

Don't Jaeger

THE BUSINESS OF STORYTELLING

STORY DEVELOPMENT GUIDE AND WORKBOOK

INCREASE INFLUENCE

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Jaeger

THE BUSINESS OF STORY TELLING

Don has been called "one of America's best storytellers" by today's most-respected business and thought leaders. Through decades of work in this space, Don has discerned the 10 elements for telling a Great story. He structured those elements into a hands-on workshop that takes you through a journey from scribbled-down ideas to a well-delivered story that provides lasting impact. This is the same journey that ultimately led Don to a nationally acclaimed speaking career and allowed him to author an incredible 11 New York Times best-selling Books. It also set the stage for years-long mentoring and coaching relationships with some of the greatest business leaders and sports champions of our lifetime.

These teachings will fine-tune your ability to:

- ✓ Know the right story to tell for the listener sitting before you
- ✓ Make your story resonate and evoke the proper reaction
- ✓ Connect your story in a way that prompts valuable response and action
- ✓ Understand when to use credibility-building detail within your story

The elements, examples, tips, and messages in this workbook can be applied to your own story immediately and effectively. Let's get started!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
FOUR UNIVERSAL TRUTHS	4
DEVELOP YOUR STORY BANK	6
WHICH STORY SHOULD YOU TELL?	10

10 ELEMENTS

TO BUILD OUT YOUR WELL-TOLD STORY

ELEMENT 1: Know Your Audience	11
ELEMENT 10: Call To Action	14
ELEMENT 2: Recognize What Is Uniquely Yours	18
ELEMENT 3: Evoke The Right Emotions	21
ELEMENT 4: Reverse The “I / You” Ratio	23
ELEMENT 5: Playing With Detail... Carefully	25
ELEMENT 6: Dialogue	31
ELEMENT 7: Using Pauses To Your Advantage	33
ELEMENT 8: All The Things You Aren’t Saying	35
ELEMENT 9: Openers And Closers	39
PARTING THOUGHTS	43

INTRODUCTION

WE CAN ALL NAME THEM. Who in your business holds your attention when they speak up? Who do you know will be the most engaging dinner conversationalist? What speaker do you see on a program that pulls you in?

HERE'S A GUARANTEE: The names that come to mind will be those who tell stories so well that time seems to stand still.

Whether you're speaking to an audience of one or 1,000; on a sales call or a stage; a talk show or around a meal; those who CONNECT with their listeners best do so through great storytelling. Decades of research and centuries of wisdom make clear that our brains are wired to remember well-told stories long after the facts grow old. Those who are able to tell meaningful and impactful stories become success stories themselves.

Great storytellers become the best salespeople. They're the best leaders, preachers, politicians, mentors, or teachers. That's because:

Storytelling is part of the marrow of what makes us human. We see it in cave paintings, hear it in ancient songs, read it etched into stone and transcribed onto scrolls. The truth is that the art of storytelling is even more relevant now in our modern world than ever. Between websites, webinars, podcasts, streaming video, recorded talks, and even good, old-fashioned one-on-one conversations, ***the way we tell the stories of our lives, our experiences, our companies, our brands, and our ideas has the ability to reach and influence people*** to a degree unmatched in human history.

“
**Storytelling is
the currency
of kings and
queens.**

INTRODUCTION

STORYTELLING involves a teller and a listener—a narrator and an audience—and we participate in storytelling every single day when we watch a sitcom or a documentary, with popcorn at the movies, admiring the mural on the walls of buildings in our town, or when we get lost in a good book. When we make decisions about the brands we choose to purchase or avoid based on their commercials or reputations, we are part of the storytelling process.

One point I want to make here: Many of the elements taught in this course may seem directed at storytellers who are in front of groups of people. While some of that is true, the **KEY ELEMENTS** of good storytelling — using an effective pause, recounting meaningful dialogue between characters, touching emotional chords — are just as valuable if you're sitting across the table 1-on-1 with someone.

WHEN WE INTRODUCE OURSELVES AND TELL A BIT ABOUT WHO WE ARE, WE ARE STORYTELLING.

