

Extraordinary Experiences through Storytelling

UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL STORYTELLING

2024

TOURISM
& EVENTS
Queensland

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01

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

In this section:

What are the benefits of storytelling?

How do I know that storytelling works?

Five steps to successful storytelling



The power of storytelling

For more than 40,000 years, Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been the ultimate storytellers, sharing their culture and Dreamtime mystique through speech, song, dance and art. In the western world, children grow up on fairytales, aimed to entertain and educate. Adults escape and bond through the written and spoken word, whether it's reading a gripping book or hearing, or relaying a compelling yarn. We become engrossed in movies and documentaries, and embrace photography and its ability to portray 1000 words in one sharp shot. Human beings are hardwired to communicate and it is through stories that we connect.

The power of storytelling

Once upon a time, it was the norm to take guests to amazing places, encourage them to become involved in activities, and even impart a fact or two. But what people remember are their experiences, and to create an experience you need to engage them emotionally.

It's about striking a balance between facts and activities (the functional) and engaging, amazing and memorable elements (the emotional). You want your story to be the first story every visitor tells when they get home, or even better the story they share on social media.

While the terms 'interpretation' and 'storytelling' are often used in the same context, are they really the same concept? The following definitions suggest there may be a subtle difference:

- Interpretation is an educational activity that aims to reveal meanings about our cultural and natural resources, making complex and arcane information more understandable and meaningful
- Storytelling is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story, while encouraging the listener's imagination

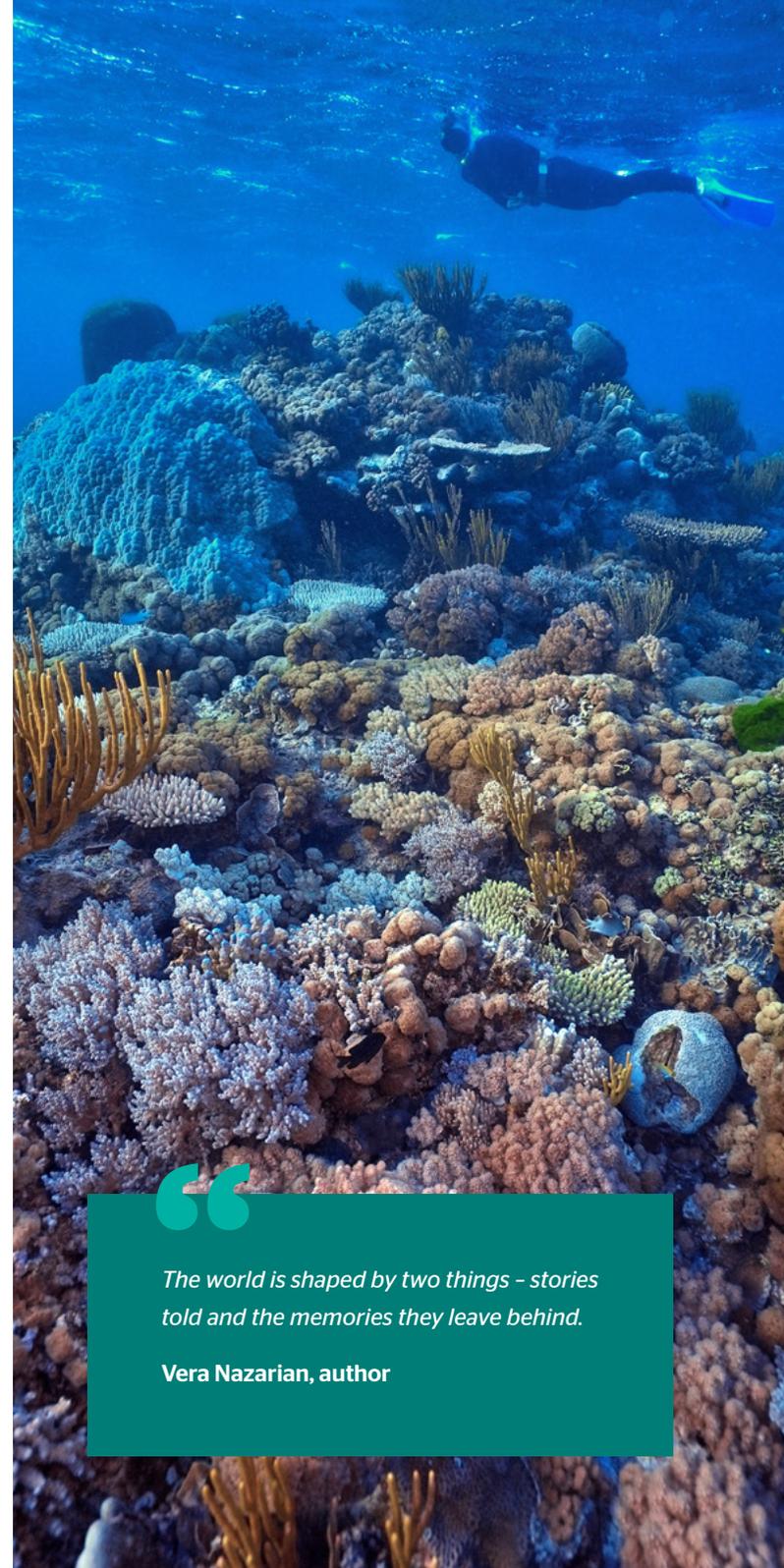
Interpretation tends to serve a more formal, interactive educational purpose, while storytelling embraces a more casual entertainment and personal engagement approach.

Both are valuable techniques that are often used together as they stimulate and provoke an audience, with the aim of forging an emotional and intellectual connection with the interpreter/storyteller.

For the purpose of this manual the focus is on storytelling, as it is considered to be more aligned with the motivations of tourists and tourism operators.

This manual has been created to assist your business with developing stories; enhancing existing stories; and improving your storytelling technique. It is aimed at everyone in the Queensland tourism industry whether you are a business owner, event manager, guide, volunteer, administrative staff or front office receptionist. You all have a story to tell and you are all potential story tellers.

The following pages break down the theory of storytelling into practical and user friendly elements that can be applied within your business. The supporting workbook is there to assist you in developing your story and bringing it to life. If you have a team or you are part of a team complete the



The world is shaped by two things – stories told and the memories they leave behind.

Vera Nazarian, author

What are the benefits of storytelling?

Successful storytelling not only results in every guest leaving with the story of why your business is so special, but why the tale is worth sharing. It's about casting a lasting impression and inspiring them to return for more. After all, who doesn't want to see how the next chapter unfolds on a great yarn?

The benefits to your business are endless and may include:

- Increase word-of-mouth business
- Repeat visitation
- Additional media publicity and coverage
- An opportunity to innovate without a large expense
- Giving your regional, state and national tourism bodies a reason to talk about your product

Your guests will become your best ambassadors, sharing the story of your brand and your destination.

GOOD STORIES COMPEL PEOPLE TO CHANGE



Marketing is no longer about the stuff you make, but about the stories you tell.

Seth Godin,
best selling author and entrepreneur.

How do I know that storytelling works?

If storytelling didn't work, there would be no films, no books, no authors, no great writers, no recorded history. Culture and language would become obsolete.

Even the best comedians believe comedy is not about telling jokes, but telling a story through humour. It's about weaving a tale in a way which is unforgettable. We already know that the more emotionally engaged your customer is with your story, the more likely they are to pass it on. But as the following case study demonstrates, a great story can also increase the value of an object.



EVEN IF YOUR PRODUCT OR BUSINESS DOESN'T HAVE AN OBVIOUS STORY, YOU CAN CREATE ONE.



