

*The Pen is Mightier
than the Statistic*



Writing Workshop

Workbook

*In memory of Carol T. Falkowski
who always reminded me to live out loud.*

Story-Wheel—The Pen is mightier than the Statistic

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www.StoryWheel.net



Content Structure

This content is divided into three books. Each stands alone but gains full momentum when combined.

Book One—Spinning Skills into Insight

Create your story using prompts and templates. To help you understand the concepts, the Radiant Residence case study example is provided.

Introducing the Story-Wheel Model

How to Create Your Story-Wheel

Radiant Residence Case Study

1. All Good
2. Oh, Shift!
3. Wish-Back
4. Running In Place
5. Eureka!
6. Restorify
7. Wiser

Story-Wheel Generator—*Write it! Tell it!*

Story-Wheel Generator—*Practice Templates*

Book Two—Case Studies from the Real World

Reference guide showcasing various stories from entertainment, business, and personal experiences.

Radiant Residence (reprise)

The Barbie Movie

The Listerine Legacy #1

Flex Seal

Post-it Notes

Water Alarm

The Listerine Legacy #2

Zoom

Chevrolet

Amazon.com

Novo Nordisk

Groundhog Day Movie

Personal Mission

Disclaimer. As Case Study examples, I present several fictional stories and marketing campaigns under educational Fair Use guidelines. My views are my own; I do not endorse any brand, nor have the companies had any input. Publicly available marketing materials are shown with the understanding that specific campaigns may change over time. Apply the overall strategies to your own products and services.

Book Three—The Science Behind the Brain

Academic exploration of the storytelling model as well as thinking processes.

A Story First

Story-Wheel

Storytelling Science

Certificate of Completion

Additional Workshops and Let's Chat!

🌀 Book One—Spinning Skills into Insight

Introducing the Story-Wheel Model

Your business success depends on communication. Done poorly, you stall. Done well, you soar. For you: a decent raise, promotion, and status—everything you deserve. For your company: increasing profits, prosperity, and a great reputation.

Storytelling is key because the human brain is wired for story. It's how we learn, understand, and remember.

But... Coming up with a compelling story is hard, complex, and time-consuming. You need a powerful shortcut to help you streamline the cumbersome process. Introducing the Story-Wheel so that you can learn to spin a story quickly.

Imagine a bicycle rolling down a pathway. The spinning wheels are held together from hub to rim by spokes necessary to align the wheel, straight and true—the Story-Wheel™.



1. The story begins with *All Good*; the world is stable and predictable.
2. Then, an *Oh, Shift!* event changes everything.
3. The desire to *Wish-Back* to the way before drives the story forward.
4. Conventional solutions to the problem don't work leaving one to *Run in Place*.
5. Then, an unexpected insight is revealed in a *Eureka!* moment...
6. ...in which *Restorify* makes thing right again, in fact, even better.
7. The lesson learned along the way makes us all *Wiser*.

How to Create Your Story-Wheel



The Story-Wheel model is a wheel with spokes that represent each stage of your story. On the following pages, create rough notes of each stage. Then, you'll transfer those onto the single Story-Wheel Generator page to create your first draft.

Or, to add a bit of fun, use a paper plate.
(You can hang it on your wall as a writing aid.)



The Story-Wheel generates **velocity**, and your content creates **mass**. Multiply those together to increase your **momentum** as an effective storyteller.

Using the template to outline your story is straightforward. But writing is rewriting so do the exercises today and revisit them tomorrow ...and the day after that. You'll find that certain aspects change as the real story is revealed. Words without action don't mean a thing.

In the end, you'll have your own story-based case study. And more importantly, you'll have the skills to easily create new ones.

As a storyteller, your job is taking people on a journey from one place to another; from where they are now to where they will be. Learning storytelling is an esoteric endeavor suitable for writing novels or major motion pictures but who has time for a deep dive? That's why I've made story-creation easy for you through this simple model. It's the result of scientific research integrated with real world experience teaching thousands to communicate well under pressure.



The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle described stories as "Character in Action" and considered it the basis of epic storytelling. They say that character is what you do when no one is looking. But customers *are* looking and asking, "What's your story?"

Give them what they want. Recount a story that illuminates the genuine character of a person, a company, or a product. Reveal an insight that proves passion, determination, or capability. Remember, your goal is to teach a lesson. And for sales, that lesson is your product.

A story is a journey, and you're the travel guide. It's up to you to make the trip entertaining as well as educational; unpredictable but safe. At the core, a story is transformation. It could be a character, or it could be a community. But it's always an alteration of the listener's perspective. Change their world for the better.

You can do this.

As with everything, you'll get out what you put in. In that spirit, I commit to giving you, my best.

BRAD COCHRANE

Case Study | Radiant Residence

A typical sales pitch for a heating contractor is something like this:



Radiant Residence offers superior radiant floor heating systems for houses. Using the latest technologies, we bring energy efficiency, comfort, and over 25 years of installation experience.

This one-way monologue lists features rather than starts a sales conversation, ends rather than begins. What if a story-based case study were presented instead?



I love the fresh winter snowfall in Minnesota. Playing outdoors on a snowmobile, skiing, skating, or just a walk. It's wonderful until my feet are cold. Then, I can only think of warming my toes. So, I head inside and stamp the snow off my boots, slip them off, and stand fidgeting on the floor's heating vent in wet socks.

That doesn't work so I crowd around the fireplace and hope to find the balance between too cold and too hot. Eventually nature calls so I scamper to the bathroom across a chilly floor and back again. I'm feeling like a caged timber wolf relentlessly pacing in discontent.

Instead of chasing the heat, what if the heat is where I am right now? Radiant floor heat keeps my feet warm anywhere and everywhere in my home. I can finally relax. Radiant Residence. We don't sell heating systems; we sell toasty toes.

Using the Story-Wheel model, a story-based case study that makes a connection is easily written. Underpinned by the *Wiser* lesson of toasty toes, a conversation can go forward.





All Good

Context

Stories begin with *All Good*, the way things are right now. It's the context of a stable, unchanging, normal world in which the rules—good or ill—remain consistent.

Overall, it's defined by external attributes governed by physical place, time, and state of security. For the person involved, it's characterized by emotional internal pressures motivated by fear, craving, or self-worth. Don't overlook personal values. There might be a yearning for something better, an aspiration. There can be a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the current state.

A smart writer focuses on the subject's context, not their own. Describe their world. What are the five things to know about them? What do they have; what do they need? Explore both external influences as well as internal beliefs/values. How does an emotional state color their perception of the world?

Find connection points to your story, that is, an on-ramp to the freeway. Start with where they are.

Book Two Case Study: The Barbie Movie

Enter Text



Oh, Shift!

Complication

Here comes the *Oh, Shift!* —a complication that disrupts the normal world. Usually, it's an outside force in the form of a calamity. That could be an actual disaster such as a tornado or a perceived disaster such as new federal reporting rules. In fantasies, it's a Magic Spell. Sometimes, it's an internal force such as a realization of a hard truth or the desire to change for the better. In any case, the world is now very different.

Be careful of imposing your own perception onto your subject's complication. For instance, you might assume that a company's *Oh, Shift!* is to increase sales but that's their normal expectation in a world of *All Good*.... However, a competitor suddenly dominating the market is the real *Oh, Shift!* complication.

Don't be shy; use a powerful *Oh, Shift!* that really shakes things up. Describe a big change: an external force, an internal fear, or a new perception. Yet also be real, reflect authenticity, and engender trust.

Book Two Case Study: Listerine Legacy #1

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Wish-Back

Desire

The powerful desire to solve what went wrong and return to normalcy is the *Wish-Back*. As a writing device, its purpose is to drive the story forward and create momentum. A powerful *Wish-Back* carries the reader through the lulls.

Your subject can desire to go back the previous world or go forward to an aspirational world. In some cases, it's a desire to undo a wrong or execute a rescue. Oftentimes, the desire is driven by an underlying emotional motivation. In general, people want to avoid pain or pursue pleasure.

Describe your subject's driving desire whether tangible, imaginary, emotional, or something else.

Book Two Case Study: Flex-Seal

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Running In Place

Tactics

Conventional solutions—or tactics—are pursued but inevitably fail leaving one *Running In Place*.

A quirk of humanity is to gloss over failures and single out triumphs. But a story in which everything goes smoothly isn't very interesting at all. People are tolerant of mistakes that are made on the road to success. Learning by observation is the ultimate survival trait.

Think of it as a series of challenges that your “hero” faces. In a Romantic Comedy movie, the two main characters will deny their true feelings until succumbing to inevitable love. In your story-based case study, your subject works through and eliminates the obvious answers. (Don't worry, the correct solution reveals itself in the next section *Eureka!*)

Generally, use three attempts and setbacks, but that's not a hard and fast rule.

Book Two Case Study: Post-It Notes

Enter Conventional Solution 1

Enter Conventional Solution 2

Enter Conventional Solution 3



Eureka!

Unexpected Insight

Unexpectedly, an insight reveals itself. *Eureka!*

This is the realm of innovation in which two seemingly unconnected ideas are combined to create something new. It isn't merely an improvement of an existing product or process but rather a key that opens a door to a whole new world.

It may be a different perspective, a new tool, or a universal truth. It's a twist in the plot. In mysteries, it's the moment that the detective discovers the final clue hidden in plain sight. In a sales message, it's the way that the product solves a problem in a way that competitors can't.

The *Eureka!* moment is crucial to the story-based case study and essential to the overall lesson learned (explored in the later section *Wiser*).