When our mind automatically fills in backstories and judgments about the people we meet based on how they look or act, we are engaged in storytelling. And, of course, other people do the same to us. Storytelling is all around us — an invisible process that is

constantly at work, but to which we rarely give a second thought. But we should. Whether it is sharing the story of how one brave hunter captured the wild boar that kept the tribe from starving, or how your experience with cancer changed your perspective on life, or how you helped a client accomplish his or her goals in a meaningful way, or why someone should partner with your organization...

“

Storytelling helps us create meaning, trust, value, and a connection.

INTRODUCTION

*This workbook is designed to help guide you through the process of carefully and intentionally crafting and telling your story for maximum impact. The world is full of stories. Learn how to make yours stand out. **Learn how to truly CONNECT.***



Who is someone you would call a great storyteller?

(Steven Spielberg, Oprah, the person sitting next to you, your uncle at Thanksgiving, etc...)



What is it about them that makes you feel like they are a great storyteller?

4 UNIVERSAL TRUTHS

1

The best stories are always human. Statistics may be important to you, but **HUMAN STORIES** make those statistics memorable.

2

The best stories are always the story **behind** the story. It's not that you did something, it's why you did something that will make the story come to life. It is not that our organization achieved a goal, it is what achieving that goal will mean to others or what the reason for the goal was to begin with.

4 UNIVERSAL TRUTHS

3

True storytellers don't make their listeners guess what they mean when sharing. They don't say things such as: *"The secret name of our group was (fill-in the blank), and you can only imagine why!"*

4

The best stories **DO NOT** follow a formula. If you were to hit a Google search: "How to tell a great story," you get 13.1 million hits in a matter of seconds. Most of those answers come back with a formula often linked to some version of the hero's journey. While that simple formula may benefit some, I promise you the BEST storytellers do not follow a formula. Great storytellers use a series of elements, and that's what we're going to cover in this workbook.

DEVELOP YOUR “STORY BANK”

MANY PEOPLE WANT TO TELL BETTER STORIES, they just aren't sure what stories they have within them. Answering these questions will allow this training to be even more valuable to you and to help arm you with the anecdotes and stories you may be able to use. Whether you are preparing for an upcoming sales call, presentation, or dinner conversation, answering these questions will help you begin finding the stories that you can deposit into your “**story bank.**”

*To increase the **VALUE** of your “story bank,” take time to answer as many of these as possible, and please do so completely. Short answers seldom spawn great stories!*



What have you navigated through in your life that your story can help others navigate?



Did you come to your current employer from another company in our industry? Why, of all your options, did you choose your current employer?

DEVELOP YOUR “STORY BANK”



If someone asks you about your best day on the job, what happened that day?



What about your company’s work in the charitable space do you most remember? Describe how that charity work made you feel about yourself and your employer.

DEVELOP YOUR “STORY BANK”



What is the greatest **PROFESSIONAL** benefit you’ve received from working here?



What is the greatest **PERSONAL** benefit you’ve received from working here?



If someone asked you to explain why an organization would benefit from doing business with your company, what would you say? Is there an example of that benefit you can tell us about?

DEVELOP YOUR “STORY BANK”



Tell me about a colleague whose work or life story you find inspiring.



Describe a story or an interaction with one of your clients that impacted you and that you have shared with others.

SCAN ME



If you want to continue developing stories for your "bank," Don has built a list of additional questions.

WHICH STORY SHOULD YOU TELL?

Now that you are filling your “story bank” and you know what stories you might tell, HOW you tell them becomes important.

In the following pages, we will examine the **10 ELEMENTS OF A WELL-TOLD STORY**.

To clarify, these 10 Elements are not your typical formula or cookie-cutter template. In fact, it’s best to imagine a bookshelf where each of the **10 ELEMENTS** are available to help you build your words into a well-told story that connects and inspires action.

A fully-loaded bookshelf often contains significant information and valuable stories from bookend to bookend. As you see below, we intend to start with the bookends as we help you build your well-told story. These two are the ideal bookend elements that every great story possesses. They are also quite noticeable whenever they are missing—ultimately creating challenges, hurdles, and barriers between the storyteller and the listener.





