

Why **STORYTELLING**
In **BUSINESS** Helps
You **INFLUENCE**
Your **CUSTOMERS**

And how you can do it too!



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INTRO

I've had the most unusual and unconventional journey as a storyteller. I spent the first 26 years of my working life as an air force helicopter pilot. In the air force, everything centred around facts, figures, and logic. Storytelling? No place for storytelling in aviation. Influence? You use rank!

In the later parts of my flying career, my entire perspective on influence changed when I met senior officers from other regional air forces. And they all outranked me. Oops! But instead of pulling rank on me, they engaged and captured my imagination with their personal war stories. They had me fully engaged and glad to listen to what they had to offer. Over time, I became a storyteller myself, but please don't tell my ex-bosses that I used this secret weapon to influence them repeatedly!



If you're wondering, the short story you just read is what this storytelling guide will help you with — **how to create stories to influence your customers or business associates**. We'll slowly go through the steps, and by the end of this guide, and with tons of practice, practice, and even more practice, you'll become a storyteller yourself with the ability to influence customers.

PART 1 IN THE BEGINNING ...

ARE YOUR CURRENT INFLUENCE “TACTICS” WORKING?

What is your potential customer likely to remember or influenced by as you persuade them to use your product or service? Pure cold hard logical arguments supported by facts and figures? Or perhaps a short story that allows their minds to meander around the boundaries you set?

While we like to believe that all humans are logical and rational beings, research from Neuroscience tells us otherwise. **Humans are governed by our emotions** and logic, often more so by emotions.

That’s why stories are such a powerful influence tool as it stirs and awakens our emotions, even when used with the most logical, rational, poker-faced, and apparently emotionless customer! We’re not talking about a story changing a person’s emotional state from bored and tired to “OMG! I’m full of life and energy, and I want to conquer the world now!!!” No, nothing that drastic but with a short and simple story, we can move a person’s emotional state just that little bit to escape their critical mind just for a moment.

“Bad decisions make
good stories.”
- Ellis Vidler,
author

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several tall skyscrapers with glass facades, creating a sense of height and scale. The buildings are dark against a lighter sky, and their lines converge towards the top of the frame.

**STORIES OPEN A DOOR IN OUR
CUSTOMER'S MIND FOR JUST A
MOMENT. THIS LETS US BYPASS THEIR
CRITICAL-THINKING AND RATIONAL
BRAIN, MAKING IT A LITTLE EASIER TO
INFLUENCE THEM!**

PART 1 IN THE BEGINNING ...

WHY USE STORIES TO INFLUENCE?

Stories appeal to ANYONE, even with the most logical, rational, poker-faced, and apparently emotionless customer we mentioned earlier.

Why?

“You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.”
- Jack London, author

With facts and figures, only two parts of our brain are activated. With stories, seven parts of our brain are activated. Most importantly (and of course with the right story), a part that releases oxytocin, or the “trust” chemical.

When potential customers trust us, they buy from us. And when existing customers trust us again, they buy from us again and again — it’s as simple as that!

By the way, as I was writing this paragraph, my mind suddenly wandered back to when I had just started my business after leaving the air force. I was still a storyteller-in-the-making and not a fully-fledged member of the storytelling fraternity. I vividly remembered the first time I went all-in with storytelling to persuade my customer about how useful my training was. I started on my usual PPT spiel and knew I was losing them. But when I told them two stories, to my utter delight and surprise, they literally sat up and looked at me square in my eyes very attentively! I had captured their attention. Sadly, they didn’t buy what I was selling (I was way too eager to sell), but it made them believe in me a heck of a lot more. They did buy from me a year later.

