

'*Stories for Work* will give you everything you need to be more inspiring and effective in your business communications. A must read business book!'

—Michael Ebeid, CEO & Managing Director, SBS

stories *for* work

the essential
guide to business
storytelling

Gabrielle Dolan

WILEY

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INTRODUCTION

I once had the pleasure of working with a wonderful woman, Merrin Butler, who confessed to sleeping or reading through the safety instructions on her regular Sunday night flight from Dublin to Glasgow.

She told me that catching the same flight every week for work made her, understandably, very blasé. So she'd either fall asleep or read the paper as the crew pulled on oxygen masks and pointed out the exits.

One night on her regular flight, after giving her usual lack of attention to the pre-flight demonstration, they hit some rough weather and the pilot had to abort the landing as they were coming into Glasgow. The plane circled around and tried again, but the rain and wind were getting worse and so the pilot abandoned the landing for the second time. Before making the third attempt, the captain announced, 'We'll make one final attempt to land but before we do, the crew will go through our safety instructions again.'

All the passengers sat bolt upright in their seats, their undivided attention on the crew. People asked questions about the oxygen masks, checked for their life jackets under their seats and physically counted out the rows to their nearest exit.

Thankfully, Merrin lived to tell the frightening tale, as did everyone else on the plane.

When she shared this story with me, long after the incident, I was helping her to implement a major organisational change at National Australia Bank. It was going to be a two-year process that would affect all the Human Resources professionals across the company.

I asked Merrin what was the one message she wanted to get across to her team when we announced the change. She said they'd all be thinking,

Here we go again... another change or restructure. But Merrin felt that it was more than that—although the change would be a long, intensive project, everyone would receive lots of information about it and, while at the time they might think it was boring or irrelevant, they needed to pay close attention because it was going to personally affect each and every one of them at some point.

As the Communications and Change Manager for the project, I suggested she share her story about flying into Glasgow. Her initial reaction was, ‘What has that got to do with anything?’ I convinced Merrin to share the story, however, knowing it matched her message—often we think information we’re receiving may not be relevant, but it does have an important purpose. I was confident the story would work...well, maybe not confident but optimistic.

The next day, Merrin shared her flight story with her team of HR professionals. I watched and waited for the response in the room (I’ll admit, by this stage the optimism had turned to hope). I should have been confident, because this became the first time I really noticed the positive impact of a personal story when delivered as a business message. Not only did her team immediately react with smiles and understanding, but they also continued to refer to the story months later.

I wasn’t aware of it at the time but that was a sliding-door moment for me. I realised the power of storytelling and this knowledge completely changed my career—and my life. From that point on, I noticed that all the leaders I found inspiring and engaging used stories to explain their actions and choices in some way.

I left my corporate career on a mission—a mission to change the boring and bland way we communicated in the business world with inspiring and engaging stories that hit the hearts and minds of leaders and their teams.

Over the last decade, this work has taken me all over the world—from Australia to Malaysia, Europe and the US—but no matter where I am, I’m always faced with questions and comments like the following:

- ‘Does storytelling really work in business? I mean, *really*?’
- ‘What stories do I need and how many do I use?’

- ‘How do you find stories?’
- ‘I don’t have any stories. I just lead a pretty average and normal life.’
- ‘Where and when do you share stories in business?’
- ‘I’ve never thought of using a personal story to communicate a business message. Are we allowed to do that?’

Hearing these kinds of questions and remarks from so many different leaders, managers and executives at all levels, in all industries and corporations, all over the world was the catalyst behind this book.

My aim is to show you the science behind why storytelling really works—because it does work, as the many examples in this book will show. This book also clarifies what types of stories are appropriate to use, how to find them and how to share them.

What I love most about this book is that it gives you a collection of tried and tested stories from people who have successfully used them in their business lives. I know from my own experience that hearing other people’s stories helps to ignite story ideas of your own.

My intention is to help you generate your own stories, show you where and when to use them and, most importantly, give you the courage to share your own stories to get great results.

So put down your paper and pay close attention—you’re about to fly into the wonderful world of storytelling.

PART I

Shaping

your

stories

Storytelling has been around since the dawn of time and humans have always communicated using stories. Evidence of this is seen from the paintings left behind by our cave-dwelling ancestors to the Aboriginal culture and Dreamtime storytelling, which continues to be passed down generation to generation.

It's only recently, however, that modern business has started to realise the power and potential of this ancient art.