THE FIRST STEP in being an effective storyteller is understanding everything you can about who will be sitting before you. For the purposes of this exercise, we think it valuable that you pick a SPECIFIC audience/opportunity where you might soon tell your story.

NAME YOUR POTENTIAL AUDIENCE: If you don't have a specific group in mind, select an audience to whom you would like to speak in the future.

Is it a sales opportunity? A current client? A prospect? A new recruit? A would-be donor? A professional organization? A civic group? A commencement address? Now here is the important piece: What can you know about them in advance?

“ Great storytellers ask themselves: *Why does this audience need to listen to what I have to say? How can my words help them?* ”

In the space provided on the next page, **write a few descriptors** regarding their age, interests, goals, etc... Even include something about the size of the venue or the crowd — if you know it. **The more clearly you can picture them, the easier it will be to tailor your message to reach them most effectively.**

Then make a few notes about common goals or language that you can use to help you connect with your listeners. For example, if you are speaking to people in a specific industry, you can demonstrate your familiarity with their work by incorporating a few phrases or details. However, if you are speaking to a high school gymnasium full of soon-to-be-graduates, such jargon would be out of place.

If you are able to key in on what their primary drivers are, you can find common ground... and that's a power spot from which to start telling your story!





In this day and age, it is irresponsible not to know something about your audience—and even some members of your audience—in advance of a presentation. Ask for names of some who will be there. Go to the web and find details. Do the work that shows you care about them.

There's nothing that makes someone more interested in you than when they find out you've taken time to show interest in them.



Who is my Audience? Who am I speaking to?



Where might I go or what might I do to learn about them?



Why do they need to listen to what I have to say?





What can I offer that will serve THEIR needs?



How will they be better for having spent this time listening to me?



What are common goals or specific language easily understood by the audience?



BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND! Everyone values their time, and your audience has entrusted some of their precious time to listen to you. So, what are you going to offer them in return? What is their takeaway from your story? So before you even start speaking, you must know the answers to these questions.

WHEN YOU'RE DONE:

What do you want them to **DO?**

What do you want them to **THINK?**

What do you want them to **FEEL?**

What do you want to motivate them to go and do once they leave the room?

One of the fundamental lessons in business is always to offer something worthwhile to the client. People generally want to sign contracts, make deals, partner with, endorse, or otherwise associate with whomever offers them the most value. No one wants to feel that their time or their money has been wasted. So, it is important that you have a clear concept of what it is you hope to accomplish by sharing your story and what you hope to give your audience in return for the ten minutes--or two hours--they have given to you to do so. Make sure you have clear action items that answer this critical question: ***Now do what?***

ELEMENT #10
CALL TO ACTION



Let's think again about the audience you chose on page 12. Take one minute to brainstorm some ideas for what you want your objective to be for that audience. How do you want your audience to feel after you finish talking? Do you want them to walk away with a new perspective? Do you want them to trust your brand and see how it is the best match for their needs? Do you want them to have a new awareness of a cause that is close to your heart? Write your Call to Action in the space provided.



The Call to Action for my audiences will be...



What will they DO or THINK or FEEL after listening to what I have to say?

BUILDING OUT YOUR WELL-TOLD STORY

Once you have focused on the bookends—identifying and researching the audience and determining the appropriate call to action—it's time to study the rest of the bookshelf. The remaining elements contain key habits and techniques to help you tell your story for maximum effectiveness.

Don's study of Great Storytelling identified these key elements. Incorporating them into your professional story will help boost your presentation in ways that walk your listener through an impactful narrative.