QUANTIFY THE ROI OF GREAT STORYTELLING

Researchers Rob Walker and Joshua Glenn created SignificantObjects.com as a way to show the value of storytelling by sharing extraordinary stories about ordinary things. They bought some random and inexpensive objects (worth about \$1.50) like a butter dish, a porcelain miniature and a mini jar of mayonnaise from eBay and wrote a back story to each. By adding a great story to a simple Missouri shot glass they purchased for \$1, they were able to sell it for \$76 making a 7,600 per cent return on investment.

Here's part of the tale:

'See that freaky little bird? That's the state bird, my friend. The Missouri Hunt-and-Pecker. Never heard of 'em?

Well, then I guess you've never been to Missouri, have you? Maybe passed through, didn't get out of the car. Or changed planes in the airport, or went up in the Arch once, just to say you'd done it.

But that's not Missouri to me. You need to get lost in Missouri or you never really were there in the first place. Even then you won't be likely to meet the Hunt-and-Pecker unless you circulate a manuscript or two.'

What makes this story powerful is that they have made an incredible investment on a bogus story. The little bird on the shot glass is the Eastern Bluebird, the Hunt-and-Pecker is not a bird. It's a powerful example of a great story and even better storytelling.

Learn more about this story here: significantobjects.com/missouri-shotglass

Five steps to successful storytelling



STEP ONE

STEP TWO

STEP THREE

STEP FOUR

STEP FIVE

Know your guests

Discover your story

Develop your story

Deliver your story

Keep evolving





KNOW YOUR GUESTS

In this section:

Are they your customers or guests?

Who is your target market?

How do you want your guests to feel?

What is your promise?



Step one

KNOW YOUR GUESTS

How well do you really know your guests? As well as a guest in your own home? Getting to know them is the foundation of success. Find out what they are looking for. When you know your guests it is much easier to connect them with your story.

Five ways to get to know your guests:

1. Find more about them before they arrive: When they book, find out as much as you can about them and what they hope to gain from their visit with you, so you are better able to tailor your story to meet their needs. Share this information with your key meet and greet staff.
2. Ask them questions when they arrive: It's not a case of interrogating them, but getting to know them with some friendly well thought-out questions. Eg. Where are you travelling from? Are you staying anywhere else on your holiday?
3. Observe them: Take time to just stand back and watch how your guests interact with your product and your team, as it may highlight the key 'touch points' where you can have the greatest influence on your guest experience.
4. Survey them after the experience: You need to find what worked but more importantly what didn't as this will help you to improve your visitor experience.
5. Connect with them afterwards: Use social media platforms to interact with your guests online. Ask for their feedback and take onboard what they are saying about their experience.



4.2 out of 5 is the average rating of products on Trip Advisor. What are your guests saying that sets you apart?

If every experience is somewhere between a 'good' (4) and 'great' (5) on the satisfaction scale, how does your business rate? Take the time to read your guests' reviews and respond to both positive or negative comments. Thank your guests and take their feedback into consideration. Don't forget to check all of the online review platforms where your business is featured.



Step one

KNOW YOUR GUESTS

ARE THEY YOUR CUSTOMERS OR GUESTS?

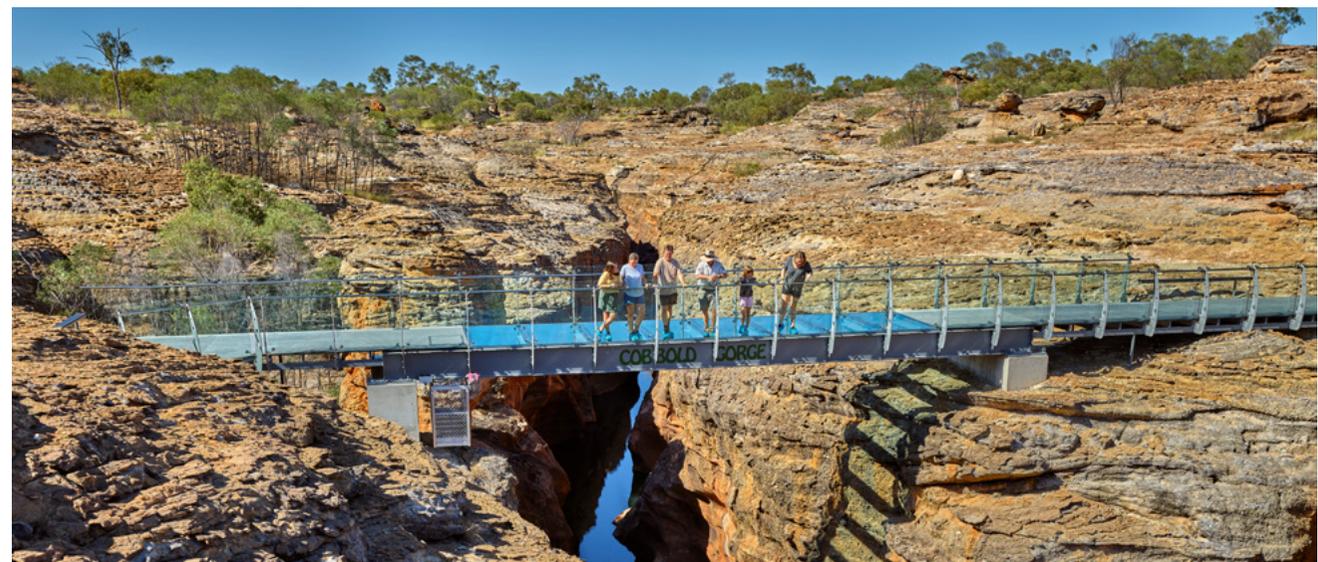
Duane Knapp, of Brand Strategy Inc, believes 'genuine brands' should have a guest mentality, so he developed his G.U.E.S.T™ principles to guide businesses to go beyond mere customer service and provide genuine one-of-a-kind hospitality.



Scratch the surface in a typical boardroom, and we're all just cavemen with briefcases, hungry for a wise person to tell us stories.

Dr. Alan Kay
computer pioneer

G	Greeting	<i>We're glad you're here</i> The initial greeting is always designed to communicate.
U	Understanding	<i>We always listen to the way our guests feel</i> Listen, learn and understand your guests, their needs and feelings.
E	Efficiency	<i>We respect your time, we know it's valuable</i> Efficiently handle requests in a timely manner.
S	Special Treatment	<i>We have the power to provide a pleasant surprise for our guests</i> There is always something you can do to make your guests feel special.
T	Thankfulness	<i>We don't take your business for granted</i> We want you to be a friend and we understand the lifetime value of your relationship.



For more information visit: teq.queensland.com/bigmarketingguide/experiencedevelopment



Step one

KNOW YOUR GUESTS

ARE THEY YOUR CUSTOMERS OR GUESTS?

We asked Nick Gray the CEO and founder of Museum Hack, an interactive, fun, non-traditional museum tour operation based in New York, how they embody the G.U.E.S.T. philosophy:

Greeting: Make your guests feel welcome. Museums are full of awesome stories but most of us turn into art critics the moment we walk inside, leaving our personalities at the door. To engage guests, it starts with an email the day before their visit, personally addressed from their tour guide, to say how much they are looking forward to meeting them and how much fun they will have the next day.

Understanding: Meeting 15 minutes prior to the tour to get to know each person is essential. This allows the guide to get to know their audience and for each guest to meet each other and start to create a relationship to emotionally connect with the experience.