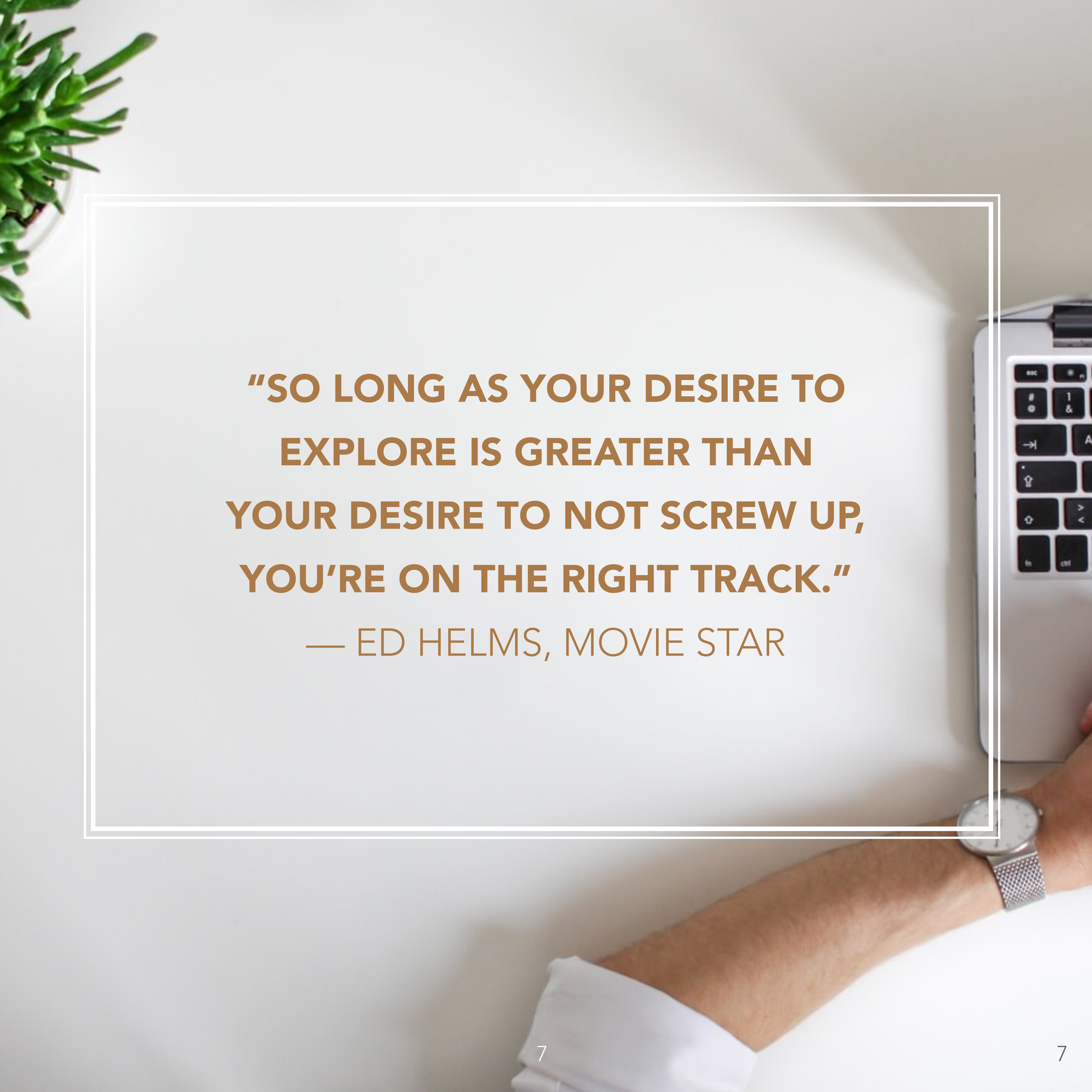
PART 2 DEBUNKING STORYTELLING MYTHS

“One of the best ways to influence people is to make them feel important.”
- Roy T. Bennett,
author and positive thinker

Before we dive into how you become an influencer using stories, it’s really useful to debunk a few awful business storytelling myths.