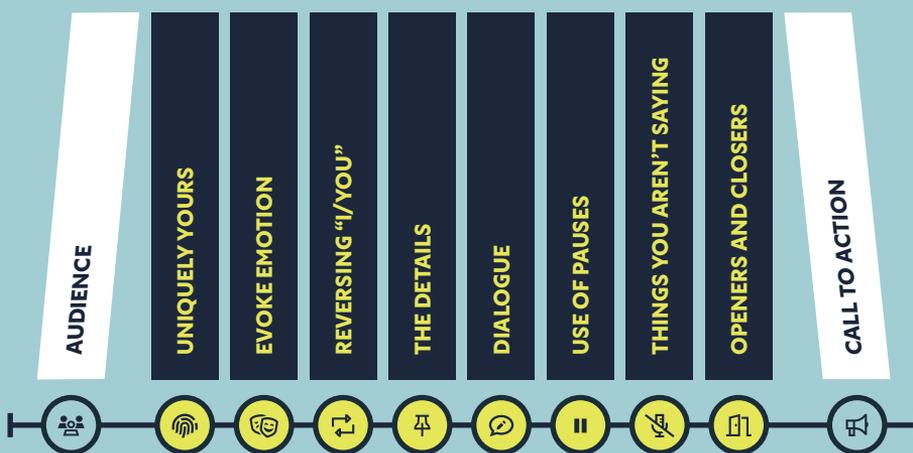
MEMORABLE STORYTELLING IS A COMBINATION OF:

WHAT YOU SAY



HOW YOU SAY IT

The following pages are designed to help you fill your storytelling bookshelf.





A COMMON MISTAKE many storytellers make is that they share stories that sound good, but to which they don't actually have a personal connection or hook. An audience doesn't want to hear you share something they can read for themselves online or hear directly from some other source; they want to hear you share something that has personal meaning for you—and through you, it will be meaningful for them, too.

Audiences begin to **CONNECT with you once they feel how the experience you are sharing with them impacted you!**

Even more than that, your listener wants to see--and believe--that this experience changed you in some way. That doesn't mean you have to be a central player in the action of the story; it might be something you witnessed or a cause you have come to believe in as you have seen people affected over time. Still, there has to be some kind of personal hook into your story for your listener to connect with it and you.

Your unique connection with your story will not only make the telling more powerful but it will also make you more credible.

How much a listener trusts you has everything to do with how much value they will see in your prospective partnership, and your value is enhanced the more credible you become.





VULNERABILITY

(vul-ner-a-bil-i-ty)

NOUN: The quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of physical or emotional harm

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS to establish credibility is to carefully and thoughtfully establish vulnerability. When you share a personal story, you create a bond with your listener because you have just shown you trust them by revealing something that others might not know about you.

When you recount a time you were embarrassed or humbled in a humorous way, you make yourself more approachable and therefore more likeable to your listener.

Remember, they see you as the one in the power position because you are the person in front of the room, or behind the desk, or holding the microphone, or controlling the PowerPoint slides.

When you make a deliberate effort to bridge the gap between you and them, you deepen a connection.

What you do not want to do, of course, is overshare private details about your life or anyone else'—or to show yourself in a bad light. What you do want to do is let your audience see that you can laugh at yourself and that you are able to learn from your mistakes and challenges.

REFLECT: *What kind of tone did Don set? How did that make the audience more receptive to the rest of his message?*





In the space below, list a few possible **unique-to-you story ideas**. These may even come straight from your answers to the questions on pages 4-7. Also, write down a handful of details that you can weave into each one that will help your listeners connect with you by seeing you as someone credible, likable, and beneficial to have as a partner.



“UNIQUELY YOURS” STORY IDEA #1



“UNIQUELY YOURS” STORY IDEA #2



“UNIQUELY YOURS” STORY IDEA #3





BEFORE we get into the nuts and bolts of crafting your story, it is important that you consider:

How do you want your audience to feel while you are taking them on this journey?

It is important to define the emotions you want to invoke before you start thinking about how to frame your story. This will help you set the right tone as you endeavor to put yourself in your audience's shoes. **If you can't empathize with them, you won't connect with them. If you don't connect with them, your message will be lost or quickly forgotten.**

How did that story feel when Don merely read the bullet points from the chalkboard?

How did Don's story use emotion to strengthen the message?

Emotions are more than just surface reactions or facial expressions. They are different feelings that trigger neurochemical reactions in the body and brain. Scientists have proven, for example, that laughter releases **ENDORPHINS** into the bloodstream.

This directly contributes to a feeling of well-being. Suspense, on the other hand, creates a reaction of **CORTISOL**, a stress chemical that is most closely linked to a person's ability to focus their attention on something.