Efficiency: Using your time wisely on a tour. In a place where you could spend a month exploring, time is important. By knowing something about each guest, the Museum Hack team can direct visitors to the displays they are most likely going to be interested in. This keeps them engaged and having fun. It's the same in any business, give them what they want and use their time wisely.

Special Treatment: Know what your guests are interested in and do something small to demonstrate you understand them. It could be anything from the way you tell a story that is relevant to them, or keeping a running joke going to build a connection between guests, or handing out chocolates between exhibits to keep the energy levels up. Make everyone feel special.

Thankfulness: Thank you is easy to say, but it's how you make it felt. Museum Hack sends a text within a few hours of the tour and an email a day later personalised by the guide to say a special thank you.

For more information visit: museumhack.com



Photo credit: Museum Hack and Wonston

HOW WILL YOU INCORPORATE THE G.U.E.S.T PRINCIPLES INTO YOUR BUSINESS?



Step one

KNOW YOUR GUESTS

WHO IS YOUR TARGET MARKET?

In order to be successful in any business, it is crucial to understand your target market. In short, a target market is a particular group of consumers at which a product or service is aimed.

Take a look at the type of guests your business attracts. Consider whether you are attracting more domestic or international visitors, or a balance between the two and their motivation to travel. Look at particular markets that have experienced growth or those you wish to attract. Examine the demographics of your target market and ask yourself: how old are they? Are they mostly solo travellers or travelling with family or friends? Do they tend to spend money or are they budget conscious?

Understanding who your target market is and how they travel will help you to deliver a story that will resonate with your guests. For example, if you have a strong German market perhaps there is a reference in your story that resonates with their culture or homeland. If your market is mostly Baby Boomers, does your story possess a specific element from that era to which they can relate?

Think about how your story will appeal to your key target markets, what would interest them most?

For the latest research and insights into the type of visitors travelling to Queensland visit: teq.queensland.com/research-and-insights



There's always room for a story that can transport people to another place.

J.K. Rowling, novelist, screenwriter and film producer



Step one

KNOW YOUR GUESTS

HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR GUESTS TO FEEL?

It is not only important to understand WHO your target market is and WHAT their travel motivation is, but also HOW you want them to feel. A great story will form an emotional connection with your guests giving them a lasting positive experience.

Through great storytelling, your aim should be to invoke at least one, if not many, of these emotions in your guests.

Ask yourself how you would like your guests to feel. Consider the following feelings and emotions:

- Joy
- Interest
- Serenity
- Hope
- Gratitude
- Kindness
- Surprise (pleasant)
- Cheerfulness
- Confidence
- Admiration
- Enthusiasm

Consider your guests' expectations of the experience you are providing. Are they coming to feel inspired, be satisfied they have achieved something, admire past heroes or be in awe of natural beauty? Your story should target the appropriate emotions and work to exceed their expectations through your content and delivery style, particularly the emotion you portray in your delivery.

What is Your Promise?

Your promise is what embodies the personality and identity that is true to what your business stands for. It is what differentiates your business from your competitors. Your promise defines how you want to make your guests feel during their experience with you and should be at the heart of your business story.

Once you have established how you want your guests to feel, ensuring everyone experiences that emotion is in essence delivering your promise. By keeping this promise, you compel your guests to share your story, the benefits and emotion that sets you apart from other experiences.



People will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou, poet, memoirist and civil rights activist

Probably the greatest story commandment is to make me care - emotionally, intellectually, aesthetically - just make me care.

Andrew Stanton , 'The Clues to a Great Story', TED2012



DISCOVER YOUR STORY

In this section:

Story topics

Authentic stories



Step two

DISCOVER YOUR STORY

It's time to discover your story and to start generating ideas. This is your opportunity to create the tourism equivalent of a best seller. There are many different starting points for a story.

Begin by thinking about your unique selling proposition (or USP), a factor about your business that makes you different or sets you apart from your competition. A USP ensures your business stands out from the crowd and is different. Once you understand your USP, successful storytelling is about beginning with the end in mind, how you would like your guests to feel (covered in STEP 1) and what you want them to say when they leave.

As a starting point you may like to start by thinking about the story of your business. Did your business start with a dream? Did you turn your childhood passion into a tourism business? What elements of your story would be appealing to your guests? Consider the following questions when thinking about the story of your business:

- Who are you?
- When do you do it?
- Why do you do it?
- What do you do?
- Where do you do it?
- How do you do it?

Do some research about your destination and how your business or product fits into your regional story. What are your destination Hero Experiences? That is the unique experiences that set your destination apart. How can you link your story and leverage off your destination Hero Experiences to enhance your guest experience?

Do you have something that only exists in one place, like a natural attribute, event, product? eg. if your region is known for having a world renowned Apple Pie Festival what stories could you share? Think all year round. It could be a story about the apple farmers, the pie makers or the festival activities. Visitors love to hear stories from locals who embrace what makes their destination unique.

What are your destination Hero Experiences?

For more information visit: teq.queensland.com/heroexperiences



“

If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.

Rudyard Kipling, short story writer and novelist



Step two

DISCOVER YOUR STORY

STORY TOPICS

Here are some story topic ideas to consider:

- how your business began with a dream
- your brand's meaning and importance to you
- your local place and the features you love
- local traditions
- anecdotes about objects or animals
- your people/team/colleagues
- your buildings, vehicle or infrastructure
- a local symbol or metaphor for a larger meaning
- personal stories about struggle, tragedy and triumph, or funny incidents
- dramatic or historic events – battles, events, escapes and adventures
- myths and legends
- a famous person who has shaped or visited your locality or region
- current events in the media
- a positive current social or political issue
- what defines the social, cultural and historical context of your region

What are the Key Ingredients?

Professional storytellers such as authors, journalists and content creators always come back to the key ingredients. That is: the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Ask yourself these seven questions as a solid starting point.

- What happened?
- Who is involved?
- Where did it take place?
- When did it take place?
- Why did it take place?
- Why did that happen?
- How did it happen?

Most importantly keep in mind who your audience is and the message you want to share with them. Will your guests care about your story?

DEFINING YOUR BUSINESS STORY

La Costa Motel is a retro beach shack motel located on the southern Gold Coast.

Our Passion: La Costa Motel was built in 1957. We bought it ten years ago and have lovingly restored and revived the property so it's operating as a motel once again. We love the Gold Coast and feel a strong connection to the colourful characters and history that makes the southern Gold Coast an interesting, vibrant and exciting place to be.

Our Context: The traditional Australian beach holiday, reminiscent of the fun, carefree attitude and simple pleasures that the beach represented to post-World War Two Australians in the 1950s. The southern Gold Coast was popular at that time for its flamboyant characters, outlandish behaviour and beach-style guesthouses and motels.

Our Story: We provide the opportunity to step back in time and stay at one of the iconic motels of that era. Our story is therefore connected to the 1950s Gold Coast and Australian beach culture and rock'n'roll that was popular during that period of history. Our family history in this area and our motivation to restore the motel to its former glory is also part of our story.

Our theme: Traditional Australian family values and beach holidays – spending quality time together through the simple pleasure of a traditional beach holiday and good old-fashion service.

**Diane Carthill,
Owner and Operator of La Costa Motel**

For more information visit: lacostamotel.com.au



Step two

DISCOVER YOUR STORY

AUTHENTIC STORIES

Above all else, be authentic. Travel is inherently personal and so is delivering a great tourism experience. You need to make the experience memorable for all the right reasons.