Finding the *Eureka!* might be difficult. It can be lurking beneath the surface or hidden in plain sight. Changing perspective is good practice. Look past the intended use and ask an end-user what they find appealing. For instance, duct-tape began as a specific solution in the home heating industry: a way to seal air ducts. The unexpected insight is its versatility. If you're stuck, write a story from your product's point of view.

Book Two Case Study: Water Alarm

Listerine Legacy #2

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Finally, the *Eureka!* is applied to the *Oh, Shift!* to *Restorify* the world. But here's the kicker: a new world emerges that is different than, and better than, the old normal world. If your story-based case study merely solves the *Oh, Shift!* then it falls short. However, if it can *Restorify* the *Oh Shift!* while being significantly better, then the story-based case study drives engagement.

There's a concept in marketing called *Ten Times Better*. This means that customers assign a cost to switching to a new product. The benefit of that switch needs to greatly outweigh the cost. In sales, the *Restorify* isn't merely a "good as" a rival, or even "better than," but an ascension to a vastly superior outcome. What is the *Ten Times Better* outcome?

Book Two Case Study: Zoom

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Everyone wants a satisfying conclusion. That's the lesson—what has been learned along the way. Through a story, your listener internalizes a new viewpoint. It's the insight that makes them Wiser.

In fables, it's the moral. Can you tie your story-based case study to a universal truth? For instance, the idea that one should *prepare for the bad when times are good* shows up in the Bible, Aesop's Fables, and Allstate's Mayhem.

In a sales message, it's the adoption of an idea (that precedes a sale). More specifically, it's the belief that the story cannot be completed without your specific product. Don't fall into the trap of promoting a general category that includes competitors. To be effective, separate your product from the realm of common commodities into the rarefied atmosphere of a specialty.

Consider the lesson of the lesson. What insight makes your listener Wiser? Is there a universal truth? Why is your product essential to the story?

*Book Two Case Study: Chevrolet
Amazon*

Enter Text



Generator

Write it! Tell it!

Now that you've created the parts, integrate them into the complete story. Take your exercise notes and summarize them below. Write and re-write. Start messy and then refine your story so that it's powerful, genuine, and persuasive. Practice, internalize, and present.

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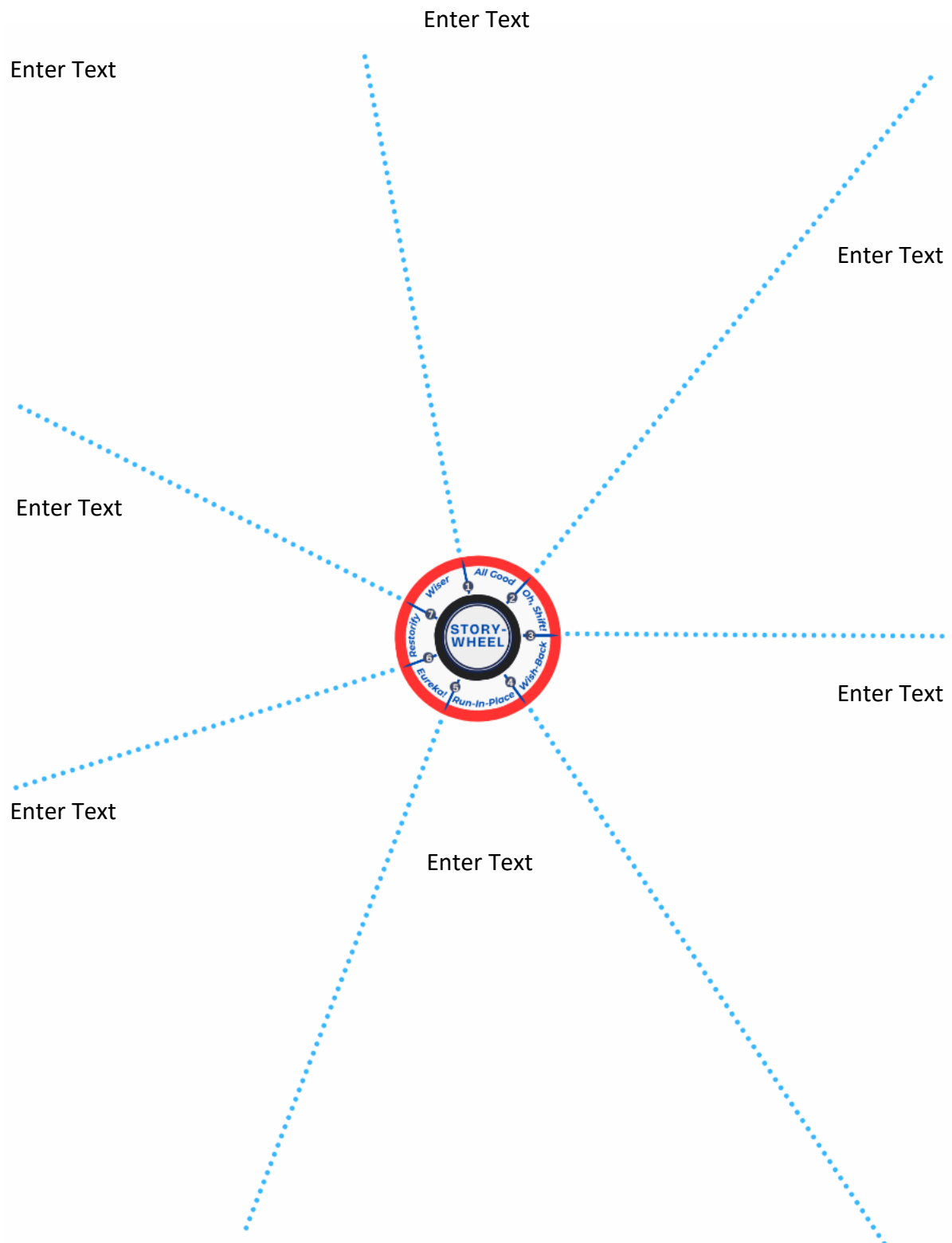
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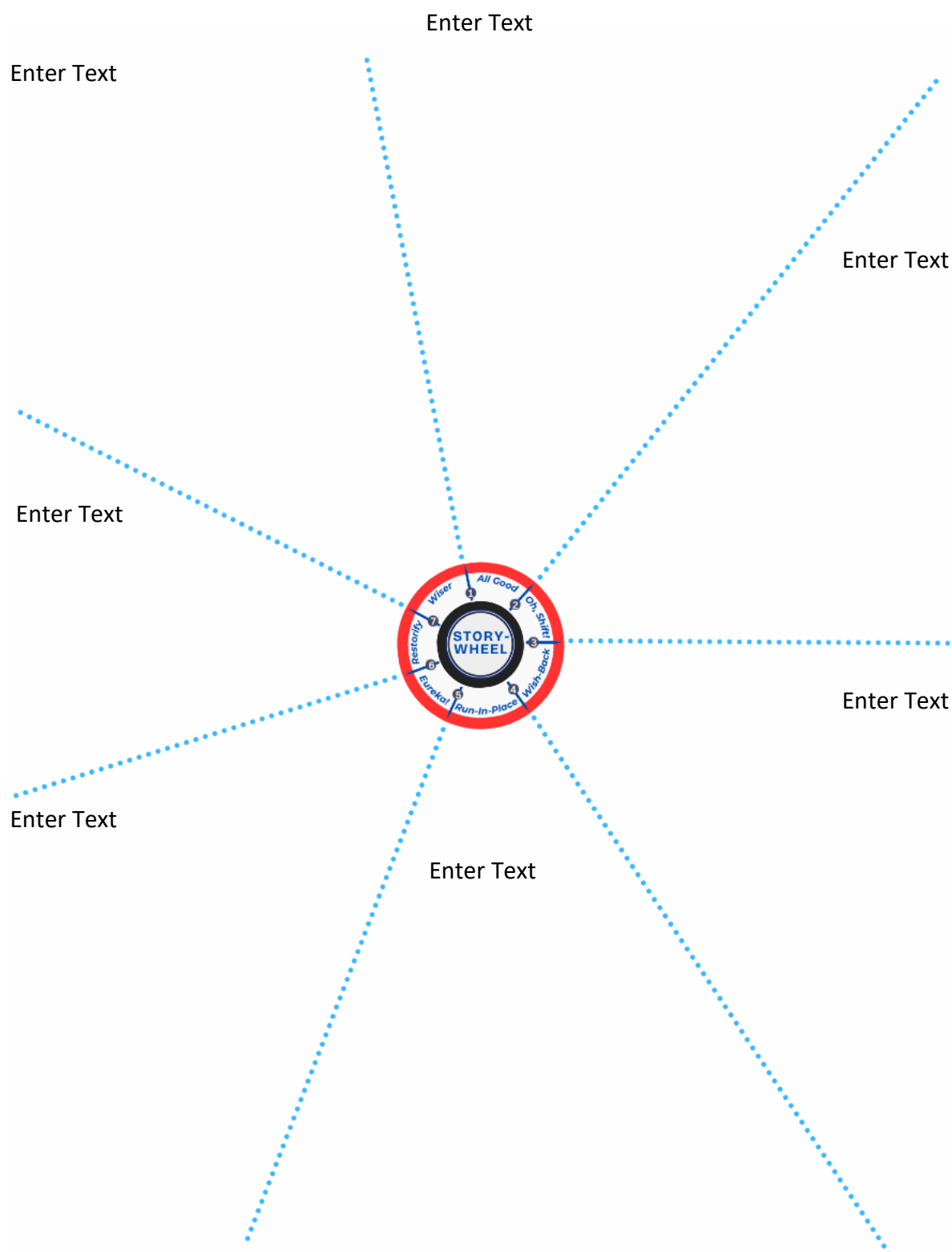
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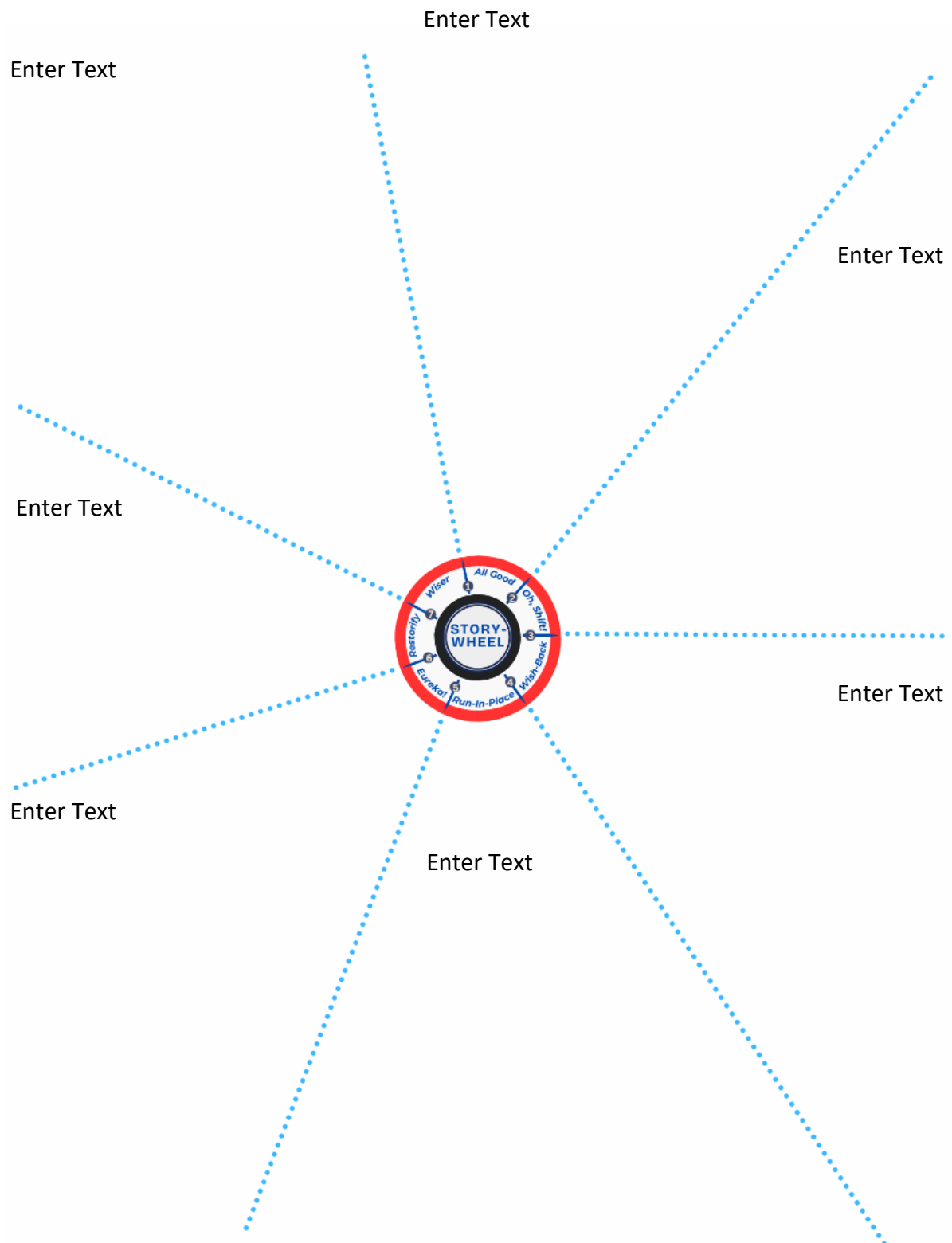
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🌀 Book Two—Case Studies from the Real World