In a world of information overload and short attention spans, business people are looking for a more effective way to get their messages across and to help them stand out from all the 'noise'. Combine this with an appreciation of being more authentic in the way we lead, and it is no surprise that storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool.

In this part, I take you through exactly why storytelling is so powerful in business, drilling down into the science behind it. I also cover the four main types of stories you will need, and how to find, construct and share your stories.

While the art of storytelling is an ancient form, the applications of storytelling in business are just being discovered.

CHAPTER 1

THE SCIENCE OF STORYTELLING

Sure, you might already be aware that telling a story makes good sense, but it is more than that. It is actually based on good science. In this chapter I take you through this science, explaining how stories build trust and heighten emotions.

The brain behind the story

Our brain has different parts, and each part has a different job. The left side of our brain, for example, helps us think logically and organise our thoughts, while the right side helps us experience emotions and recall personal memories. We also have a ‘reptile brain’ that makes us act instinctively and a ‘mammal brain’ that helps us connect in relationships. And our brains have a neocortex, which is connected to a complex series of nerves and networks called the ‘limbic system’. This is responsible for the development of the bond we feel between ourselves and another (like the mother–child bond).

In his international best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman explains that our evolved neocortex is the reason our emotions are so powerful. He says,

“As the root from which the newer brain grew, the emotional areas are intertwined via myriad connecting circuits to all parts of the neocortex. This gives the emotional centres immense power to influence the functioning of the rest of the brain.

When we tell stories all the different parts and areas of our brain are stimulated and start to work together, combining words and logic and emotions and sensory images, so we see the whole picture and communicate our experience. Essentially, with all this activity going on, our emotions go into overdrive.

This means that stories provoke our emotions. Good stories make us feel something as we listen to them—excitement, anger, sadness, empathy or enthusiasm. Consequently, feeling these emotions means we feel something towards the person telling the story, which helps create connection—the bond like the ones our neocortex helps develop.

We love a good story

In the 2014 *Harvard Business Review* article ‘Why your brain loves good storytelling’, neuroeconomist Paul Zak revealed the powerful impact the love hormone oxytocin has on the brain when we tell stories.

Oxytocin is also often referred to as the ‘trust hormone’. Our bodies release it when we are with people we love and trust, when we hug, or even when we shake hands in a business meeting. And it’s released when we listen to stories. Oxytocin being released signals to the brain that everything is okay and it is safe to approach others—essentially, that we won’t be attacked or eaten, as would have been the risk back in the day.

So not only does a good story make us feel different emotions and a connection to the storyteller but, at the same time, the love hormone oxytocin is also signalling that we can be trusted, which in turn helps build our credibility.

Stories build trust and credibility

Neuroscientist Uri Hasson opened his 2016 TED talk with the following:

“ Imagine if we invented a device that could record my memories, my dreams, my ideas and transmit them to your brain. That would be a game-changing technology, right? But, in fact, we already possess this device and it's called the human communication system and effective storytelling.

Hasson's research shows that even across different languages, our brains show similar activity when we hear a story, becoming what he calls 'aligned' or 'synchronised'.

In one study, listeners lay in the dark waiting to hear a story spoken out loud. The moment the story started, the auditory cortex of the listeners' brains, the area that processes sound, became active and aligned. Hassan calls this 'neural entrainment'.

It was only when the listeners heard the story in a coherent way that alignment started to happen. This did not happen if the story was played backwards, or the words or sentences were scrambled. But the story was still understood in a similar way when it was told in Russian to a group of Russian listeners as it was when told in English to a group of English listeners.

The participants were also shown a clip from the BBC TV series *Sherlock*. Months later, one participant was asked to tell another about the scene they watched. The results showed that the brain of the person telling the story aligned with the same activity their brain showed when they watched the show some months earlier. Furthermore, the brain of the participant who was listening to the story also aligned in a similar way.

So what does all this prove? Listening to a story being told is effectively like reliving that story as if it were yours. What better way to create common ground and a shared understanding with someone? And this is especially the case if you're making a presentation to an audience of 1000 strangers or even facilitating a one-on-one coaching session.

Emotions drive our decisions

Just some of the questions running through the minds of our audience when we are talking to them include the following:

- Do I buy from you?
- Do I get behind this change?
- Do I accept the role with you?
- Do I believe you?
- Do I take your advice?
- Do I follow you?
- Do I respect you?

Our audience will be forming these types of questions whether we're trying to get them to buy-in to an organisational change or motivating them towards next year's goals.