MYTH	TRUTH
The aim of storytelling in business is to tell one super well-written story that instantly takes your customer’s breath away and leaves them putty in your hands.	FALSE! Unless you have a captive audience that’s just dying to hear every last word you share, that’s not going to happen. You’re probably thinking of a TED speaker or the late Steve Jobs launching a hot new product. That’s a completely different setting from the usual ones you face in business so let’s not imagine we have that type of audience. Instead, you tell a short story every time you want to emphasize a key point.

MYTH	TRUTH
One long story will instantly wow your customer and immediately influence them.	FALSE! Multiple short stories of about 30 to 90 seconds are needed to influence an audience. It's quite impossible to influence anyone with just one long story in a business setting. It's 1000%, no make that 1000000000%, better to tell multiple 30 to 90 second stories anytime when you emphasize a key point.
Your story must follow a traditional storytelling structure, i.e., have a protagonist - challenge - solution, or use Joseph Campbell's 17 stages in <i>A Hero's Journey</i> .	FALSE! Use short 30 – 90 second stories that follow the structure we layout in Part 3 below, "How to create a story".
Your story should teach a lesson to the audience, i.e., the moral of the story.	FALSE! The purpose of your multiple and short 30 - 90 second stories is to emphasize ONE point you want to make. That's so important it's worth repeating; the purpose of your multiple and short 30 - 90 second stories is to emphasize ONE point you want to make.
You expect your story to influence to cause a massive and huge emotional shift in your audience.	FALSE! Your stories to influence in a business setting are meant to emphasize ONE key point, and with more and more stories told, will build trust between you and your audience.



**"SO LONG AS YOUR DESIRE TO
EXPLORE IS GREATER THAN
YOUR DESIRE TO NOT SCREW UP,
YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK."**

— ED HELMS, MOVIE STAR

PART 3 THE STEPS OF BUSINESS STORYTELLING TO INFLUENCE

PART 3A: HOW TO FIND TRUE STORIES

We know why we should use stories to influence our audience. But where do stories come from?

1. **True** stories from your own life.
2. **True** stories from other people's life, e.g., famous people.
3. A combination of **true** stories from your own life and someone else's.

Using true stories are so much better than trying to come up with a contrived story to fit the situation.

Why? Because it's ethical and you retain your integrity, that's why!

