anecdote. Name names.

Pace yourself. *Tell* a story.

Make the product the hero.

Use an analog.

Be a poet.

Surprise people.

Practicing storytelling

EXERCISE

Color/Advance

Pair up.

One participant is the storyteller and the other is the director.

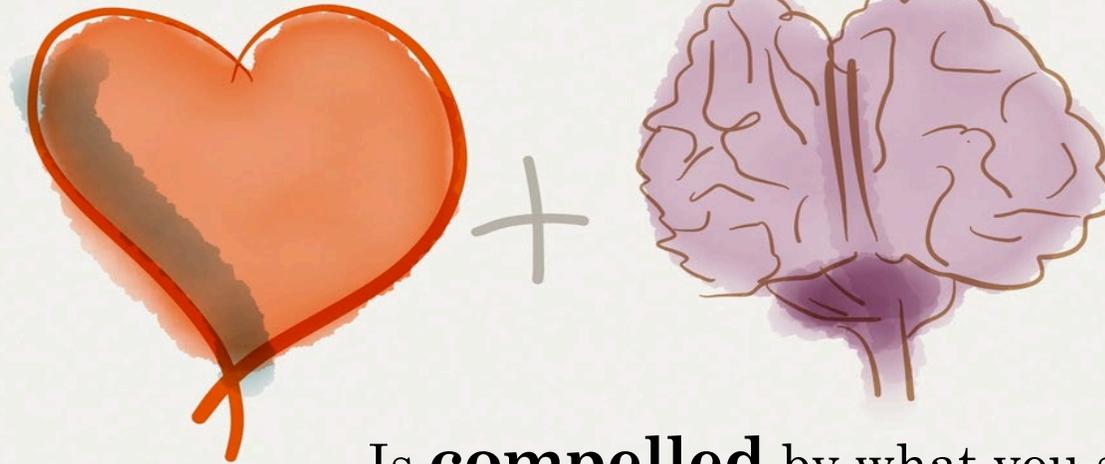
Director gives a prompt to the storyteller.

e.g. Tell a story about your best or worst day this month.

Director will coach storyteller on adding color or advancing the plot.

You win when your audience:

Remembers what you said,
because you **touched** them



Is **compelled** by what you said,
because it **made sense**



Understands what you said,
because it was **clear**



Remember: Make them **FEEL** something



“When the brain detects an emotionally charged event, the amygdala releases dopamine into the system. Because dopamine greatly aids memory and information processing, you could say it creates a Post It note that reads, ‘Remember this.’”

Hook your audience (vertical lift-off!)



Origin story

Video

**A 32-Year-Old's Startup, Inspired
By A Health Scare, Sells For \$275
Million**



Surbhi Sarna
CEO, nVision Medical

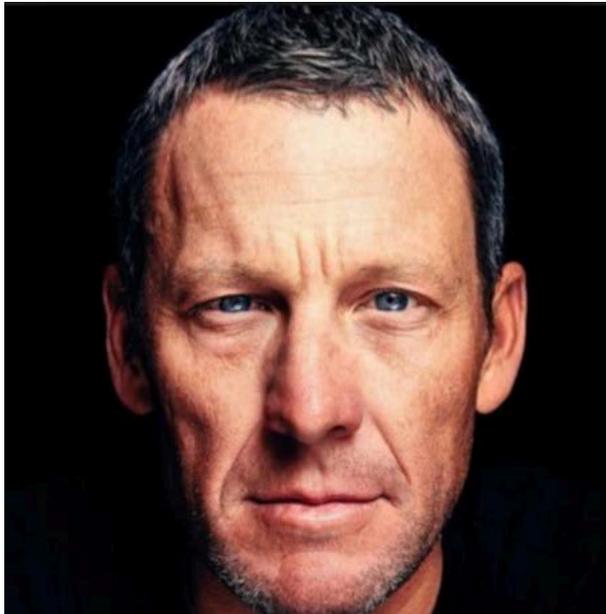
Great leaders “bring the customer into the room”

Video



The Vulnerable Storyteller

Audio and
exercise



**Reflect on your values and
Think of a time...
that you didn't live by them**

Lance Armstrong, Freakanomics, 7.25.18; 48:30

When you have a
great story...
everyone wants to
tell it.

riemer@berkeley.edu