Usually, we try to influence them with a PowerPoint presentation of facts and figures or an outline of the pros and cons of whatever it is we want them to feel excited about. These strategies are all based on logic. Yet, science says that we make up our minds to the types of questions I listed based on our emotions and how we feel about something.

Research by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio shows emotion plays a significant role in our ability to make decisions. While many of us believe logic drives our choices, the reality is that we have already made an emotional decision and we then use logic to justify the choice—to ourselves and to others.

Damasio's research involved examining people with damage to their frontal lobe, which is the area of the brain where emotions are generated and that helps to regulate personality. Except for their inability to feel or express emotions, the participants had normal intellectual capacity in terms of working memory, attention, language comprehension and expression. However, they were unable to make decisions.

The vast majority of participants could describe in logical terms what they thought they should be doing, but they found it difficult to actually make a decision, including making a simple choice like deciding what to eat. This indecision came from them going over the pros and cons for each option again and again. Presented with a choice to make, we struggle to make a decision without some form of emotion influencing it.

Influence and impact

Damasio's research does not stand alone. According to Christine Comaford, neuroscience expert and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Smart Tribes: How Teams Become Brilliant Together*, 90 per cent of human behaviour and decision-making is driven by our emotions.

Not fully understanding this is often why we get incredibly frustrated when our team members do not do what we want them to do. In our mind, our request makes logical sense! But as best-selling author Dale Carnegie put it, 'When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion.'

That's why it's important to note the difference between a case study and a story. Case studies are based on logic, facts and figures (as you'll see from those provided in chapters 13 to 15). They still play an important role in business, but not from the standpoint of connecting with someone on an emotional level.

Marketing executives and advertisers are acutely aware of the power of using storytelling and emotion in business to drive purchasing decisions. You only have to look at the latest car advert for proof!

A study of over 1400 marketing campaigns submitted to the UK-based Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) rated how effective marketing campaigns were, based on profit gains. The results showed:

- campaigns based purely on emotion rated as 31 per cent effective
- campaigns based purely on logic rated as only 16 per cent effective

- campaigns that combined emotion and logic rated as 26 per cent effective.

This research indicates that using logic alone has the least impact and using emotion has almost double the impact. (For more on this research, go to www.neurosciencemarketing.com/blog and search 'emotional ads'.)

Storytelling is deeply rooted in making an emotional connection with another person. That's why if you're looking to make an impact or influence someone at work, it makes scientific sense to use a story.

Attention, please!

Remember Paul Zak's research on oxytocin and storytelling? His research goes on to show that when we listen to a tense moment in a story, our brains produce the stress hormone cortisol, which helps us to focus.

In one of his studies, participants watched an emotional story about a father and his son. Both cortisol and oxytocin were released in varying degrees in the participants. When cortisol was present, the participants with higher amounts of oxytocin also present were more likely to donate money to someone they had never met.

The research showed that in order to motivate people to help others, a story must first sustain attention and then develop tension. If this is the case, listeners are more likely to share the emotions of the characters in the story and mimic the feelings and behaviours of those characters.

These findings have significant relevance in business. Zak's research shows that character-driven stories that provoke emotion result in a better understanding of key messages in the story. More importantly, listeners are better able to recall the main points weeks later. As Zak states, 'In terms of making impact, this blows the standard PowerPoint presentation to bits'.

Remember when . . .

An investigation into autobiographical memories found that:

- emotionally charged events are remembered better
- pleasant emotions are usually remembered better than unpleasant ones
- positive memories contain more contextual details (which, in turn, helps memory)
- strong emotion can impair memory for less emotional events and information experienced at the same time
- emotional arousal, not the importance of the information, helps memory.

Anyone who works in business must sit up and take note of these findings, especially that it's emotion, not logical information, that helps us to remember messages. Too many leaders in business believe that having an important message to share, such as the new strategy or technical change, is reason enough for their audience to listen. (For more on the preceding findings, go to www.memory-key.com/memory/emotion.)

Unfortunately, focusing on logical information usually produces the opposite effect. Without a story or a connection to how this new strategy is going to make listeners feel, the message is usually lost or slept through and forgotten. This is why you should use a story.

The safety industry has been decades ahead of the rest of business when it comes to memorable campaigns and messages—in particular, Air New Zealand. The airline is renowned for using humour and storytelling in their inflight videos to deliver crucial information when it comes to safety in the air.