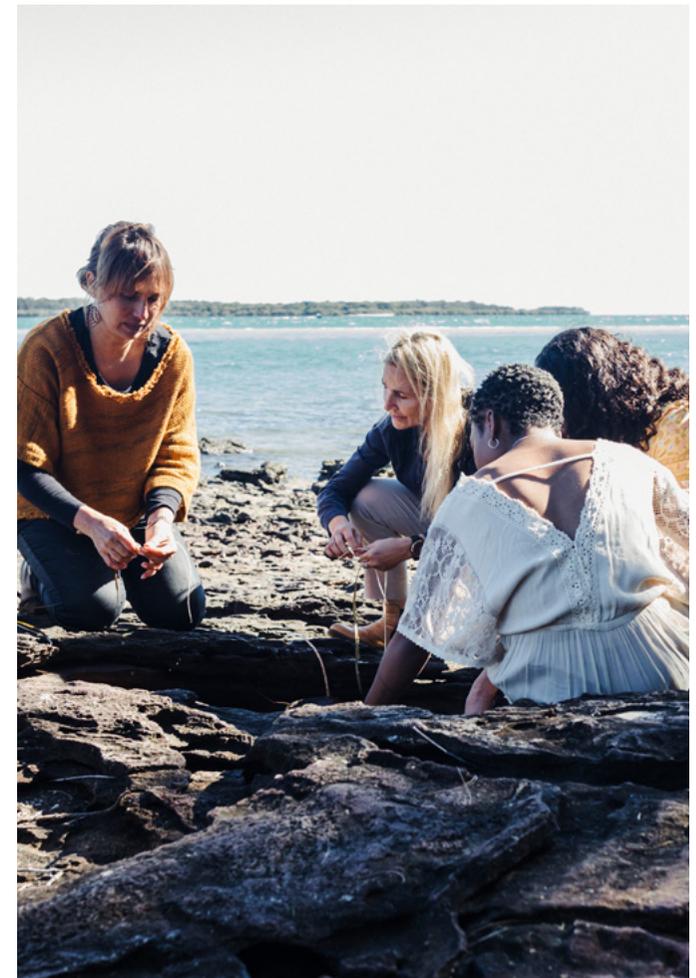
Your stories should be genuine. If they are factual ensure they are correct in detail. If they are fictional yarns acknowledge this and give them links to reality to increase their impact.

Many storytellers share from their own life experiences. Make these stories relevant to guests, humble and perhaps funny or instructive. This personal 'emotional buy-in' will increase the chances of creating memories for your guests.

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been handing down their stories for thousands of years. Sharing authorised Indigenous stories can create an emotional connection with guests because these stories are so valuable to their owners and they often bring deep meaning to a place. Acknowledging the Traditional Owners of a place builds respect and maintains a story's authenticity. Ensure you follow appropriate protocols - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories are best told by Traditional Owners. In some cases stories have been published or shared with their permission. Contact your regional council for more information on how to connect with the Traditional Owners in your region.

Top Tips

- Look at the setting, the place and the people that are at the heart of your experience and begin by researching the history and story behind them, the origin of their names, famous people or local myths. Seek out local experts and build a relationship to find authentic stories relevant to your business.
- Is there something undiscovered, a local hot spot or a hidden gem that would make a great story?
- What are the small elements in your guests' experience that may be overlooked? Perhaps the artwork at your accommodation is sourced from a well know local artist with an insightful story to share.
- Find a powerful core fact, moment in history, or person with whom your guests can relate. Build a story around this rather than presenting a random collection of facts.
- Will your story spark questions or debate? Be careful with controversial issues that may divide your guests or raise divisive opinions.
- How will your story answer the 'so what' question? Why should your guests be interested and care?



04

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

In this section:

Interpretive principles

Structure your story

Classic storytelling structure

How storytelling affects the brain

Mix it up

Which medium suits your story?

Extra touches

Make a plan



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

Now that you know who your guests are, how you want them to feel, and an idea of what story you would like to share, it's time to have some fun molding your ideas into a memorable story.

To develop your story it helps to cultivate a child-like curiosity about the world in which you live as well as your business. When you watch a film, the filmmaker needs you to have an emotional reaction to the characters for the plot to work. If you don't engage with the characters, you don't care what happens. The same approach applies to other forms of storytelling.

INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES

University of Idaho Professor Sam Ham developed the TORE Model of persuasive (or thematic) communication. This model states that effective communication is not achieved by presenting general facts and figures to the audience in order to get them to think logically and rationally, but rather presenting a message that provokes them into thinking. Thematic communication is used around the world daily by interpretive naturalists, zoo and museum educators, guides, park rangers and other communicators in natural and cultural settings. This model can be applied to storytelling.

Remember that the best stories don't just happen - they are well planned to contain key elements, follow an engaging theme and inject emotional connection at the right times.



THEMATIC

Having a theme means that your story is built around a unifying idea, making it easier to elicit empathy and create a point-of-reference back to which your guest can relate. A theme is not the same as a topic. A topic is merely a subject matter (what the story is about), whereas the theme is the main point or idea a communicator is trying to convey about the topic. It's what you want your guests to think about.

A good storyteller knows you have to understand the point of the story before you can tell it well.



ORGANISED

Storytelling needs to be presented in a way which is easy to follow, otherwise audiences lose attention if they have to work too hard to follow. People decide quickly whether the benefits of paying attention are going to be worth the effort required, and a major factor in estimating effort is how well the message is organised.

Storytelling needs to follow a logical train of thought. Knowing why you are telling the story is key to organising the narrative.



RELEVANT

Two qualities make a story relevant to a person, that it is meaningful and personal. Meaningful stories are those the audience can understand and have context, and personal stories are those to which they can relate. It is easier to make it relevant if you know something about your guests.

Human stories, such as those about families, health, wealth, beliefs and frailties, are the easiest for any audience to relate to.



ENJOYABLE

The way in which information is delivered makes all the difference to whether you hold your guests attention and keep them engaged and entertained.

Most audiences are holidaymakers who want to be entertained. Be careful with your level of technical detail, and have fun telling your story!



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

STRUCTURE YOUR STORY

Successful storytelling is not only about keeping your audience engaged, but making it easy for them to share your story after they have returned home. A clear structure will help this.

A great way to start is to write the start, middle and end of your story. This is a fantastic way to clarify the main points you want to convey. Remember, not all stories are simple narratives – you might start with a situation your guests can vividly imagine or a surprising idea to which they can relate.

For example, a café that uses local bio-organic coffee beans has limited time to share their story with their customer. The below is an example of how their story could unfold using this simple structure:

START

The barista asks the customer ‘Would you like the imported coffee beans or would you like to try our locally sourced bio-organic coffee beans?’

The customer may ask ‘What is the difference in taste?’ or reply ‘Yes, I will try the bio-organic beans.’ This is the invitation to tell a story.

MIDDLE

The barista responds by providing an emotive description of the taste of the coffee and how the bio-organic process impacts the quality of the beans resulting in the delicious coffee they are about to taste. He does this while proceeding to make the customers coffee.

The barista sees that the customer is interested in the story and proceeds to share that the owner of the plantation is a dear friend who has operated the plantation with his family for more than 20 years and he explains their passion for coffee and bio-organic farming.

END

Finishing on a high, the barista presents the coffee and says something like ‘Thanks for supporting our local farmers, I’m sure you will taste the difference’. While the customer sips on their special local latte, they look around the café and start to absorb more of the story. The café has displayed photos of the coffee plantation and an action shot of the farmers growing and roasting the coffee.