The suspense can often become a satisfying payoff that generates a release of **DOPAMINE**, a chemical tied to a person's ability to feel pleasure or acknowledge being rewarded. Empathy prompts the natural release of oxytocin, a chemical that promotes care, connection and a bond between human beings. The best stories touch several emotional chords. They are, in effect, like a roller coaster





Look at the list below and consider which emotions you would like your audience to experience while listening to your story. Consider which emotions best align with your topic as well as your goals. Mark or write in all emotions that apply to you & your story.



I WANT MY STORY TO BE...

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> AMUSING | <input type="radio"/> EVOCATIVE | <input type="radio"/> PROFOUND |
| <input type="radio"/> CHALLENGING | <input type="radio"/> EYE-OPENING | <input type="radio"/> RELATABLE |
| <input type="radio"/> COMFORTING | <input type="radio"/> HEART-BREAKING | <input type="radio"/> REALISTIC |
| <input type="radio"/> COMPLEX | <input type="radio"/> HEARTFELT | <input type="radio"/> REVELATORY |
| <input type="radio"/> DRAMATIC | <input type="radio"/> HUMOROUS | <input type="radio"/> SERIOUS |
| <input type="radio"/> DYNAMIC | <input type="radio"/> INFORMATIVE | <input type="radio"/> SUSPENSEFUL |
| <input type="radio"/> EMPATHY INVOKING | <input type="radio"/> INSPIRING | <input type="radio"/> TOUCHING |
| <input type="radio"/> EMOTIONAL | <input type="radio"/> MEMORABLE | <input type="radio"/> TRIUMPHANT |
| <input type="radio"/> ENRICHING | <input type="radio"/> MOTIVATING | <input type="radio"/> TRUSTWORTHY |
| <input type="radio"/> ENTERTAINING | <input type="radio"/> POWERFUL | <input type="radio"/> UNEXPECTED |



ADD YOUR OWN WORDS

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____





STORYTELLING RESEARCH IS CLEAR: *every listener wants to have a role in your story.* The events you are recounting likely involve yourself—your journey. The story you’re sharing can often involve a very specific person the audience may never have met. Nevertheless, the audience still wants to understand what their place is in the narrative.

If the audience doesn’t feel invited into the story they are likely to feel as if you are talking **AT them rather than talking **WITH** them.**

How did Don rely on second-person language (i.e. you, yours) rather than first person language (i.e. I, me, my) to make his audience feel like participants in the story rather than just a listener?

By changing wording slightly to use more inclusive language, you can change your audience’s perception of the entire message. For example, instead of asking your listeners, “*What did I learn from this?*” ... Try phrasing it as “*What can we learn from this?*” Or rather than saying, “*This is how I helped them,*” you could say, “*This is how we can work together to accomplish your goals, too.*”

This change in story perspective will help translate the message of success, triumph or impact from the broader story to one they can see in their own lives.

To do this, **record yourself telling your story.** Transcribe it. Then look at every point where you say the words “I” or “my” and see if you can REVERSE that phrase to be inclusive, saying “you” or “your.”

This habit is game-changing...for the listener.

Reversing the “I/You” ratio helps make the abstract seem concrete by allowing the audience to “put their own clothes on it” by imagining themselves in that same situation.



REVERSING THE “I/YOU” RATIO



In the space below, list three components specific to your story that are ideal ways to bring your audience into the environment. Think of phrases that help add gravity to your message by allowing your audience to consider how your message can apply to their life. Even though the story isn’t specifically about the audience, how can you help them see themselves in your story and recognize their own goals, beliefs, and ambitions in what you are laying out?



COMPONENT #1



COMPONENT #2



COMPONENT #3



NOW THAT YOUR STORY HAS A SOLID “SKELETON,” it’s time to begin adding some muscle in the form of details. These details are one of the most important ways that you change a story from something broad and sweeping, into something identifiable and relatable.

What are some of the details that stood out to you from Don’s story?

CONSIDER THE “5 WS” OF JOURNALISM:

WHY • WHO • WHAT • WHERE • WHEN

For example, if you can give a specific time, date, and place as you set the scene like:

- 📍 New York City, September 11, 2001
- 📍 Graduation ceremony in May
- 📍 Sitting in a doctor’s office in March 2020

Used properly, a few details can give your audience a chance to think about where they happened to be in their own lives at the time. That, alone, will help them feel more connected to the events you are about to describe.