In 2011, the first of these videos was launched starring American fitness guru Richard Simmons. ‘Fit to Fly’ shows a bunch of lycra-clad passengers working out as they buckle up and demonstrate putting on their oxygen masks. The video has had over three million views on YouTube—pretty amazing for a boring old safety video! Other Air New Zealand campaigns featured Bear Grylls (from *Man vs. Wild*) and *Golden Girls* actress Betty White. If you haven’t seen them, you can find them easily via a quick search on YouTube.

Australian airline Qantas is also starting to follow this lead. While they do not use humour like Air New Zealand, they do use stereotypical Australian characters and scenes outside of a plane to deliver the safety messages. (You can also find Qantas examples on YouTube.) Even Merrin, my friend from the introduction of this book who slept through the airline safety instructions, would agree these unusual videos and stories grab your attention much longer than the stock standard boring ones.

So if you lead a safety meeting as part of your role—or, indeed, need to impart other kinds of critical information—this is an opportunity for you to start sharing a story instead of reading out a list of bullet points about compliance with your team.

The research in this chapter proves that tapping into emotion not only aids our understanding of a logical message, but also helps us retain that information. We are more likely to remember a good story as opposed to a bunch of facts.

As American poet Maya Angelou famously said, ‘People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel’.

Make your stories work

This chapter showed you the science behind storytelling. You learned that stories:

- provoke emotions in our brain and body
- stimulate the release of the love hormone oxytocin
- make us feel something towards the person telling the story
- help build trust and credibility
- influence our audience into making a decision
- aid in focusing listeners on key messages
- help us to remember details rather than just facts and logic alone.

So what stories do you need? Do you need different types of stories? How many of these stories do you need? How long will it take you to find them? We answer these questions in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

HOW TO CONSTRUCT AND SHARE YOUR STORIES

Now you know the four types of stories you need, and you've come up with a list of potential memories and stories that you can use. This serves as your 'go-to' list. As you identify a business message or situation where you need to use a story, you can look at this list and craft the relevant story you need.

Of course, it's a good idea to pick a few stories to get you going. As you'll soon see, preparation is key when it comes to effective storytelling.

So let's walk through how you construct and craft a story. First, you'll need to write or type out your story before you hone it and practise presenting it. This will help you craft a story that is succinct and relevant, and means you'll have something to keep referring back to over time.

To begin crafting your stories, let's look at some storytelling advice that has withstood the test of time. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, invented this simple three-step story structure back in 350 BC:

1. beginning
2. middle
3. end.

Let's look at each in more detail.

The beginning

How do you start a story? Often, the best approach is with time and place. Some examples include:

- 'When I was a kid, I lived in Switzerland ...'
- 'This morning when I was taking the dog for a walk ...'
- 'In grade 3, I had a best friend called Lizzy ...'
- 'When I was kid, we would always go camping on holidays ...'
- 'On 9 December 2007, I received a phone call ...'

Stories that start with a specific date, and sometimes an exact time, often indicate that what you are about to share is something quite significant. I would, therefore, try to only start a story with a specific date and/or time if the story is genuinely significant (most likely a triumph or tragedy story) or the information is relevant.

Referencing time and place is a great signal to your audience that you are about to tell them a story (rather than bore them with a bunch of facts and data from last year's conference). As you'll remember from chapter 1, as humans we are not only hardwired to tell stories, but also hardwired to listen to stories. As soon as your audience starts listening to your story, their brains will start reliving your experience as if it were theirs.

Try to avoid starting with something like, ‘Let me tell you a story ...’ because this can come across a bit condescending. Can you picture the eyerolls? And if you flag it as a ‘true story’, your listeners will think that all your other stories are lies. Remember, one of the keys to your stories is authenticity.

A successful story will quickly establish time and place to hook and maintain the attention of your audience. One of the most common mistakes people make with the beginning is to ramble. They either waffle on with too much detail or fail to decide between facts—for example, ‘12 years ago when I was travelling to Australia, actually it was more like 13 years ago. Oh, I remember, it was about 11 and half years ago because it was just after my thirtieth birthday and I am about to turn 42 ...’ This kind of beginning is a sure-fire way to lose the attention of your audience before you have even started your story.

The point of the opening is to be short and succinct, and set a little context. It’s not meant to provide your working history or a thorough background on what you are about to talk about. Be clear and to the point.

The middle

After a short and sharp beginning, you move to the crux of your story. Some key factors here determine whether your story is successful or not.

Be disciplined with the detail

When crafting the middle of your story, keep questioning whether the detail you have included is relevant to your message. If it is, you can leave it in; if it isn’t, you need to delete it.