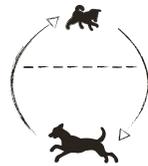


Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

CLASSIC STORYTELLING STRUCTURES

Pulitzer Prize winning novels and Academy Award winning movies don't just happen by luck. The authors, script writers and producers involved in developing these award winning stories invariably use one or a combination of the following eight storytelling structures.



THE MONOMYTH

The Monomyth (also called the hero's journey), is a story structure that is found in many folk tales, myths and religious writings from around the world.

In a Monomyth, the hero is called to leave their home and sets out on a difficult journey. They move from somewhere they know, into a threatening unknown place. After overcoming a great trial, they return home with a reward or newfound wisdom - something which will help their community. Lots of modern stories still follow this structure, from the Lion King to Star Wars.

Using the Monomyth to deliver your story will help to explain what has brought you to the wisdom you want to share. It can bring your message alive for your audience.

Good for:

- Taking the audience on a journey
- Showing the benefit of taking risks
- Demonstrating how you learned some newfound wisdom



THE MOUNTAIN

The Mountain structure is a way of mapping the tension and drama in a story. It's similar to the monomyth because it helps to plot when certain events occur in a story.

It's different from the Monomyth because it doesn't necessarily have a happy ending. The first part of the story is given to setting the scene, and is followed by just a series of small challenges and rising action before a climactic conclusion.

Using the Mountain structure to deliver your story is a bit like a TV series each episode has its ups and downs, all building up to a big finale at the end of the season.

Good for:

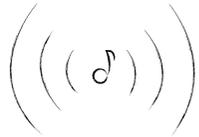
- Showing how you overcame a series of challenges
- Slowly building tension
- Delivering a satisfying conclusion



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

CLASSIC STORYTELLING STRUCTURES



NESTED LOOPS

Nested Loops is a storytelling structure where you layer three or more narratives within each other.

You place your most important story - the core of your message - in the centre, and use the stories around it to elaborate or explain that central principle. The first story you begin is the last story you finish, the second story you start is second to last, etc.

Using the Nested Loops structure works a bit like a friend telling you about a wise person in their life, someone who taught them an important lesson. The first loops are your friend's story, the second loops are the wise person's story. At the centre is the important lesson.

Good for:

- Explaining the process of how you were inspired/ came to a conclusion
- Using analogies to explain a central concept
- Showing how a piece of wisdom was passed along to you



SPARKLINES

Sparklines are a way of mapping the story structure. The presenter draws attention to problems in our ordinary world; our society, personal lives or our business. They compare what is, with what could be in an ideal improved world. The presenter creates and fuels a desire for change in the audience.

It's a highly emotional technique that is sure to motivate your audience to support you.

Good for:

- Inspiring the audience to action
- Creating hope and excitement
- Creating a following



IN MEDIA RES

In Medias Res is when you begin your story in the heat of the action, before starting over at the beginning to explain how you got there.

By dropping your audience right into the most exciting part of your story, they'll be gripped from the beginning and will stay engaged to find out what happens.

But be careful - you don't want to give away too much of the action straight away. Try hinting at something bizarre or unexpected - something that needs more explanation. Give your audience just enough information to keep them hooked, as you go back and set the scene of your story.

Good for:

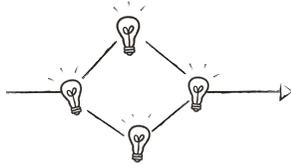
- Grabbing attention from the start
- Keep an audience craving resolution
- Focusing attention on a pivotal moment in your story



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

CLASSIC STORYTELLING STRUCTURES



CONVERGING IDEAS

Converging Ideas is a speech structure that shows the audience how different strands of thinking came together to form one product or idea.

It can be used to show the birth of a movement. Or explain how a single idea was the culmination of several great minds working towards one goal.

Converging ideas is similar to the nested loops structure, but rather than framing one story with complementary stories, it can show how several equally important stories came to a single strong conclusion.

Good for:

- Showing how great minds came together
- Demonstrating how a development occurred at a certain point in history
- Showing how symbiotic relationships have formed



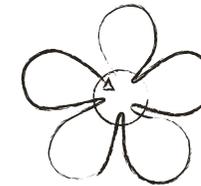
FALSE START

A *False Start* story is when you begin to tell a seemingly predictable story, before unexpectedly disrupting it and beginning it over again. You lure your audience into a false sense of security, and then shock them by turning the tables. This format is great for talking about a time that you failed in something and were forced to 'go back to the start' and reassess. It's ideal for talking about the things that you learnt from that experience, or the innovative way that you solved your problem.

But best of all, it's a quick attention hack which will disrupt your audience's expectations and surprise them into paying closer attention to your message.

Good for:

- Disrupting audience expectations
- Showing the benefits of a flexible approach
- Keeping the audience engaged



PETAL

The Petal approach involves a series of stories that relate to a central theme. You tell your stories one by one before returning back to the theme. The petals can overlap as one story introduces the next, but each should be a complete narrative in itself.

In doing so, you can weave a rich tapestry of evidence or strong emotional impressions around your central theory.

By showing your audience how all these key stories are related to one another, you leave them feeling the true importance and weight of your message.

Good for:

- Demonstrating how strands of a story or process are interconnected
- Showing how several scenarios relate back to one idea
- Letting multiple speakers talk around a central theme