You might also give an indication as to the period you or your main character were at in that time of your life (i.e. just before the birth of a first child; after a divorce; trying to juggle professional responsibilities with those of caring for an aging parent). Important Point: That kind of pinpoint detail would be exhausting if you incorporated it in every single aspect of your story, but it helps to create atmosphere when used sparingly and deliberately to emphasize significant moments.



There are other details that will help draw your audience into your story, as well. As you begin to flesh out the events of your story, you will want to reserve the best details for the most significant elements: setting the scene, describing the main character(s), explaining exactly how you felt in that moment. As you do this, try to engage as many of the five senses as possible.

Our senses are the way that our body gathers and synthesizes information in order to create meaning from the world around us. By sharing with your audience specific details that incorporate sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, you will be making your story all the more real for your audience.

In the space provided in the next few pages, follow the prompts to identify certain details about a significant moment in your story.



When does this moment take place? Be descriptive.

EXAMPLE: Date, Time of Year, Period in Life, Notable Current Event



Where is your main character?

EXAMPLE: Is it a foreign country or a major city? Is your character broken down on the side of a country road? Is it in a courtroom or the frightening moments after a natural disaster?



What can you / they see—or not see?

EXAMPLE: Are other people around, or are you all alone? Are you surrounded by carnival rides & cotton candy stands? Are tree branches blocking the blue sky? Is the moon out or is it dark?



What can you / they smell—or not smell?

EXAMPLE: *Is it the scent of a sweaty locker room after a game? Is it the freshly mowed grass? Is it the smell of dust burning in the radiator as the heat in the house is turned on for the first time?*



What can you / they hear—or not hear?

EXAMPLE: *Is the room noisy? Is there music playing? Can you hear other people talking? Can you understand what they are saying? Is your room silent except for the rhythmic ticking of a grandfather clock?*





What can you / they taste—or not taste?

EXAMPLE: Is the coffee too strong? Is the soup far too hot? Are you having difficulty enjoying it because you burned your taste buds on the soup? Can you taste blood from the tooth you just lost?



How do you / they feel physically?

EXAMPLE: Do they feel cold, sick, nervous, or hungry? Are they embarrassed because this is the fifth time they've made this mistake?



KEY POINT:

Do your details **BOOST** your story or **CLUTTER** your message? How so?



EXAMPLE: Do you reference the character's dry mouth and nervous cough to indicate an uncomfortable scenario? Or do you clutter the story by detailing what the character ate for breakfast along with the brand and flavor of cough syrup he bought from the pharmacy earlier?

Use details only if they can
add more **CREDIBILITY**
than **CLUTTER**

Great storytellers routinely choose a few of the most interesting details and explore how those can help set the scene to make the story as real as possible for the audience.

At the same time they are **CAREFUL** not to allow this process to clutter their story.





ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL pieces of advice for any storyteller is:

"Show me... don't tell me."

In other words, don't just say, "He was sad" or "She was angry." Instead, convey those emotions through the way you describe and re-create the scene for the audience.

Dialogue is an immediate way to bring the audience into the conversation. While it may not be necessary to recount every single word in a conversation, you can give your story a tremendous amount of depth and color by using someone's exact phrasing.

WHICH IS MORE POWERFUL?

“

She quietly told her dad how much that moment meant to her.

OR

“

She leaned in and whispered, 'Dad, you being here for this dance is everything I've hoped for since I was seven years old.'

ONE IMPORTANT TIP for making your dialogue as impactful as possible is to choose a specific spot to turn your head each time you quote the same person.

FOR EXAMPLE, when showing dialogue between 2 people (Person A & Person B), try facing Person A slightly to the right; and for Person B, turn the degree to the left.



ELEMENT #6

DIALOGUE



Each time your story speaks of Person A or Person B, bring your audience along by returning to that same character position for dialogue — face the same direction. This simple visual distinction can help your audience follow the changes in the conversations more easily — especially because the skill of including dialogue does not mean attempting to do impressions and impersonations of the various characters in your story.

NOTE: like any of these habits, overuse loses the impact. Be sparing!