Case Study | Radiant Residence

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I love the fresh winter snowfall in Minnesota. Playing outdoors on a snowmobile, skiing, skating, or just a walk. It's wonderful until my feet are cold. Then, I can only think of warming my toes. So, I head inside and stamp the snow off my boots, slip them off, and stand fidgeting on the floor's heating vent in wet socks.

That doesn't work so I crowd around the fireplace and hope to find the balance between too cold and too hot. Eventually nature calls so I scamper to the bathroom across a chilly floor and back again. I'm feeling like a caged timber wolf relentlessly pacing in discontent.

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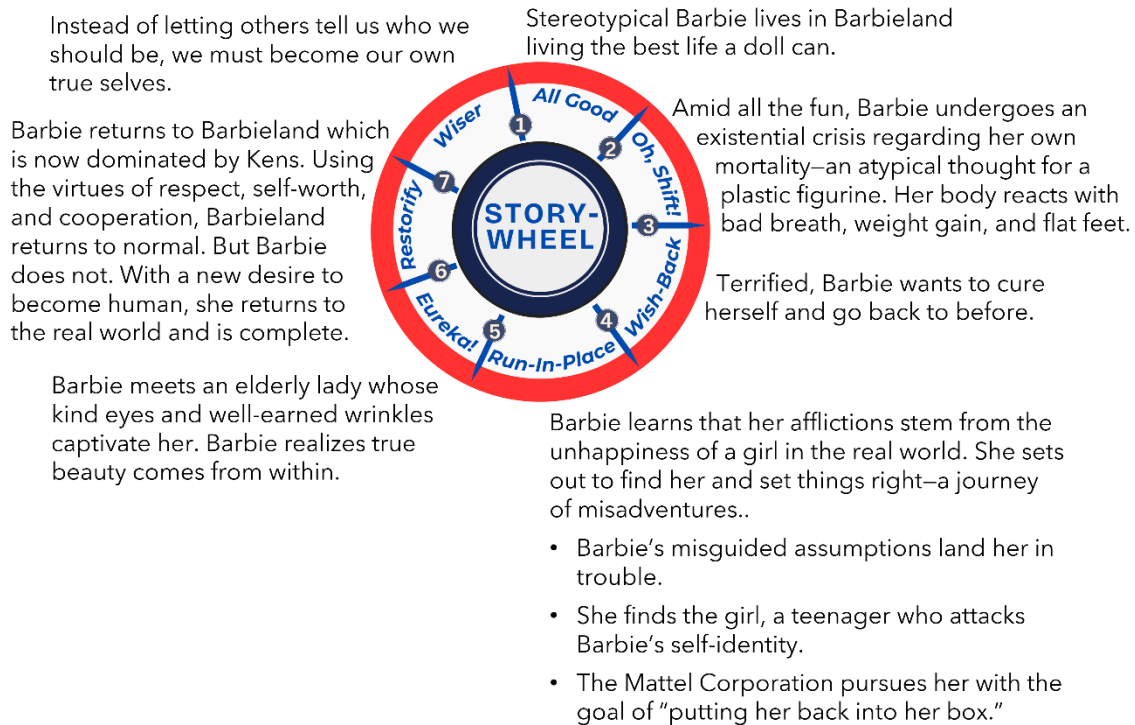


Case Study | *The Barbie Movie*



It could have been a superficial tale about the adventures of a doll but with some great storytelling, *The Barbie Movie* became a summer blockbuster. How did the writers get there? Let's do a bit of deconstruction. The obvious model is *Hero's Journey* in which Barbie is called to adventure, picks up companions, faces her darker self, and emerges stronger to fix a broken world. Yet, in a great story, other models work just as well. Let's deconstruct it using the Story-Wheel.

From the film's opening moments, Barbieland is established as the perfectly normal realm of Barbie from the colorful colors to her permanently arched heels. It's truly a *All Good...* world. It's *wonderfulness* becomes a character in its own right to be extolled, aspired to, and ultimately rescued. The audience cares about Barbieland.



Case Study | The Listerine Legacy #1

If your customer isn't experiencing an *Oh, Shift!*, you can create a *Complication*.

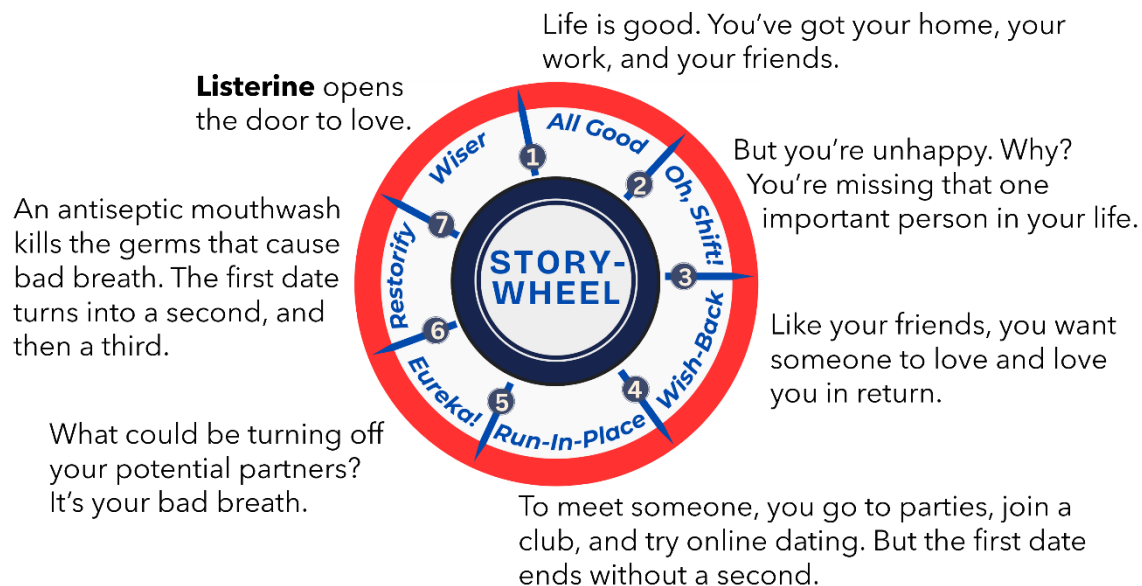


Over one hundred years ago, the natural odor of the mouth was reframed as “Halitosis” and promoted it as a source of social embarrassment. Bad breath was born. Fortunately, Listerine offered the necessary solution. Today, the mouthwash industry is a billion-dollar concern.