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

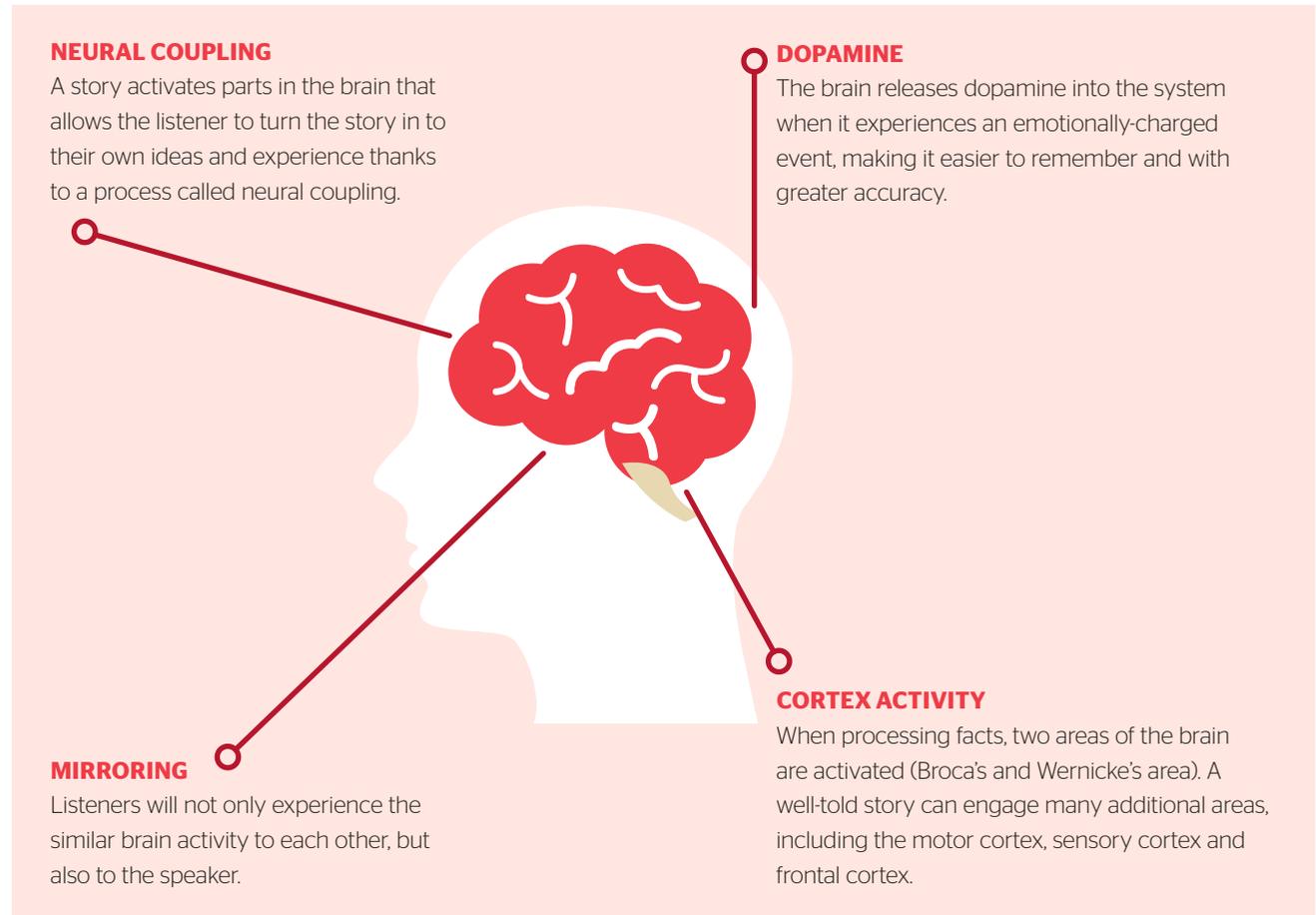
HOW STORYTELLING AFFECTS THE BRAIN

The human brain is wired to predict cause and effect, the two elements which are also the essence of a good story. The more areas of the brain your story engages, the more memorable it will be. To engage the brain, think about:

How you can engage the sensory cortex?

- Strong memories are created through the senses so consider how your guests can engage with your story through touch, smell, hear, sight and taste (if you aren't offering a sensory experience, why not describe one with a metaphor such as 'his hands felt like leather').
- Engage the motor cortex by encouraging your guests to become physically involved. Even asking them to imagine a physical effort can spark the motor cortex.
- The frontal cortex is where our life experiences and emotions are stored. Research shows that when a storyteller accesses their own frontal cortex, it lights up the frontal cortex in the listener as well.

Research shows that our brains are not hard wired to understand logic or retain facts for very long. Our brains are wired to understand and retain stories. Stories help our audience understand who we are. Most importantly, they give them a reason to interact with us, to join us on our journey.





Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

Engaging the sensory cortex

At Queensland's iconic Bundaberg Rum Distillery, storytelling is told by engaging the five senses through a new 'Blend Your Own Rum Experience' (BYOR). Launched in August 2016, 30 years after original tours of the distillery began, guests can now start their journey in a fully-immersive one-of-a-kind museum visit where they can see, touch, smell and hear about the history and legends of Bundaberg Rum.

They then move on to the distillery itself with a guided tour. At the end of their visit, guests spend time with two expert guides who demonstrate the art of tasting rum straight from the barrel. The guides then teach guests how to blend and create their own personalised rum. Guests leave with two of their own individually labelled and created bottles of Bundaberg Rum, the ingredients of which are kept on file should they require more of their special brew in future.

Bundaberg Rum Distillery Senior Brand Manager Duncan Littler said the new experience is part of an \$8.5 million redevelopment which retains the authenticity of old buildings. 'We wanted to give visitors the type of experience we have on site. We wanted them to learn the secrets and to give them something to take away,' he said.

'We talk about the blending commandments and the types of rum you like. We wanted to create something people could put on their bucket list and do something no one else was doing. Authenticity is the key. You don't have to spend millions of dollars to tell a purposeful story. Think about what is unique and special to your brand and what is your brand purpose.'

For more information visit: bundabergum.com.au/distillery/book-a-tour





Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

MIX IT UP

Different people absorb information in different ways, so you should offer a mix of communication and learning styles. Consider how you will:

Change their mood: Guests need to escape their everyday lives and be embraced into your world. Find an inspiring place or technique to help guests experience a transition.

Get them thinking: Let your guests draw their own conclusions rather than telling them facts and figures. If you stimulate them emotionally and intellectually, they are more likely to remember it.

Let them engage at their own pace: Some people like to hear a story and respond immediately, others need time to process and pull the facts together. Provide a range of media they can read, watch and touch to engage at their own pace.

Connect with individuals: Speak to one person, then another using eye contact, and possibly link story elements to individuals in the audience by side comment or questioning.

Engage all of the senses: Strong memories are created through all of the senses so persuade your guests to touch, smell, hear, see and taste your experience.

Be responsive: Successful comedians have a rule that despite the fact they may be in the middle of an act, they never ignore what's happening around them. If someone heckles them, they bring it into the story. If a waiter smashes a tray of glasses in the middle of their set, they own that new information and find a way to incorporate it into the act.

Help your guest create their own stories: Give your guests the chance to create a memory, perhaps by taking a photo and sharing it on social media

TRANSFORMING THE MINDSET OF YOUR GUESTS

The International Antarctic Centre in Christchurch is one of New Zealand's most award-winning tourist attractions. The attraction allows visitors of all ages to experience Antarctica – the coldest, windiest, driest and most remote place – on earth.

In the centre visitors experience a stunning light and sound show in the Four Seasons of Antarctica and brave an Antarctic Storm in the Snow & Ice experience – feeling the chill factor of -18 °C. They share stories about Antarctica and Scott Base, New Zealand's station in Antarctica. Visitors can also hang out with Little Blue Penguins and cuddle the Huskies, ride the Hågglund all terrain vehicles and enjoy a 4D simulated cruise.

The physical transition into the International Antarctic Centre provides their visitors with a feeling of entering a new and exciting world. By creating a transition from one space into another, visitors leave behind their everyday lives and become more open and ready to learn about what life is like on the frozen continent. This approach creates story moments for their guests. The act of putting on the snow clothes is something different that can create a talking point – a reason to share the story.

For more information visit: iceberg.co.nz



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

WHICH MEDIUMS SUIT YOUR STORY?

Choosing the ideal medium to help communicate your story should be a creative process.

Ask your team what they think and experiment with ideas. While face-to-face delivery is the most popular way of storytelling, it is not the only option. Think about ways you can use mediums to put your guest in the lead role, but don't let the medium take the place of the story.

Questions to Consider:

- What medium will best help deliver your story?
- What mediums or methods of communication do you already have?
- What is the cost and will you make a return on investment?
- Will the medium require ongoing maintenance?
- Will elements need to be replaced regularly?
- Will the medium date easily? - technology can change rapidly.



A special effect without a story is a pretty boring thing.

George Lucas, filmmaker



FACE-TO-FACE STORYTELLING

Involves someone talking to and engaging with your guests (i.e. guided tours, re-enactment etc).

\$\$
medium to high

+VE
human dimension, flexibility

-VE
training, commitment, capacity



STORY PANELS/ SIGNAGE

Show text and visuals related to the story and provides orientation as well as interpretation.

\$\$
variable, medium to high

+VE
always present, carry images and text

-VE
inflexible, can be visually intrusive, maintenance, impersonal



BOOKLETS

Print-outs for guests to read during their visit in the form of information sheets, maps, quizzes, activity sheets, self-guided trails etc.

\$\$
low to medium

+VE
images and text make it easy to use, functions as a keepsake

-VE
distribution and availability, regular updating, can be impersonal



AUDIO TOURS

Spoken commentaries which tell the story delivered through headsets or on guests' own personal devices (i.e. mobile phones, tablets).