Take a moment to consider where in your story dialogue might enhance the narrative. Jot down those key exchanges and conversations between characters. Remember, you don't need to recount the entire conversation. Write just the key moments that pack the most emotional connective tissue or impact.



WHO IS PERSON A?



WHO IS PERSON B?



DIALOGUE HIGHLIGHT / KEY MOMENT





A character in a thriller movie doesn't march casually upstairs and just throw open the door. They take a few steps... They pause, creep, stop, listen, look behind them, take a deep breath, reach for the doorknob, hesitate, pull back, pause again... and then reach out again to enter the room.

PAUSES BUILD SUSPENSE AND ANTICIPATION

In their own quiet way, they also SCREAM “Listen to what I’m about to share or what I just shared!”

As you think about the pacing and tempo of your story, pay close attention to the moments when you speak quickly. When during your story do you find yourself naturally slowing down?

Try building in pauses for dramatic effect and listener impact. This technique will also keep you from “stepping on” an important line.

Reflect on the story Don shared. What were you thinking or feeling during those pauses?

How did they change your level of engagement? Did they give you a moment to breathe?





By making your audience lean in a little more to hear what comes next, you are subtly reinforcing the idea that what you have to say matters. You're also connecting your audience to the belief that they care about your message and what you're saying. Take time now to consider the story you are building today.

USE THE SPACE PROVIDED below to identify two or three key spots where you can pause for a beat and make the audience wait for what you have to say. Identify spots for a powerful / impactful PAUSE during your story

SPOT # 1

SPOT # 2

SPOT # 3



BEYOND THE WORDS YOU SPEAK, your body, hands, and face all contribute to the overall impact of your story — and your effectiveness as a storyteller. In fact, experts say up to 93% of all communication is nonverbal. As a storyteller, this means you need to be aware of not only the words you use and how you use them, but also the way your entire body helps support your message.

If you feel yourself moving unnecessarily, take a calming breath, deliberately plant your feet, and grasp an object like a pen or a water cup to keep yourself still. These small efforts can go a long way in helping you appear composed, confident, and credible.

GREAT STORYTELLERS CONSIDER:

- Body Language
- Natural Gestures
- Facial Expressions
- Use of Visuals (i.e., PowerPoint)

STORYTELLING TIP:

If speaking to a roomful of people, remind yourself to connect by looking at various spots throughout the room. Don't simply look at the same person/spot every time.

YOUR BODY SENDS A MESSAGE

How do you carry yourself in front of a group? Are you hunched over, or are your shoulders back confidently and your head up high? What about eye contact? Do you stare at your notes? Do you make comfortable eye contact with your listeners? Do you fidget or “leak energy” by tapping your hand or rocking on your toes? Remember that confidence is key.

Even if you don't feel confident, you want your listeners to feel confident in you, your knowledge of the topic, and the advice or lessons you are sharing. Remember to practice your confident posture.





USE NATURAL GESTURES

STORYTELLING TIP:

Facts, figures, pictures + charts are all ideal places to use gestures to draw the attention of your audience.

A common misconception is that movements need to be larger to be seen in front of a group. Most of the time, this is not true. Exaggerated gestures will look silly and over-rehearsed, which hurts your authenticity and possibly even your credibility. Don't overthink your gestures, either. Doing so can make them look robotic, stiff, and stilted.

So how do I project the proper body language? Practice!

Practice your presentation while paying attention to which gestures feel natural during various parts of your story. Put a mark in your notes when you want to make sure you hit a specific movement. This can help you stay on script, even with your movements. Most of us have a pretty good feel for gesturing almost automatically; our bodies seem to know when it is helpful to point or make a motion. As a result, it's important to trust your instincts.

Facts, figures, and movements on charts are all useful places to use gestures to draw your audience's attention to the areas you would like them to notice.

The exception to this is if you are someone who has been told you tend to talk with your hands — if this is you, it will be worth practicing ways to keep your hands a little more controlled so that your movements don't distract from your message.





YOUR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS SHOULD MATCH YOUR WORDS

Some people look very serious when they speak in front of a crowd—even when they are presenting funny or exciting information.