Taking a cue from Listerine, many companies intentionally create dissatisfaction in their customer's mind and then introduce their product as the solution. Are you fat? We've got a pill for that. Unattractive? Try our hair product. Don't feel manly? Buy our pickup truck.

It's a tried-and-true method. However, this “trick” is over-used and is instantly recognizable. You run the risk of destroying your credibility if you force a false *Oh, Shift!* onto your customer. Approach it from their point of view and you may find the hidden key.

For instance, a teenager getting ready for a first date will use mouthwash for fresh breath. Hoping for a kiss, using Listerine gives confidence. The *Oh, Shift* isn't bad breath but rather the insecurity of adolescence.





He's loud! He's boisterous! And he's coming to an infomercial near you!

TV pitchman Phil Swift hawks Flex Seal adhesive with the promise to fix anything and everything. Broken pipe? Fixed. Flooding basement? Fixed. Leaky boat? Fixed.

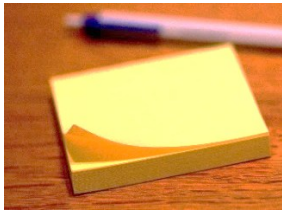
But here's something that might surprise you: Flex Seal is genuinely a superb product that fulfills its brand promise exceedingly well. It creates a flexible, watertight seal that lasts; Do-It-Yourselfers use the product for home repairs as well as fabrication projects.

Phil Swift understands that he's not selling glue but rather the customer's *Desire* to undo the common disasters that come with owning a home. For his high-pitched frenzy, his appeal is the *Desire* to make life calm again. For all the corny antics, he engenders the *Desire* for something they can trust and count on. Or perhaps an aspirational *Desire* to fashion something new and unexpected. Like slicing a boat in two and tapping it back together.



Bon Voyage!



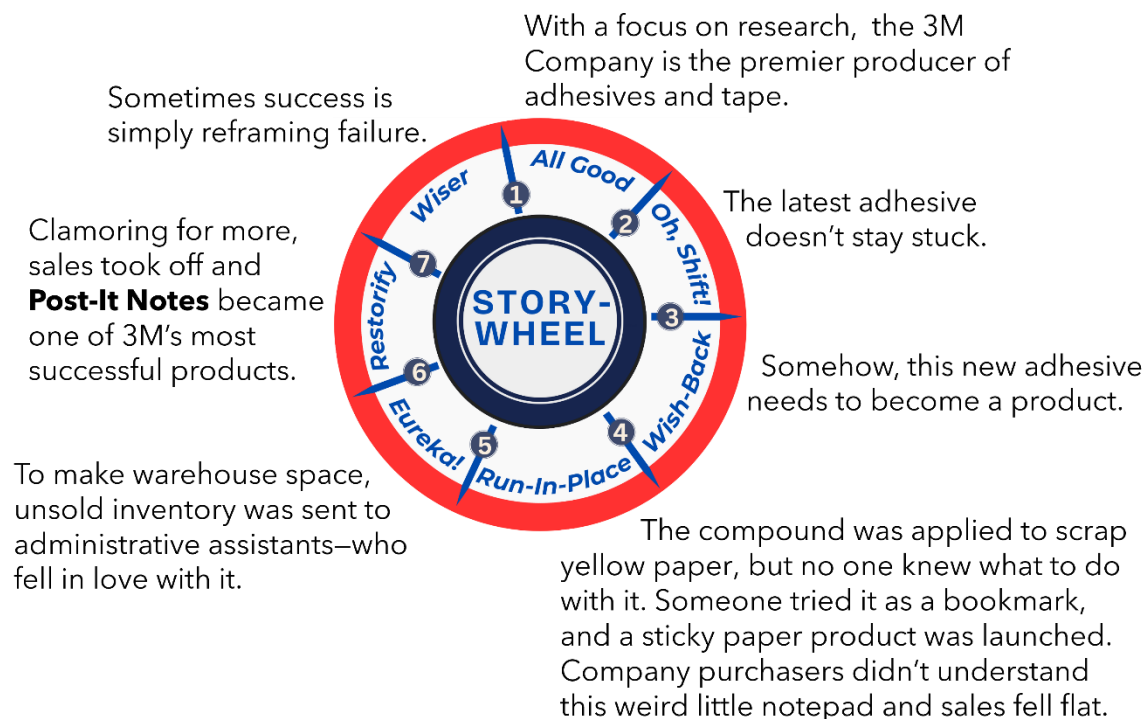


Post-it Notes, the yellow paper pad that sticks, has been called 3M's most successful failure. It began as an adhesive misstep: the glue that didn't stay stuck. Almost as an afterthought, the compound was applied to leftover yellow paper. But that experiment languished as no one knew what to do with it. Then, the idea of a sticky bookmark took hold, and the product was launched. Although corporate purchasing agents understood paper clips, they didn't understand this weird little notepad. Sales fell flat.

It's a tale of tactics, that is, conventional approaches that fail: a weak adhesive, a solution in search of a problem, and moribund sales channels. It's about *Running in Place*

And then, the unexpected insight: With too much inventory, 3M cleared out stocks by giving it away to administrative assistants. *Eureka!* They fell in love with the product and clamored for more. By engaging end-users first, success is achieved.

Today, Post-it notes are one of 3M's most successful products with widespread popularity.



Case Study | Water Alarm

Finding an unexpected insight, the *Eureka!* moment, can be challenging. It's not always apparent and often hidden. Sometimes, it's hiding in plain sight and only needs a small shift in viewpoint to see.

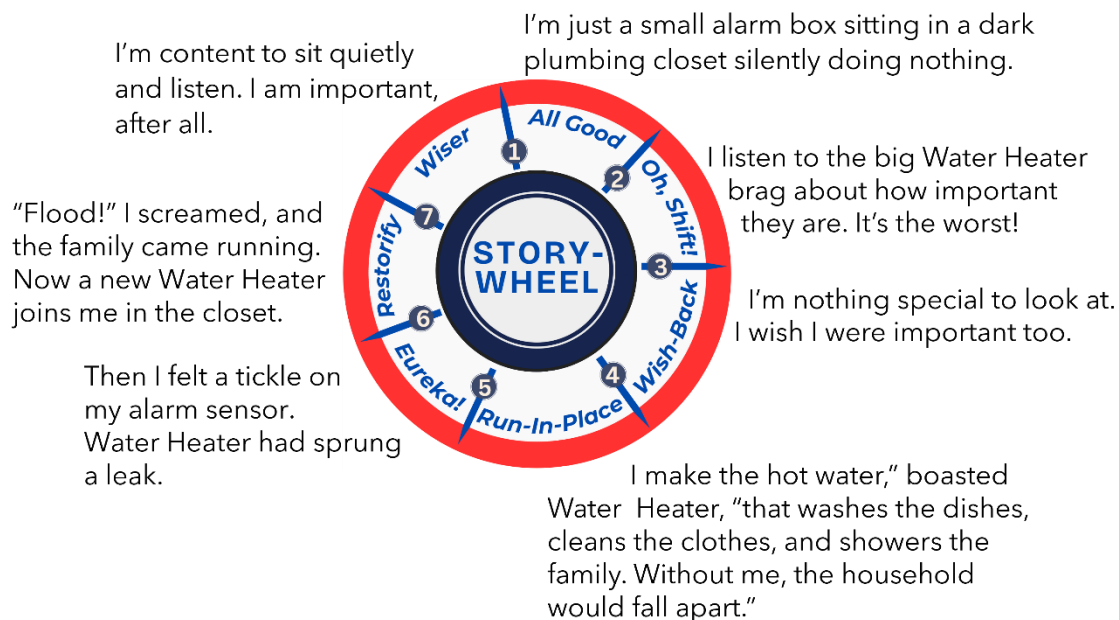
I teach copywriting classes. One morning, a student became stuck on their product story. Why? His product was just a non-descript box that sat in a dark closet next to a water heater. It didn't do anything. That is, unless it detected water. Then, a loud alarm went off. I asked him to write a story from the box's perspective and the resulting story was magical, something like this...

I'm just a small alarm box sitting in a dark plumbing closet silently doing nothing. I listen to the big Water Heater brag about how important they are. It's the worst! I'm nothing special to look at. I wish I were important too.

"I make the hot water," boasted Water Heater, "that washes the dishes, cleans the clothes, and showers the family. Without me, the household would fall apart."

Then I felt a tickle on my alarm sensor. Water Heater had sprung a leak. "Flood!" I screamed, and the family came running. Now a new Water Heater joins me in the closet.

I'm content to sit quietly and listen. I am important, after all.