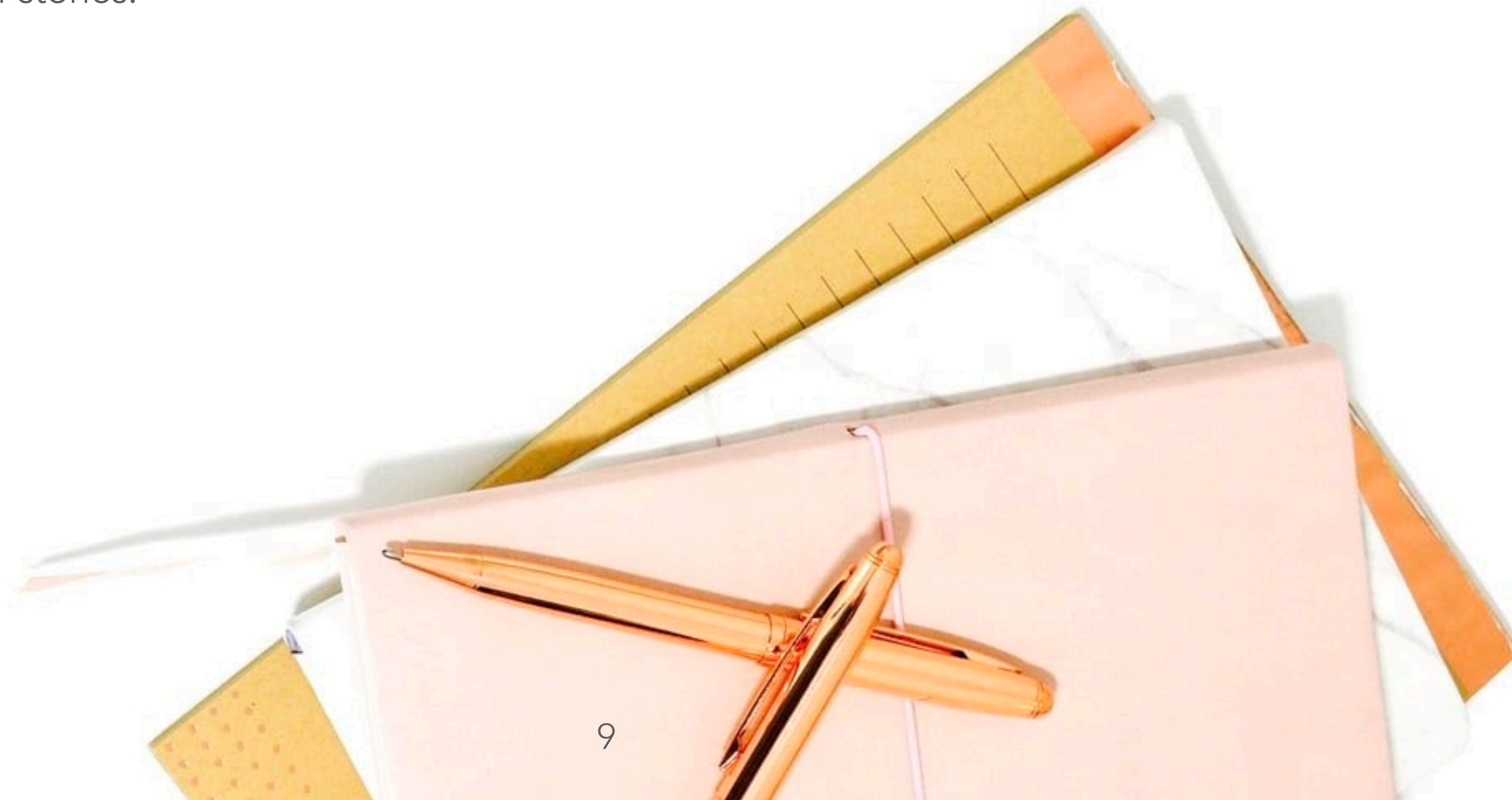
Another reason to only use true stories is that you don't have to remember your story's made-up facts, figures, and characters. If you made up a story, you might talk about the woman you met in London that regaled you her stories. Moments later, this same story features a man you met in South Africa. Yes, it's that easy to get lost in your own web of untruths, and you'll waste precious brain cells and energy trying to remember your lies.

"Trust starts with truth and
ends with truth."
- Santosh Kalwar, author, poet,
computer scientist

PART 3B: BUILD A LIBRARY OF STORIES

“It usually takes me more than three weeks to
prepare a good impromptu speech.”
- Mark Twain

This applies to storytelling as well, and many people forget that the best storytellers are the most prepared ones. Influential storytellers don't pull useful stories out of thin air; they pull it from their ready library of stories.



PART 3C: HOW TO CREATE A STORY

“The audience does not need to tune themselves to you—you need to tune your message to them. Skilled presenting requires you to understand their hearts and minds and create a message to resonate with what’s already there.”

— Nancy Duarte,
writer, speaker, CEO



Step 1

Set your intention



Step 2

What emotion do you
want your customer to
feel?