\$\$
variable, medium to high

+VE
creative, engaging, multi-lingual

-VE
lowers group interaction, regular maintenance.

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE MEDIUMS YOU CAN USE. BE CREATIVE AND EXPLORE DIFFERENT OPTIONS.



Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

Four lessons from Aboriginal storytellers

Make it real: the listener needs to feel like they aren't just hearing the story, our approach to storytelling is to invite the listener into the story as if they are there, through the introductions of characters to which we can all relate.

Create drama and tension: the strongest emotions create the most memorable stories. Stories of love, betrayal, and anger are common themes in stories.

Use props: whether it's drawing in the dirt or using the latest technology, Aboriginal people have mastered the art of the prop. Modern Aboriginal storytellers are using art, music, dance and technology to the same great effect as our ancestors.

Repeat the key themes: through the use of repetition, we ensure the listener is completely comfortable with, and connected to the characters and the theme.

Traditional Owner stories are an excellent way to connect your guests with the landscape. If you are keen to share traditional stories from your area, make contact with your Traditional Owner group through your local council and sit down and listen to the stories. Remember to ask about the protocols for sharing those stories with your guests.



Our approach to storytelling is to invite the listener into the story as if they are there.

**Cameron Costello, CEO,
Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation**





Step three

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

EXTRA TOUCHES

While you don't want your story to be too complex or lengthy, consider how you might add to the emotional impact by using the following techniques:

Big start: grab your guests' attention with a powerful statement or question.

Description: use adjectives, paint pictures in your guests minds, explain the feelings of the characters in your story.

Dialogue: personalise your story, what will your characters say or think.

Acknowledge the source of the story: add credibility and depth.

Physical interactions: ask your guests to do something, pass a prop around, close their eyes and imagine, have a sensory experience.

Acting out sections or getting into character: remember that you are entertaining your guests, not lecturing.

Emphasise challenge or conflict: these are often the most compelling part of a story.

Humour: jokes or puns can add a fun dimension, make sure they are appropriate.

Surprise and delight your guests: offer something they wouldn't expect.

Don't be a data dumper: 'A short story is a good story', your audience is unlikely to remember the facts, details and sequencing of events, but rather how your story made them feel and the theme or messaging behind it.



Tell the readers a story! Because without a story, you are merely using words to string them together in logical sentences.

Anne McCaffrey, science fiction writer

MAKE A PLAN

Plan in as much detail as possible every step of your story.

Remember to:

- Include time for interaction, conversation and reflection
- Who will deliver your story? Will there be more than one person?
- Are there any additional costs involved?
- Are there any logistical challenges?
- How will you manage timing?
- What is your back up plan? eg. if you're storytelling is mostly outside what happens if it rains?





DELIVER YOUR STORY

In this section:

Your greatest asset

Attributes of a great storyteller

Practice makes perfect



Step four

DELIVER YOUR STORY

YOUR GREATEST ASSET

A strong initial concept (Step 2) and clear structure (Step 3) provides a solid foundation for a great story. However the skills in imparting the story are still important and in many businesses different staff will be telling the same story to guests on the next scheduled tour or shift.

Empowering your storytellers with a little training will build confidence and quality in their delivery. Of course everyone has a slightly different style and producing robots will take the emotion from the story. The secret is to enable your storytellers to find their authentic strengths while maintaining the basic content you want your guests to hear.

Virgin Group Founder Richard Branson believes it's your staff, not your guests, who are your most valuable asset: 'If you look after your staff they'll look after your customers, it's that simple.'

Make full use of your staff's knowledge, skills and enthusiasm. Encourage them to contribute to the process of perfecting your story by sharing ideas and listen to their experiences of feedback on the frontline.

“

When we want mood experiences, we go to concerts or museums. When we want a meaningful emotional experience, we go to the storyteller.'

Robert McKee, *Story: Style Structure, Substance and the Principles of Screenwriting*





Step four

DELIVER YOUR STORY

ATTRIBUTES OF A GREAT STORYTELLER

Ensure your staff are confident in communication techniques and know how to deliver your story to guests. Consider which staff possess the skills and interests to personalise aspects of your story and contribute to a more active and vivid guest experience.

Encourage your storytellers to use these techniques:

Knowledge depth: Having an interest in, and knowledge of related topics, will help with communicating the story and answering any questions guests might have.

Vocal skills: Clear diction, projection, variation, emphasis, appropriate vocabulary and the use of silence for emphasis or reflection.

Non-verbal communication: Body language, eye contact, physical demonstration and dramatic gestures all add to the audience's emotional engagement.

Interaction: During the story find opportunities to ask rhetorical questions such as 'So what would you have done?' or encourage a child to act out a story element.

SOMETHING FUN TO DO AS A TEAM

Museum Hack founder and CEO, Nick Gray, suggests undertaking this exercise with your team to perfect your story. This exercise is ideal if you have limited time to share your story with guests. Ask a colleague to time you.

Step 1: Tell your best story in just 2 minutes

Step 2: Now cut it in half and try telling your story in just 1 minute.

Step 3: Keep shortening the time that it takes to tell your story, until you get to under 1 minute. At what point did your story stop being a story? When did it lose its theme and emotional connection?

Repeat Step 3 until you can deliver your story and all of the important elements in under a minute. Now it's time for your team to try this exercise.



Photo credit: Museum Hack and Wonston

For more storytelling tips from Nick Gray visit: teq.queensland.com/storytelling



Step four

DELIVER YOUR STORY

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

It's all about practice. Once you have nailed the hallmarks of your unique story, practice on your colleagues.

Share your story with your friends and family, be open to suggestions and set aside your ego. Ask for raw and honest feedback about your delivery. Are you engaging your audience or merely speaking at them? Your story will change over time, so be prepared to change your delivery and content as well. Be adaptable in your story-telling technique and enhance what works and discard what doesn't.

Top Tips

- Pay attention to your tone, pace, volume, and non-verbal communication. Do you have a speech habit, such as 'um', 'you know' or 'like' that could adversely affect the impact of your story?
- Attention to detail and personalisation will make your guests' experience memorable
- Be relaxed and flexible so that you can enjoy telling your story
- Slow down the pace and avoid jargon when communicating to groups where English is not their first language
- Emphasise the point (theme) of your story.
- Link the story elements with a theme to which they can relate and care about.

EMBRACING YOUR STORY

The story of Paronella Park in Tropical North Queensland is a story of love, loss and triumph around a set of glorious gardens boasting a castle, theatre, refreshment rooms, tea gardens, swimming pools and waterfalls, opened in 1935 by Spaniard Jose Paronella and his wife Margarita. Paronella Park survived floods in 1967, 1972 and 1974 and was sold out of the family in 1977. In 1979, the castle was devastated by fire and closed to the public for some time.

Mark and Judy Evans bought the park in 1993, but didn't start storytelling until 1999. Within a month, their thrice-daily tours exploded to eight. The park now attracts more than 100,000 guests a year. 'In the first six years we gave people a piece of paper with a bit of information and a map of the park and we spoke for about two and a half minutes,' Mark said. 'In 1999, when we started the process of storytelling, we thought 'can we afford to do it?' Ultimately storytelling was the launchpad to take us to the next level.'

These days, Paronella Park tours - including a night tour - take 45 minutes and are conducted in several languages. 'We see it as the delivery of a story which tugs at the heart strings. The one ingredient we look for in our guides is passion,' Mark said. More floods in January 1994, Cyclone Larry in 2006 and Cyclone Yasi in 2011, have all added to the story.