Case Study | The Listerine Legacy #2

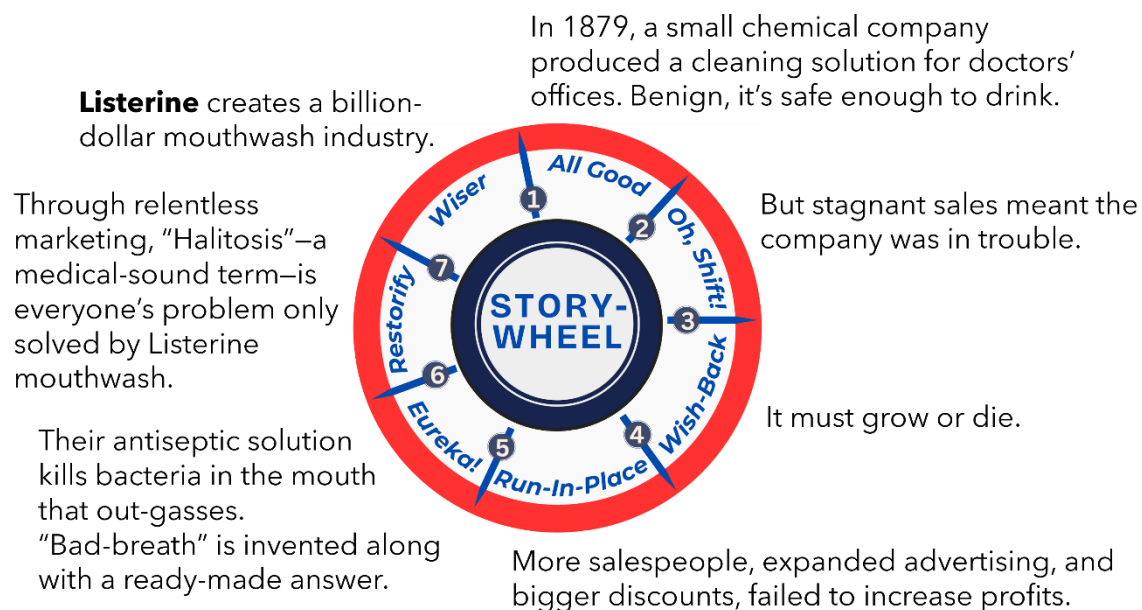
While the success of a product can be told as a marketing case study (Listerine #1), it can also be told as a business case study.



One hundred and thirty years ago, no one had bad breath. It's true. The small chemical company Lambert manufactured Listerine—a cleaning solution that killed bacteria. Doctors disinfected their exam rooms with it. But the market was limited, and no amount of advertising and salesmanship grew profits.

Listerine is a great product containing natural ingredients that's safe to use. In fact, you can drink it without ill effects. (Although it tastes awful). It's especially effective at removing an odor-producing bacterium that thrives in the mouth. In a leap of unexpected insight, Lambert Chemical reframed this natural odor as “Halitosis” and promoted it as a source of social embarrassment. Fortunately, Listerine offered the necessary solution. The awful taste was refocused as a benefit. Today, the mouthwash industry is a billion-dollar concern.

Listerine started as a cleaning solution for doctor offices until the *Eureka!* insight created bad-smelling mouths. Today, Listerine mouthwash fights the scourge of bad breath (thereby solving customers' *Oh, Shift!*).



Case Study | Zoom

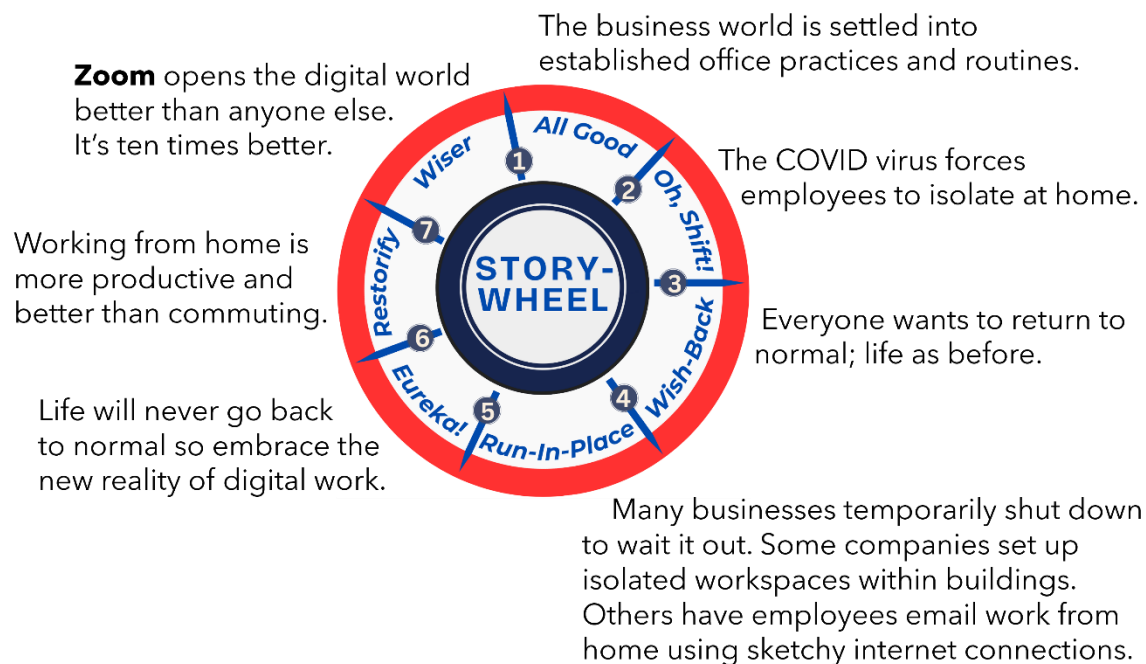


The video conferencing application Zoom has become prominent, popular, and pervasive. In fact, *Zoom* is now a verb meaning to communicate with video online. But it's not the first software to do this and certainly not the last. Why has it taken hold?

It's the first to deliver video conferencing several degrees better than competitors. The platform is stable with crisp video and audio as well as a user-friendly interface. On many levels, Zoom works without the need for a degree in computer science.

When the COVID-19 Pandemic forced people to shelter-in-place, Zoom allowed a path to work from home and stay connected to the outside world. The other platforms struggled to keep up.

There's a concept in marketing called *Ten Times Better*. This means that customers assign a cost to switching to a new product. The benefit of that switch needs to greatly outweigh the cost. As a salesperson, your *Restorify* isn't merely a "good as" your rival, or even "better than," but an ascension to a vastly superior outcome.



Case Study | Chevrolet

Post-War America experienced unbridled optimism and prosperity. Automobiles became a popular *must have* for every family. Roads were built at a breakneck pace in response; paved US Highways crisscrossed the country. However, cars were mainly used for errands around town and sales flattened. Advertising, yearly redesigns, and mechanical improvements did little. In a *Eureka!* breakthrough, automobile manufacturers investigated ways to speed up the purchase cycle, that is, how to make the product wear out faster to sell replacements.



Encourage more driving, as Chevrolet did with “See the U.S.A. ...” It’s an aspirational story in which the audience sees themselves participating. Wouldn’t you want to visit exotic places, leaving your cares behind, in the safety of your own backyard?

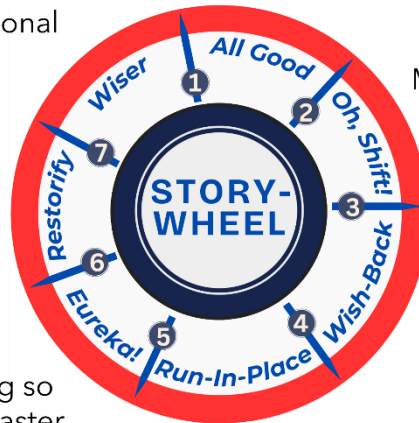
“... in your Chevrolet” is the *Lesson* that puts the customer into the scenario and makes the product essential to the completion of the story. A customer internalizes the *Wiser* belief “I need to see America, so I need this reliable car.”

...In Your Chevrolet means traveling smart in personal comfort that’s reliable.

See the U.S.A. ... advertising campaign encourages exploring by automobile.

Create more driving so that cars wear out faster.

In Post-War America, the buying public embraces the automobile for everyday errands.



Manufacturers experience a major sales slump as those who want a car have a car.

Automakers need to recreate the good times of growth.

Advertising budgets are increased.
Radical design changes are introduced.
Engines get bigger.

The story informs and aligns the additional visual elements such as the binoculars, highway sign, historical marker, and the panorama of the open country and mountains. There’s also a secondary story, “See your local Chevrolet dealer” which inextricably pairs the adventure story with the outfitter who makes it possible. As a final touch, the ad is in the shape of a license plate further reinforcing the story with a tangible automobile.