Storytelling in business is a discipline. You need to have the discipline to leave out the irrelevant details of the story, even if you think these details might be funny, or you enjoy sharing them. If you put things into the story because you like sharing them and they’re not related to your message or

your audience, then your storytelling becomes about you and not about your listener. Don't be self-indulgent with the stories you share in business.

You may have a great story that you could use for several different business situations. You need to pick the details that are relevant to each individual story and message. So you may use the same story but with different details—if the business message is different, you may not need all the same details. The key is to tweak your story for each different situation where you use it.

Also avoid unnecessary facts and figures in your story. When you include too much logical data, you reduce the chance that your audience will be able to emotionally connect to what you're saying.

During a recent workshop, for example, I had a participant share the following:

“ At 7.30 last Wednesday night, I was sitting on the couch when I heard a large crash. We live approximately 150 metres from a main intersection and when I looked out my window I could see that two cars had collided. I ran to the crash and arrived first at the scene about three minutes later. About two minutes after me, other neighbours started to arrive.

See how all the numbers and details included force your brain to work really hard to follow the story?

An alternative might be:

“ Last Wednesday night I was sitting on my couch and heard a large crash. I live really close to a major intersection and when I looked out the window I could see two cars had collided. I ran to the scene and I was the first to arrive with other neighbours arriving within minutes.

This is clearer, concise and far more engaging.

Name the main characters

Your stories will always include people, so name them. If you are talking about your children, name them. If you are talking about your partner, name them ('the wife' or 'husband' doesn't count). If you are talking about your best mate at school or favourite teacher, name them—Doris, Bob, Jane, Jim and so on. (It's okay to call your parents Mum and Dad, or your grandparents Pop, Nana or Grandma.)

The trick here is to name the main characters, not each and every person who gets included. For example, a client of mine once shared a beautiful story about a mechanic he had met on a family holiday. He started his story with, ‘Last year I went on a family driving holiday with my wife, Sue, and our three children, Harry, Lucy and Tom, to the Gold Coast’. However, Sue, Harry, Lucy and Tom weren’t mentioned for the rest of the story, because the story was about Rob the mechanic. In this instance, you would simply start with, ‘Last year we went on a family driving holiday to the Gold Coast’.

Unless your story is from a long time ago (involving, say, your grade 1 teacher), make sure you ask for permission to use someone in your story. Most people don’t mind—in fact, they often feel quite honoured, especially if the story paints them in a good light. However, you can also offer to change their name—after all, you’re not providing key identifying features such as their surname, age and tax file number. A first name is not usually an issue. If you do change their name, you don’t need to spell it out to your audience that this is not their real name. Doing so is unnecessary, interrupts your audience’s experience and often just leads everyone to try to work out who the story is about and if they know them.

You may find you don’t know the names of some people in your stories. Avoid saying something like, ‘Let’s just call them James’. This implies the story is not authentic or real. Saying instead that you can’t recall their name or that you were never introduced is okay. In some cases, this is a lot more powerful because it shows that even though you don’t know their name, you remember the incident.

The following is a great example of how to craft a story if you don’t know your main character’s names. It’s a story told by Jack Percy, former managing director of Accenture, Australia and New Zealand.

When I was 20 and in my second year of university at Trinity College, Cambridge, I was doing a subject on non-linear differential equations. One day the tutor, who was from King’s College, told the story of how the King’s College bar was losing money. Since it shut at 10 pm someone suggested keeping it open until 11 pm wouldn’t cost much more and they’d then have an extra hour in which they could sell stuff. So they did that and they made even less money.

Someone then suggested they keep the bar open until midnight—which was abruptly ridiculed by the linear thinkers, who believed that if keeping the bar open for one more hour lost them more money, then keeping it open for a further hour would increase losses further. My tutor then explained that the problem was not in fact linear, as it appeared to be, meaning the solution should also be considered in a non-linear way. The midnight trial went ahead and they started making lots of money.

What had happened was that all the other college bars closed at 11 pm, so with King's open until midnight people would leave the other bars as they were closing and go to King's and, in fact, many started going there in the first place so they would not have to move on when all the other bars closed.

I cannot recall the tutor's name or much of the subject. However, I still remember the story in detail to this day. And I remember the message it carried, which resonated with me and went some way to shaping my view of the world. Throughout my personal and professional life I have often recalled this story and the message behind it to help guide me in finding the non-linear solution to problems that often appear linear, but aren't.

This to me highlights the power of storytelling. A story helps people truly understand what you are saying, helps them remember it and can have a lasting impact. As leaders, parents or friends, in every aspect of our lives, we often have important messages to share—and storytelling is the perfect vehicle to get those messages across in a way that connects, engages and inspires.