Remember, it's not unprofessional to smile at good news. Conversely, other people tend to smile when they are nervous; this can be very confusing for an audience if someone is grinning while talking about a difficult or unpleasant topic.

Make sure your facial expressions are consistent with the words coming out of your mouth, or else the audience will be left wondering what your message really is... and whether you truly mean what you say.



YOU CONTROL PROPS; YOUR PROPS DON'T CONTROL YOU

Technology glitches happen all the time; it's still your responsibility to know the material well enough that you can give your presentation without getting ruffled or thrown off your game even if the PowerPoint slides don't work properly, or the special effects and animations you arranged start malfunctioning. Plan for the best, but prepare for the worst.

STORYTELLING TIP:

Distractions will happen, so you must plan for the best, but be prepared for the worst.





Take time in the spaces below to reflect on how effectively you use non-verbal language in your own storytelling process.

List any habits you've noticed or been given feedback about.



GOOD HABITS



BAD HABITS



What gesture/expression can you incorporate into your message?



What visuals might you add that can enhance your storytelling?



First impressions matter— as do final impressions.

The way you open your speech sets the tone for what is to come. The way you close your speech will seal your message, and solidify your call to action in your listeners' minds effectively.

That's why it is so critical to have your introduction and conclusion committed to memory—no stumbling, no searching for words, no backtracking because you forgot a detail. Your opening and closing need to be tight, powerful, polished, and ultimately memorable.

STORYTELLING TIP:

Rehearse roughly **400 WORDS** that you can say easily to start + close the conversation.

The research is clear:

After the first 90 seconds to three minutes of a new conversation, the listener will determine whether to continue giving you their attention, or to start tuning you out.





Work on effectively **MEMORIZING** the **FIRST THREE MINUTES** of your story in a way that exudes confidence and clarity, while grabbing your listener's attention and appealing to their willingness to actively hear your message.

ALSO WORK ON MEMORIZING THE LAST THREE MINUTES of your story so that you can close your conversations with the same clarity and precision and effectively deliver concrete objectives, takeaways, or actions. Try to get to the point where the story feels comfortable and automatic so that a dropped word or distraction won't throw you off. No one wants a stiff, over-rehearsed delivery — but you also don't want to sound unsure. Write it out in complete sentences to start.

The average rate of conversational English is 125 to 150 words per minute. Anything more than that causes your audience to feel rushed, hurried, or lost in your message. Anything slower than that causes your point to feel beleaguered, uncertain, or unprepared. As you script your opening and closing three minutes, it is important to keep your total word count between 400–450 words.



PARTING THOUGHTS

If your use of these lessons is to increase your professional opportunities, your story will be different from that of the person next to you. However you choose to tell it, the question you will want to answer is this:



WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO? AND WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO KEEP DOING IT?

Ultimately, that is what the audience wants to know, because that answers other key questions:



WHY SHOULD I TRUST YOU?

WHAT VALUE CAN YOU OFFER ME?

**WHAT MAKES ME CONNECT WITH YOU
MORE THAN YOUR COMPETITOR?**

When you can show your potential clients — not just tell them, but really make them see, feel, and believe your motivation and vision — you will set yourself apart from the pack. Anyone can tell you what they do and how they do it, but not everyone can tell you why they do it... and why it should matter to a listener.

If you are able to guide the audience to the same appreciation for your story that you have — engaging with them and offering a favorable impression along with a lesson they can carry with them — you will succeed. You will show yourself to be authentic, respectable, and respectful of their interests. You will make yourself, and your message, memorable.



YOU WILL CONNECT THROUGH THE POWER OF STORYTELLING!



Okay, now is the time to write YOUR story and build it into one that is powerfully told.

Should the opportunity arise to record yourself delivering your message and even obtaining feedback and constructive criticism, take advantage of it — doing so only enhances your ability to tell your great story.

If you've written your speech or story prior to going through this workshop and workbook, be sure to compare what you've learned with your previous versions of the speech. Make certain to weave in the 10 Elements for Powerful Storytelling that Don emphasized in this workshop. As you craft your new version of your story, take careful consideration of the best ways to connect your story and your call to action to the audience in a way that creates trust and provides value.



Don Yaeger

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