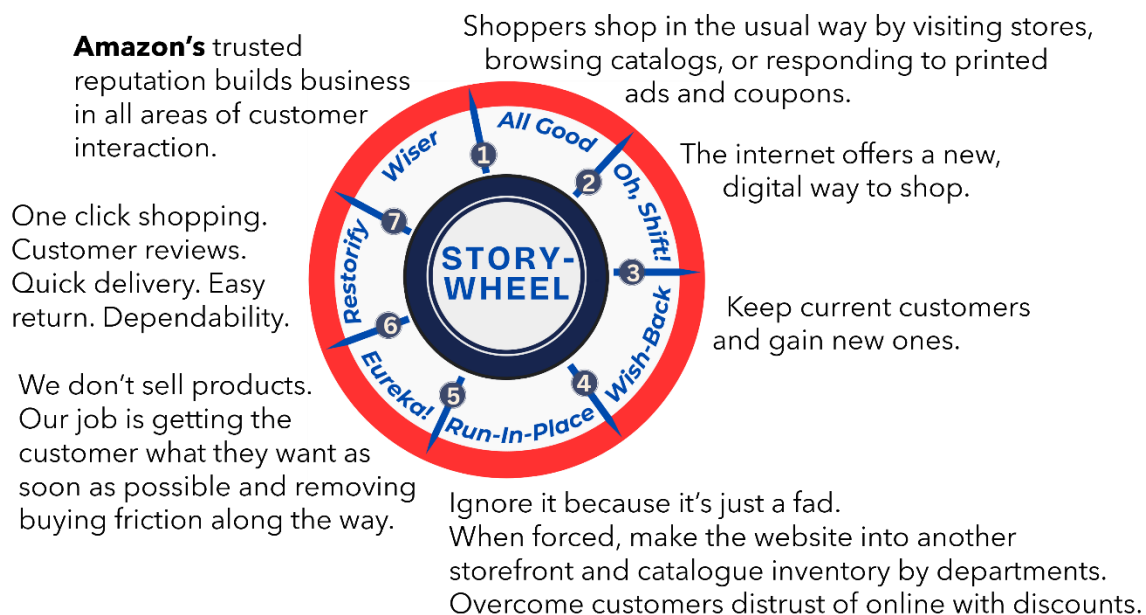
Whatever you want, you can get it from Amazon. The selection is hugely huge—12 million individual product offering to start. Add in Marketplace sellers and that number expands to more than 353 million. Anything you can imagine and a lot you can't is just one wish away.

Is it easy to buy from Amazon? Too easy, some say. One-click purchasing, fast delivery, and easy returns. Prime introduced 2-Day delivery which soon became Next Day delivery. Now, Same Day delivery is no longer unusual. Watch the skies for Drone delivery—coming soon.

But... Amazon's business is *not* selling products. The business model is really getting you what you want as easily (and quickly) as possible. There's a concept in retailing known as *buying friction*. It means difficulties encountered by the customer while purchasing. It encompasses the process from decision-making to paying to getting to using. Amazon recognizes that removing friction results in a better customer experience. And that translates directly into repeat sales.

According to a recent survey, people trust their money with Amazon more than they trust their bank. Why? The customer experience at a bank can be confusing, overwhelming, and intimidating. The customer experience at Amazon is clear, simple, and dependable. That trust engendered by buying toothbrushes transfers to unrelated areas. In practice, Amazon has become the default habit. That's pure gold to any company.

Remember, we don't sell a product or service; we sell the adoption of an idea. The sale follows as a matter of course. The adopted idea is that you can count on Amazon. Wiser's *Lesson* is trust.

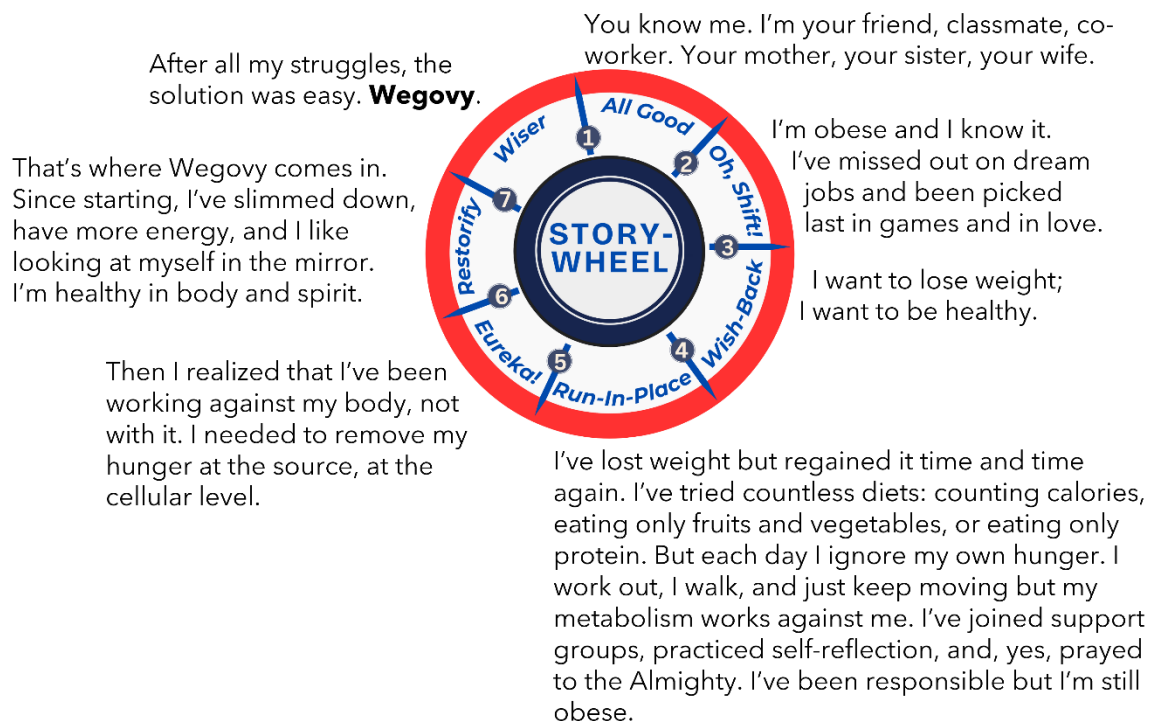




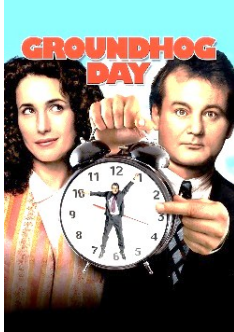
Type 2 Diabetes. Over 38 million people in the U.S. suffer from it. The disease impacts your body's insulin production and causes high blood sugar levels. In response to this epidemic, drug company Novo Nordisk developed semaglutide widely known as Ozempic.

The initial marketing campaign emphasized reduction of a patient's A1C level to under 7%. Game changer, right? Unfortunately, patients had to suffer though the side-effect of significant weight loss. *Wait, what?* In a new, revised campaign, the weight-loss side-effect became the selling point and sales exploded. (The treatment of Type 2 Diabetes is a secondary benefit.) Seeing a good thing, Novo Nordisk introduced a formulation specifically for weight-loss: Wegovy.

A powerful patient story lies within scientific data. It might go something like this:



Case Study | **Groundhog Day Movie**

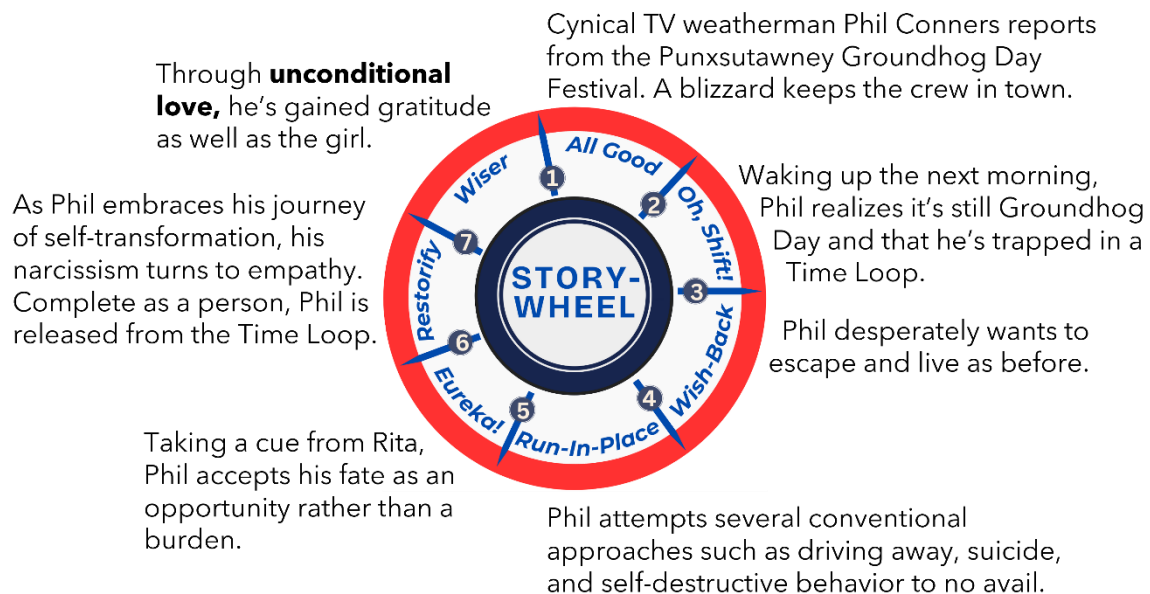


In this classic comedy film, cynical TV weatherman Phil Conners (Bill Murray) reports from the Punxsutawney Groundhog Day Festival. Then, he becomes trapped in a time loop and relives February 2nd over and over again. At first resistant, he eventually accepts his fate and embraces personal growth. Once his self-centeredness transforms into empathy for others, he is freed. The core story is generalized as context—complication—resolution.

However, there's more layers within. The Story-Wheel introduces motivation and transformation. Phil Conner's reporting assignment sets the *All Good...* Context while the time loop is Phil's own personal *Oh, Shift!* complication that changes everything. Phil's *Wish-Back* desire to escape his fate drives the forward momentum of his adventure. He tries several tactics as he attempts conventional approaches that ultimately fail (such as exiting town and suicide) leaving him *Running In Place*.

Then Rita Hanson (Andie McDowell) offers an unexpected insight: "Sometimes I wish I had a thousand lifetimes. I don't know, Phil. Maybe it's *not* a curse. Just depends on how you look at it." *Eureka!*

Phil accepts his lot and engages in a journey of personal growth. Eventually, he *Restorifies* himself by evolving into a complete human being and is released from the time loop. With *Wiser's* attitude of gratitude—and the girl—he's learned the lesson: love unconditionally.