Keep your language real

Your stories have no room for corporate jargon—ever. Remember, the reason you are sharing your story is to create an emotional connection. Your audience needs to feel something and visualise your experience. To help you achieve this, you need to try to keep your language as real as possible.

Saying 'my objectives were not met' is no way to describe the bike you missed out on at Christmas when you were eight. Neither is saying the

‘project was delivered on time and under budget’ if you’re talking about the birth of your first child.

Too often in business we use language that is safe and try to avoid describing our emotions. We use words like ‘anxious’ instead of ‘scared’; ‘disappointed’ instead of ‘sad’. The point is to connect with your audience in an authentic way and that means using genuine, heartfelt everyday words we can all relate to.

The end

Ending your story and making sure it links to a clear business message is one of the hardest aspects of storytelling. A successful story ending consists of three parts:

1. *bridge*: to bring your audience’s attention back to business
2. *link*: to transfer your message
3. *pause*: to let the message sink in.

Let’s look at each in a bit more detail.

The bridge

A bridging sentence brings your audience back to a business context and is critical when you’ve used a non-work-related story. It is not as necessary if you are sharing a work-related story.

Simple bridging sentences include:

- ‘I am sharing this with you because ...’
- ‘When I reflected on this it reminded me of what we are trying to do ...’

The link

The link is the final one or two sentences in your story that connect the story back to your purpose, but without you being too direct or repetitive.

Examples of a link include:

- ‘Imagine what we could achieve if ...’
- ‘Just think of what we could do if ...’
- ‘I invite you to ...’

To ensure your ending is more inviting and respectful, try to use ‘we’ instead of ‘you’. ‘Imagine if we could do this’ is far more inclusive than ‘Imagine if you could do this’. ‘I invite you to ...’ is also more inclusive and respectful than ‘I ask you to ...’ or ‘You need to start ...’

Never end your story with, ‘The moral of the story is ...’ When you end your story like this you are telling people what the message is when you should allow them to reach their own conclusion.

The pause

The final part of your story is the pause at the end. You need to stop talking and pause for effect.

The pause only needs to be one or two seconds long. You could even try the strategic move of taking a sip of water, which allows for a longer pause.

The pause is where your audience connects to your story. You need to be prepared for the usual awkwardness that comes from a little bit of silence and know that the pause is where the magic happens.

Practice makes perfect

It is really important to practise sharing your stories. When you speak your story out loud, you identify different areas for improvement from when you read it to the person in your head. You pick up words or phrases that don’t feel ‘right’ for you, or are not the normal way you talk or describe

something. Phrases that feel unnatural can trip you up when you're actually presenting your story on the day—remember, you won't be reading from a piece of paper!

Practising is also important because you don't want to forget critical bits of the story. You want your bridge and link to flow smoothly, for example. You also want to make sure you practise pausing for effect at the end, because this will make sure your story is as effective as it can be.

Where to share your stories

Last year, I bought a new pair of shoes—well, actually I bought quite a few new pairs of shoes last year, but this is about one particular purchase. At first I really liked them, but when I started looking closer I realised I loved them! I felt like they were made for me because the story behind the brand was written on the leather that formed part of the shoe. The story read:

“ The Django and Juliette footwear brand is the brainchild of Kerrie Munro. With the arrival of her twin nephew and niece in 2001, who were uniquely named Django and Juliette respectively, a distinctive footwear brand was born in Melbourne, Australia, at the same time.

This same story is also used on their website, and it helps explain where you can share your stories (as well as where you find them). The reality is you have so many places to share stories and, as Django and Juliette have shown, you can get creative with where you share your stories. If a story can be shared on a shoe, it can be shared pretty much anywhere. Whenever you need to build rapport or credibility quickly a story will help. Whenever you need to get people to think of something differently, a story will also help. What's more, if you really want your messages to be fully understood and remembered, a story will support you to do this.

Make your stories work

As you saw in this chapter, Aristotle invented a brilliant three-step story structure that has withstood the test of time:

1. beginning
2. middle
3. end.

Use this structure to write or type out the stories you select from your memories in chapter 3.

You then need to refine and practise speaking your stories out loud to ensure they are succinct, relevant and have impact. Once you've done that, you can look at where you can share your stories.

The chapters in the next part provide real examples from real people and real stories that they have used in one of several business contexts:

- presentations
- organisational change
- sales
- company values and vision
- personal brand
- coaching
- job interviews
- newsletters and blogs.