Mark, who meets guests after each night tour and gives them a piece of the castle wall which was destroyed by Cyclone Larry, says everybody has a story to tell. 'Paronella Park started with two people and a lot of skepticism. We are taking Paronella Park from being an attraction into a destination,' he said.

For more information visit: paronellapark.com.au



KEEP EVOLVING

In this section:

How will you measure if storytelling is effective?

Where else should you share your story?

Digital storytelling

Next Steps



Step five

KEEP EVOLVING

No matter how good your story is, it must evolve to stay relevant and to do this, you need to observe what impact your story is having on how your guests feel and how they share it with others.

Try to keep the subject matter current. Using modern references that are relevant to your audience will make it easier to connect and share. Don't be afraid to use what is happening in the world around you, to make your story as relevant as possible.

Storytelling must work for your guests and your business. Regularly assess what difference storytelling has made to your business, whether it's an increase in visitors, new target markets or improved customer satisfaction.



I'll keep evolving and put that into my songs.'

Alanis Morissette
rock singer and songwriter



Step five

KEEP EVOLVING

HOW WILL YOU MEASURE IF STORYTELLING IS EFFECTIVE?

Evaluation isn't a one-off exercise, but should be part of a regular review process to understand expectations from visitors, and gauge how they react to your story. Regular visitors can become bored with the same experience, and guests' needs change all the time.

Evaluation can also help you improve your storytelling technique. Even the way in which you evaluate needs to be reviewed for its effectiveness. Consider what methods you will use to measure impact and effectiveness. Develop a plan to collate this information and use it to make necessary changes. Make a plan of how often you will review the feedback and how you will share it with your team.

Direct Evaluation

- Talking to your guests - are they interested in your story?
- Conducting surveys - visitor cards or online
- Assembling focus groups
- Checking and responding to online review platforms such as TripAdvisor and other third party websites
- Monitoring your social media responses

Indirect Evaluation

- Observing your guests - what are their verbal and non-verbal reactions?
- Noting how long visitors spend with the storyteller afterwards, chatting or asking questions
- Monitoring an increase or decrease in visitation
- Profiling changes in your target markets or new markets' responses
- Checking staff responses and satisfaction levels





Step five

KEEP EVOLVING

WHERE ELSE SHOULD YOU SHARE YOUR STORY?

It would be a mistake to think that delivering your story starts and finishes when your guests are onsite. Nothing could be further from the truth, the storytelling journey needs to start long before your guests even arrive.

According to the Consumer Purchase Cycle, there are five stages a visitor undergoes as part of their travel experience.



The dreaming and planning stages present prime opportunities for you to share elements of your story through your marketing collateral, website and other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In fact, this is often the most important step to motivate and inspire travellers to choose your experience over others.

Once onsite, real-time sharing of your story while your guests are experiencing your tourism product should be encouraged. Ensure you present them with the tools, such as free wifi, recommended photo angles and adequate time in order to do this.

But it doesn't end here. Remind your guests there are many platforms on which to share their holiday experience after it has ended. Provide them with details of key review sites as well as your relevant hashtags, websites and social media pages so that they can link back to your product. This also makes it easier for you to monitor what they are saying about you, and enables you to interact with them to keep the story, and relationship, alive for as long as possible.

Grant Hunt, a former director of Tourism Australia and one of the Australian tourism industry's most recognised leaders, floated in 2009 the concept that Generation Y and Baby Boomer travellers were influenced by 'brag factor' holidays. Grant said that travellers were increasingly looking for out-of-the-ordinary experiences which they could brag to their friends about. The influx of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have increasingly facilitated this concept, making it easier than ever before for tourism operators to capitalise on this free form of marketing.

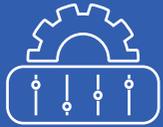
ALSO CONSIDER SHARING YOUR STORY THROUGH THE FOLLOWING MEDIUMS:

Traditional

- Images and media releases
- Newspapers and Magazines
- Brochures and flyers
- Television and Radio
- Mementos or souvenirs
- Media and trade famils

Digital

- Websites (yours and others)
- Email
- Blog posts
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Advertising
- Social Media platforms



Step five

KEEP EVOLVING

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling uses multimedia to combine photos, video, animation, sound, music, text and sometimes narrative to convey a story. Digital storytelling is quickly evolving and is becoming a popular method for communicating stories.

The best news is you don't have to be an expert in this field to use this technology. There are a number of simple and free Apps on the market, such as Quik and Splice, which collate your photos, words, videos, music, text and animation into professional-looking storytelling tools. Ensure you think visually, as well as in words. If you can collate a great image library of your business, which is easily accessible, it has multiple uses for storytelling.

The benefits of digital storytelling are numerous and often work well on audiences who are time poor or more comfortable with technology such as a younger demographic. Digital stories are often emotionally engaging and can also be interactive, enhancing their appeal. Digital storytelling can cover a range of digital narratives such as web-based stories; interactive stories; hypertexts; and narrative computer games.

SHARING YOUR STORY

Ocean Rafting has been operating tours to Whitehaven Beach since 1997. Carrying between 25 and 32 passengers on each tour in their semi-rigid inflatable vessels, Ocean Rafting shows guests the 'wild side' of the Whitsundays, with the ability to visit uninhabited islands.

These multi-award winning tours are fast, fun, educational and adventurous. Guests also experience special snorkelling sites and Ocean Rafting is the only tour operator with direct access to Hill Inlet Beach.

Ocean Rafting owner Jan Claxton says two years ago they realised they needed to be more active on social media and gave GoPro cameras to all of their staff. 'It took a while to get them used to doing it as part of their job but since then it's been absolutely fantastic and they have embraced the creativity,' she said.

'At the end of each day, the footage comes back to the office and there are a lot of man hours involved but we are lucky to have one or two office staff who really take it on and go through the photos.'

Jan said they look for 'quirky' and 'less hard sell' images which are loaded onto several platforms including their web page for sale, the profits of which are given to staff for taking photos.

'Facebook is also huge for us and is where we put the most newsworthy things and Instagram is also fantastic, but we are careful not to cross post the same picture,' she said. 'We also encourage our guests to use Facebook and TripAdvisor and have stickers on our boats promoting this. It's about empowering your staff. We have an awesome team and we've always told them they are storytellers.'

For more information visit: oceanrafting.com.au



Step five

KEEP EVOLVING

NEXT STEPS

All good stories must come to an end and this Storytelling Manual is no exception. We hope, through these pages, we have inspired you to find your story. To be successful in this craft, you must know your guests and understand how to connect with them through your unique story. Discover and develop your stories, be authentic, and learn how to best deliver it on different platforms. Keep evolving.

Storytelling is powerful and has the ability to:

- Help people remember and create new memories
- Connect people to a place, person or event
- Attach importance to an experience
- Bring intellect and emotions together
- Entertain through drama and humour
- Help make sense of the world
- Create wonder
- Deliver enrichment and rarity
- And most importantly make people care and spread word of mouth to increase visitation to your business

The supporting Storytelling Workbook provides a series of questions to assist you in putting these ideas into practice.

We strongly encourage you to complete these questions to enrich storytelling within your business.

It is through great storytelling that you will enhance your tourism business and, as they say in the classics, live happily ever after.

To access the Storytelling Workbook and other storytelling resources visit: teq.queensland.com/storytelling



Words are how we think; stories are how we link.

Christina Baldwin, author



teq.queensland.com/storytelling

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