Case Study | My Personal Mission



It's been said that salespeople sell themselves first and the product second. A story that reveals who you are, your values, and commitment to your customer's success goes a long way in establishing trust. This is my story:

In a long career of telling stories, my proudest moment came creating a PBS documentary during the earliest days of the AIDS epidemic. The prevailing view of victims was negative and homophobic. We wanted to change that.

We interviewed researchers, politicians, and doctors. Our show began to look like every other TV news story.

Instead of going big, we went small. By documenting the lives, struggles, and aspirations of Shaun, Bobby, and Cleve, we revealed AIDS/HIV sufferers and caregivers as real people in real pain. We influenced public perception and sparked a change in attitude and media coverage. Those People went on to win an Emmy.

Ever since, my personal mission has been to champion storytelling because of the way it can change how people think, feel, and act.

You'll see versions of this story throughout my marketing content. My personal mission is the guiding principle that informs everything I do. It's honest, authentic, and you know that I'm completely committed to empowering you as a storyteller.

Let's deconstruct my story. Notice that some spokes are condensed while others are expanded. In your own story, exercise your best judgment for flow and balance.

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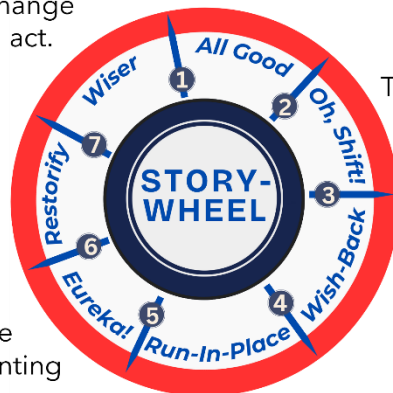
Instead of going big, we went small. By documenting the individual lives, struggles, and aspirations of Shaun, Bobby, and Cleve, we revealed AIDS/HIV sufferers and caregivers as real people in real pain.

In a long career of telling stories, my proudest moment came creating a PBS documentary during the earliest days of the AIDS epidemic.

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⊗ Book Three—The Science Behind the Brain

A Story First

Stories are integral to our humanness, our evolution as a culture, and our advancement as a civilization. From *Gilgamesh*, the first epic, to *Game of Thrones*, a popular TV series, there's power in storytelling. Stories convey emotions as well as facts, and lessons as well as warnings. It's how we learn, decide, and act. To persuade begins with putting forth an idea. Done correctly, our listen then adopts that idea, that is, internalizes it. Action follows as they manifest it in their world. Authorities agree: Stories are essential to communicating effectively.

The challenge is learning how to find, write, and tell a story that moves listeners to action. I once asked a storytelling expert that very question.

“Stand up straight and speak with confidence.”

“No, that's not what I mean. *How* do I story tell?

Their vague response referenced *Hero's Journey* and *Pixar Way* in a roundabout way. In truth, they misunderstood what makes a story, and how to create one's own. As an Emmy-nominated documentary maker for PBS, I knew there was more to it. A lot more.

Like you, I needed a practical formula, an underlying construct that I could put into action. And so began my quest. I joined a writing group, read books about plots, and rewatched Joseph Campbell. I wrote, and I wrote, and I wrote.

One sunny afternoon at the baseball park, I pondered what made the game so engaging. A ball is thrown, a bat swings, and we hang on to what happens next. In a blush of excitement, I realized that *this* is story: Context—Complication—Resolution. Suddenly, I recognized *what* is story is.

But *why* do stories work? That led me into the rabbit dens of brain science. Simply put, our brains combine memories with incoming information to create a brainwave that I call a Theta Signature™. When we tell someone a story, our brainwave pattern is replicated in their brain. Our goal as storytellers is to sharpen the story so that it stimulates our listener's imagination.

The final question is *how* to tell a story. A writer's function is to lead readers on a journey of transformation. Imagine a bicycle rolling down a pathway. The spinning wheels are held together from hub to rim by spokes. In storytelling, the three primary spokes are Context-Complication-Resolution. Yet, four more are necessary to align the wheel, straight and true. All together, they form the seven spokes of the Story-Wheel™.

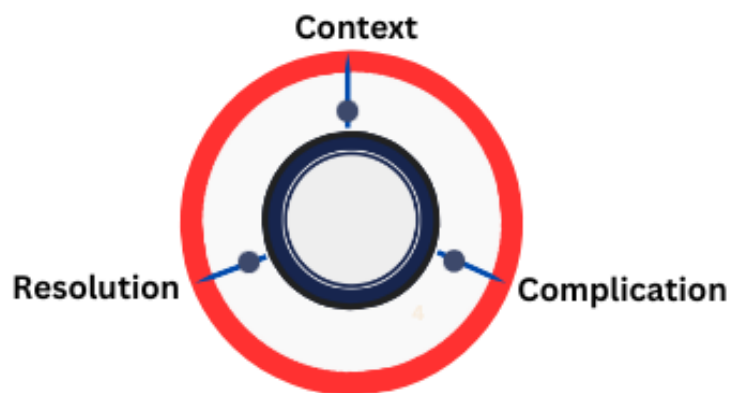
Basics | Story-Wheel™

A story isn't a recitation of facts and data but rather an invitation into a meaningful conversation. And a story is more than creative stringing of words, there is an underlying structure that you can learn to earn more time with your listener.

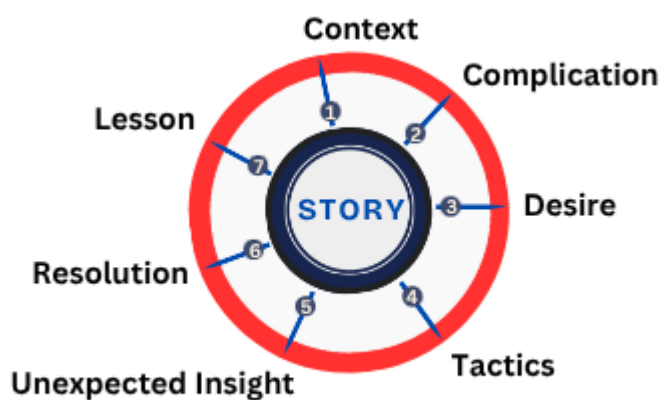
Storytelling may seem simple but is a delicately balanced collection of subtlety, nuance, and deeper meanings. We'll get to that. But for now, since a story usually returns to its beginning, I use the metaphor of a wheel, the Story-Wheel. Imagine a bicycle wheel with each spoke representing a specific piece of the story, each essential to rolling forward.

This is the Story-Wheel with three spokes. In the general model, every story is simply Context—Complication—Resolution.

Start with the way things *are now*, then make *something happen* followed by a *result*. Some marketers simplify Complication—Resolution into Problem—Solution.



But there's more to a dynamic story as seen from the academic perspective.




1. Begin with the *Context*, the way things *are now*.
2. The *Complication* changes everything.
3. Introduce a motivating *Desire* to solve the problem.
4. *Tactics* are conventional approaches that ultimately fail.
5. Reveal an *Unexpected Insight*.
6. The *Resolution* solves the *Complication*.
7. A *Lesson* is learned.

Stories are best served with a splash of style to draw attention. Let’s make it memorable with the seven-spoke Story-Wheel

1. It begins with *All Good*; life is good.
2. Then, an *Oh, Shift!* event changes everything.
3. The desire to *Wish-Back* things to before drives the story onward.
4. To fix it, you try conventional solutions that never work, leaving one to *Run in Place*.
5. Then, an unexpected insight is revealed in a *Eureka!* moment...
6. ...in which *Restorify* makes thing right again, in fact, even better.
7. The lesson learned along the way makes you *Wiser*.



Putting this into a table helps with a direct comparison of the Classic and Story-Wheel models.

 Story-Wheel © Brad Cochrane	
1. Context <i>All Good...</i>	The Normal World (desirable or undesirable). Aspirational World i.e. "yearning" for something better.
2. Complication <i>Oh, Shift!</i>	Change that disrupts the Normal World. Usually, an outside force. "Magic Spell" or "disaster."
3. Desire <i>Wish-Back</i>	Quest to solve the complication.
4. Tactics <i>Running in Place</i>	Conventional solutions can't overcome barriers resulting in setbacks.
5. Unexpected Insight <i>Eureka!</i>	A new point-of-view, a breakthrough invention, or a previously overlooked universal truth.
6. Resolution <i>Restorify</i>	The <i>Insight</i> applied to the <i>Complication</i> for success.
7. Lesson <i>Wiser</i>	The Moral: the story can't be completed without the product or idea.

Because storytelling is universal, you may recognize connections with other models.

Story-Wheel	Classic	Three Act	Hero's Journey	Pixar's Story Spine
All Good	Context	Act I—Set-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposition • Inciting Incident • First Plot Point 	Ordinary World	Once upon a time... Every day...
Oh Shift!	Complication		Call to Adventure	Until one day...
Wish-Back	Desire		Refusal of the Call	
Run-in-Place	Tactics	Act II--Confrontation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising Action • Mid-point (twist) • Second Plot Point 	Meeting the Mentor Crossing the threshold Tests, Allies, and Enemies	Because of that... (repeat)
Eureka!	Unexpected Insight	Act III--Resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climax • Falling Action • Denouement 	Approach to the Inmost Cave Ordeal Reward (Seizing the Sword)	Until finally...
Restorify	Resolution		The Road Back Resurrection	And ever since that day...
Wiser	Lesson		Return with the Elixir	

To tell a story right out of the gate, follow the practical Story-Wheel process. It's the result of scientific research integrated with real world experience teaching thousands of students to communicate well under pressure.