Step 3

Find a true story from
someone else’s life to
match Step 2



Step 4

Find a true story from
your life to match Step 2



Step 5

Assemble your story



Step 6

Check story’s length
and save it

YOUR INTENTION	HOW TO CREATE YOUR STORY
Step 1: Start with the end in mind. What do you want your customer to do? What is your intention? What is the ONE key point you want to emphasize?	Of course we want our customer to buy, buy, then buy even more, and to tell the whole world and our neighbouring solar systems how good you are. But that's not going to happen, so decide what you want your customer to do. It could be as simple as setting up an appointment, confirming a second meeting, or allowing you to present your plan in person. These are the steps that lead to a sale. But suppose you've already reached the point where your customer is ready to buy. In that case, the stories you use will gently nudge them wholeheartedly to your side. In other words, there are usually two intentions for your story, it's either to (1) push them to the next step in the buying journey or (2) push them to buy because that's the next step.
Step 2: What is the emotion you want your customer to feel during your engagement with them?	Choose from one of these five categories and see it from your customer's perspective: 1. I feel my status / recognition is enhanced when I use the product.

YOUR INTENTION	HOW TO CREATE YOUR STORY
Step 2: What is the emotion you want your customer to feel during your engagement with them?	2. I feel more certain this product will solve my problem. 3. I feel I have a choice in choosing between this product or a product from someone else. 4. I feel part of a group of successful people when I use this product. This is called relatedness. 5. I feel this offer is fair. Why these five? It's from neuroscience research and activates the "primary reward" circuits of our brain. This leads to our customer seeing us or our product as a reward, not a threat, and unconsciously helps them trust us and approach us with more confidence.
Step 3: Think of a story from someone else's life to match the one emotion you want your customer to feel.	This does NOT have to have a business angle. If you're stuck thinking of a story, Google "story about a famous person with status as the theme." Replace the word "status" with one of the other five feelings explained in Step 2.
Step 4: Think of a story from your own life to match each of these five emotions.	Just remember, your true story does NOT have to have a business angle. It's just a story that captures this emotion.

YOUR INTENTION	HOW TO CREATE YOUR STORY
Step 5: Assemble your story.	Yes, we said earlier you don't need a traditional storytelling structure. Still, you certainly need a frame to follow, and we suggest using this: Beginning: Give a brief description of what you or someone else faced and the emotion you were experiencing, e.g., "I felt so lost when I started my own business and all the stretch goals my personal coaches kept asking me to aim for became more and more impossible." Middle: Talk about what you did to move towards the emotion you wanted to feel, e.g., "I nearly gave up several times, but each time, I would bump into someone in an even worse predicament than I was." End: Warning! Don't end with a miraculous light bulb moment ending that made all your problems melt and a solution magically appear. That's called a fairy tale and not a story to influence. Instead, explain what really happened, e.g., None of these people I bumped into came to my rescue or inspired me to persevere. Instead, I found myself stealing simple and small ideas to get myself moving in the right direction. I didn't change my plans drastically but added a few helpful steps that helped me feel more certain

YOUR INTENTION	HOW TO CREATE YOUR STORY
Step 5: Assemble your story. (continued)	about my business. I guess all I needed were a few different ideas and steps to add to my plan.” WARNING! Don’t use metaphorical stories as suggested by many well-intentioned self-help guides, e.g., birds flying south in the winter with each taking turns leading the flock. Your story’s purpose could and probably will get lost in the story! Keep it simple, please.
Step 6: Test your story’s length and save it on your computer.	Do your best to keep your story within 30 to 90 seconds. A rule of thumb is that we speak at a pace of about 160 words a minute, so for a 30 to 90 second story, stay between 80 to 190 words. The story above is about 123 words — just nice!





Here's the story again.

"I felt so lost when I started my own business, and all the stretch goals my personal coaches kept asking me to aim for became more and more impossible. I nearly gave up several times, but each time, I would bump into someone in an even worse predicament than I was in. None of these people I bumped into came to my rescue or inspired me to persevere. Instead, I found myself stealing simple and small ideas to get myself moving in the right direction. I didn't change my plans drastically but added a few helpful steps that helped me feel more certain about my business. I guess all I needed were a few different ideas and steps to add to my plan."

This story certainly isn't earth-shattering, mind-blowing, amazingly original, awe-inspiring, or makes me leap into action instantly. And that's perfect as the intention of using stories in business is to emphasize a key point. And in this case, the key point was to accept new ideas to experience certainty.