Storytelling Science

Storytelling has a solid basis in science. By understanding how the brain works, you can create more engaging and effective stories that start a conversation with your audience.

The human brain can hold about seven facts that can be easily recalled. Yet, our brain can hold thousands of stories in its consciousness and is looking for more. The fact-path is jammed but the storytelling super-highway is wide open. According to one academic study, only 5% of people remember facts while 63% recall stories. Additional research found that stories are remembered up to 22 times more than facts alone.

Homeowner Brian W. wanted a new deck. Because he's a smart decision-maker, he asked three salespeople for estimates. The first, he can't remember, the second wore a red hat, and the third told a memorable personal story of their family business. Which one got the job?

In a crowded too-much-information world, if you aren't remembered, you're history. A high-quality story will get you further than any number of low-value fact lists. Layering your message with feelings as well as facts triggers more of your listeners' brain—turning an external word dump into internalized ideas.

Brain Science | **Theta Signature™**

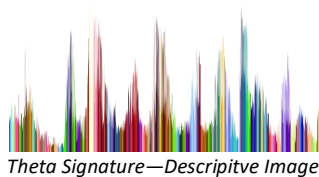
Before action, comes planning. In the pre-frontal cortex, intent is formed by combining memory with the current situation to create a task set.

The brain is very smart and very dumb at the same time. It can process vast amounts of information, but that data is limited to what enters through your senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and fingers. The incoming data stream travels along unique neural pathways.

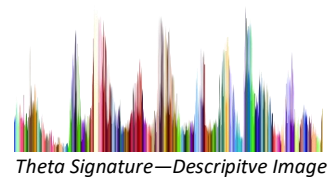
Along with the new is the old. Our memory system underlies all our knowledge and perceptions. It's how we call up facts, remember experiences, and understand the meaning of things.

As the brain collates information, the hippocampus and the pre-frontal cortex cycle evidence back and forth. Within tens of milliseconds, a unique brain wave is formed into the unique, irregular profile that I call the *Theta Signature*. Here's the astounding thing: that same pattern is duplicated in the listener's brain.

Teller



Listener



What does a thought look like? An MRI scan can show you.

A well-layered story is a repeatable pattern. In a sense, stories are pre-constructed memories that are passed from person to person. The more robust a story, the more contoured, the more likely it becomes an ingrained memory in the listener.

A story can hijack this transportation system by substituting descriptions of sensations for sensations themselves. That's why teachers want their students to "paint a picture" with words that describe sensations. The imaginary is made real to the brain.

It's the secret to storytelling because details and data stick as well as meaning. Ideas become integrated into thought, feeling, and action. In truth, people make decisions emotionally and then seek out the facts to support their decision.

Leveraging the Theta Signature is a novel approach that competitors miss, and storytelling is the gateway to your customer's decision-making method.

As you read this your brain just went through a process of receiving data, interpreting information, and storing memories. Later, when recalled, a memory converts into a rule set that guides actions. Underneath is a worldview, a set of beliefs with meaning. A story becomes a memory, becomes a belief, becomes an action. And it happens in a specific scientific process that can be observed, measured, proved, and used.

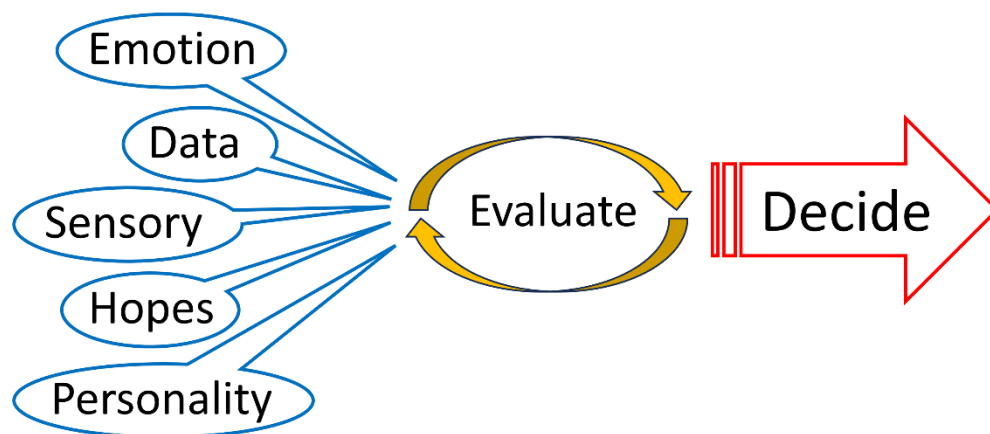
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To influence how people think, feel, and act, would you rather lead with a fact or a story?

Brain Processing | **Emotion-Imbued Choice**

People make decisions through a brain process known as Emotion-Imbued Choice (EIC). The brain evaluates facts AND feelings, incoming data AND memories as well as sensory stimuli—one is as important as the other.



People crave stimulation. Expert storytellers understand that success depends on tickling their listener's brain. Carefully chosen words can tell a story on the surface while triggering brain processes underneath. Review the areas below and start to incorporate them into your writing.

Anticipation

- Humans operate on incomplete information
- Leaving gaps force the reader to guess at a solution and then check it for accuracy after the fact

Comparison

- As a survival characteristic, humans are scanning the environment looking for what's different. Different could be dangerous.
- Therefore, the brain is always categorizing as a quest to separate the safe same from the dangerous different.
- Describing something through a metaphor triggers the categorization part of the brain.

Memory

- Efficiency. What worked before will most likely work now.
- Use a common memory (like sitting at a school desk) to create a shared connection.

Sensations

- The brain processes incoming sensory information to understand the world around themselves. Describing a sensation in words can hijack the pathways... (not as strong as real sensations but effective nonetheless).
- Describe smells, tastes, hearing, etc... as well as temperature fluctuations.

Emotions

- We are a bundle of emotions. Some are chemicals, some are memories, and some are our belief systems.
- Relaying the emotional journey of a character can create a shared experience with the reader.

Movement

- The brain comprehends physical movement through balance, up or down, forward or back. Speed can be indicated by sound, sight, and touch of the wind upon the skin.
- Use movement words to create physical movement as well as psychological movement.

Place

- The brain is always determining its location, the sense of place.
- A general description of a specific place helps the brain center itself. A specific description of relationship to objects or people, using words such as near or far, does the same function.

Time

- Time cells within the brain fire at different rates thus mark the passage of time.
- Describing time—yesterday, today, and tomorrow—stimulates those cells.

Music

- Variations in tonal quality is the basis of human language.
- Describing music speaks to that capability.

Rhythm

- Another aspect of language is rhythm, that is, the sound patterns of pace.
- Writing a sentence in which the syllables create a rhythm or beat, engages on a subliminal level.

Symbology

- Symbols are a shorthand for basic human communication. For instance, a frog symbolizes change because of its transformation from tadpole to adult.
- Use symbology to convey underlying messages.

Culture

- Humans have created universal beliefs for over 200,000 years. For instance, the sharing of water is rife with meaning.
- Use cultural assumptions to create a shared connection.

Certificate of Completion



The Pen is Mightier than the Statistic

PARTICIPANT

BRAD COCHRANE

INSTRUCTOR

www.StoryWheel.net

Let's chat! | Brad Cochran

Changing the conversation through undeniable storytelling. Story Coach, Copywriter, Author, Speaker/Trainer, and Communication Professional.

[LinkedIn/IN/BradCochrane](#). Brad@twominutesale.com www.storyfirstspeaker.com

Workshop | Sell Under Pressure

“They’re ready for you.”

You’ve waited hours, weeks, and even months just for this one appointment; your chance to pitch your product and you’re ready. You stride into their office, desk piled high with paperwork. The prospect looks up and snaps, “Make it quick!” So, you speed through features before being ushered out. The conversation is over before it begins.

How’s that working for you?

Think of your investment in marketing, funneling, and sheer persistence needed just to get one-on-one time with a prospective buyer. And it’s all been wasted. What if you could turn it around so they ask, *can you tell me more?* Instead of racing the countdown clock, you’ve earned more moments for a real sales conversation. It’s about winning the first two minutes—rare and short—that happen quickly and are gone. Saying the right thing at the right time makes the difference between a pass and a purchase. That’s effective selling. That’s performing under pressure.

Curiosity may have killed the cat but for humans it’s an essential survival characteristic; it’s hardwired into us. When entering a new environment, our brain goes on alert looking for danger or opportunity. The moment a customer identifies a sales environment, they subconsciously ask seven questions.

The program is organized around the *ECLIPSE Sales Stratagem*™ which provides those answers before they’re even asked.

Start here at www.TwoMinuteSale.com.

Workshop | Copy Selling Secrets

Is your copywriting a monologue? A one-way dump of product features? Or are you engaging your customer by conveying ideas in unexpected ways that surprise, stimulate, and validate?

If you tell someone a fact, you’ll trigger two parts of their brain. If you engage the brain’s natural processes, you’ll trigger seven. As a professional who wants to influence how people think, feel, and act, would you rather lead facts or something more?

In truth, people make decisions emotionally and then seek out the facts to support their decision. It’s a novel approach that competitors miss.

Writing well is a skill that you can learn. But just as a football player lifts weights to build strength, you’ll need to stretch your creative muscles. Learning how to contour elevates your writing to a whole new level. Release your creativity as you develop writing skills. Follow the path to effective copy selling by enrolling in the exclusive *Copy Selling Secrets Workshop*.

Start here at www.TwoMinuteSale.com.

***The Pen is Mightier
than the Statistic***



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