PART 3D: HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY

Now that you've added stories into your library, it's essential to know how to slip them into your conversation. Now that you know how to build and practice stories to influence, the only thing left for you to do is to **tell** your story. Let's break this into four parts:

1. Build Rapport

First, you want to build rapport with your customer so that they'll listen intently and attentively to every word of your story. Creating rapport prepares them to trust you.

How do we do this? Part of creating rapport is to have a friendly and agreeable connection with your customer. So don't constantly disagree with them, interrupt them when they're speaking, or carry energy that says without words, "I'd rather be anywhere else but here." Instead, patiently wait for your turn to speak. Your story can wait!

2. Use a transition sentence to start your story

When it's time to unleash your 30 to 90 second story to emphasize your point, don't say, "let me tell you a story." You want to gently flow into your story without giving your customer's logical mind a chance to put up impenetrable defences! With all the positive publicity placed on storytelling to influence, this is like telling your enemy to get put the walls up! Why would you do that? Instead, use one of several transition possible sentences, e.g., "This reminds me of the time when..." and launch into your story. Sneaky but essential! For now, just use this transition sentence as it serves multiple contexts. And when you reread this guide, you'll notice I used it when I slipped a few stories in (sorry).

3. Tell your story

Never memorise your story. You'll waste a fantastic amount of energy. Just remember the main points, and as each story is only 30 to 90 seconds long, it's pretty easy to remember the main points.

Instead, bring yourself into the moment and become an actor in the story, reliving the emotional highs and lows. Relive the story in your mind.

And do remember to add details. Add names, dates, places, what people were wearing. Whether it's minor or major details, every detail adds more colour to the story. It holds the audience's attention as they join you in your story.

4. End with a transition sentence

To seamlessly glide back to the point you're making, use another transition sentence to lead the audience back into the present by saying, "Back to the point we were talking about..."



1. Build rapport



**2. Start story
with transition
sentence**



3. Tell your story



**4. End with
transition
sentence**



**"AN OUNCE OF ACTION IS
WORTH A TON OF THEORY."**
RALPH WALDO EMERSON,
PHILOSOPHER AND POET

CONCLUSION

AND WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER (IN OTHER WORDS, THE CONCLUSION)

Stories create trust between you and your customer; trust helps you influence them, influence makes them buy from you. Need another reason to tell true stories that last 30-90 seconds every time you want to emphasize a point?

Definitely not!

This reminds me of the time ... oops, sorry! Force of habit always makes me tell a story.

Just wanted to end by thanking you for finishing this guide. Do remember to practice, practice, and practice more, and write to me when you have a question. I'm at jeff@StickySteps.cool

You can also get even more help here:

www.InfluenceWithStories.com.

You deserve it!

"The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation that is to come."
– Steve Jobs

ABOUT STICKY STEPS

Sticky Steps was born some years ago when Jeff Tan, its founder, started dabbling in influence alchemy and sort of succeeded. Spurred by his small successes, he kept going, and this Storytelling to Influence eBook is one of his many efforts to help folks improve their influence skills.

As Jeff so eloquently puts it, “Talking about storytelling reminds me of the time (*sound familiar?*) when I first arrived in Shanghai after spending my entire life in Singapore. Shanghai was a messy, lively, always-on city that kept my adrenalin pumping for days on end. It either kept me going at breakneck speed or wore me out. But after finding a nice balance, Shanghai became a city impossible to leave! It’s like my love affair with storytelling. Once I get addicted to its seductive powers to influence, storytelling has been my constant companion. I must admit I’ve strayed a few times, with lustful glances at other “hot” bods like Neuroscience, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), and conversational hypnosis. But in the end, I stayed true to my true love, influence using storytelling. And I’m still in love!”



Sticky Steps — We help young professionals travel through life better by sharing essential skills using fun-to-learn, ultra-practical and sticky tools.

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