

# The Art + Science of Storytelling

## Learning Guide

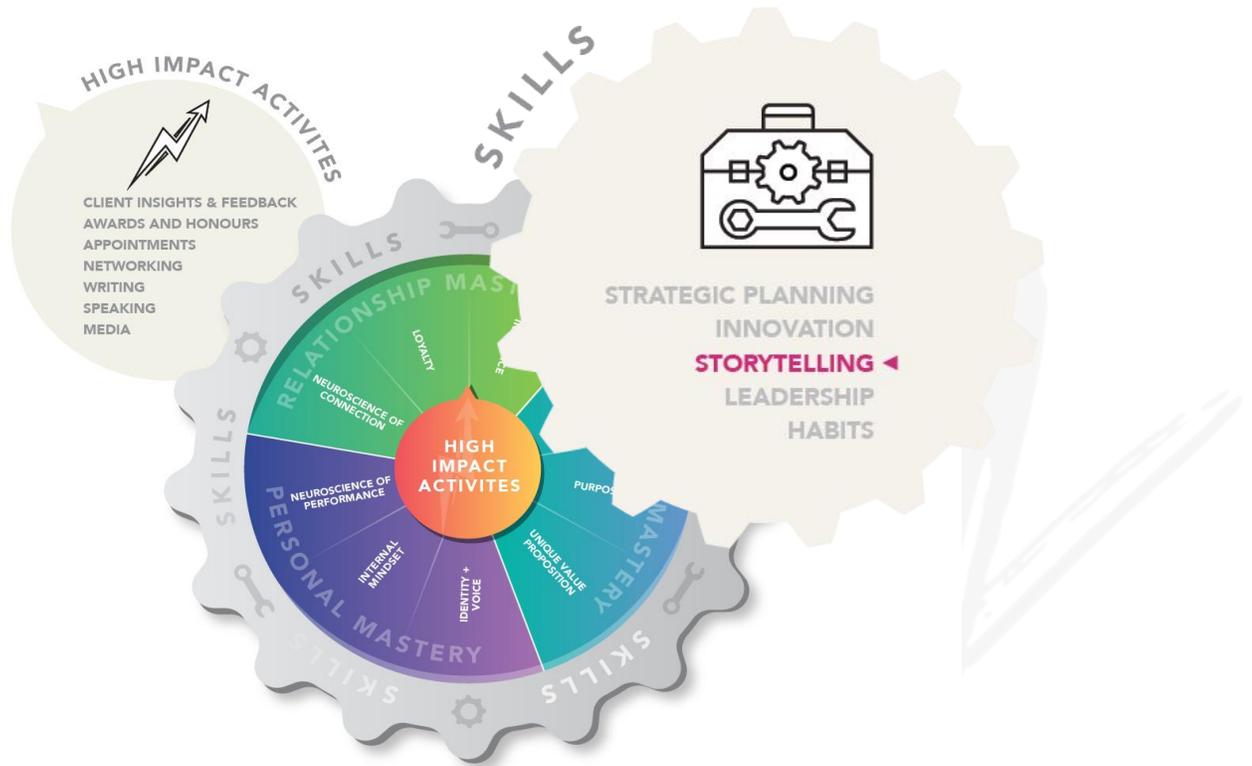
MCMILLAN PATH TO EQUITY 2021

McMillan LLP  
October 2021

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# Placing Storytelling



## Storytelling in Context ::

- Storytelling is one of the skills that circle the Mastery Wheel because skills both **necessitate mastery** in each of the three domains AND **build it**.
- Relationship Mastery ::** Your stories and skill as a storyteller will contribute to you building strong and effective relationships; AND you build your skill as a storyteller through your strong relationships.
- Purpose Mastery ::** Story is a masterful way to communicate your purpose and unique value, and personal brand; AND you hone your own understanding of your purpose/value/brand through your stories.
- Personal Mastery ::** Your voice, identity and internal character will shine through your stories; AND your practice of storytelling effectively builds your voice and identity, strengthens your habits and bolsters your character.

# Why Storytelling Mastery Matters

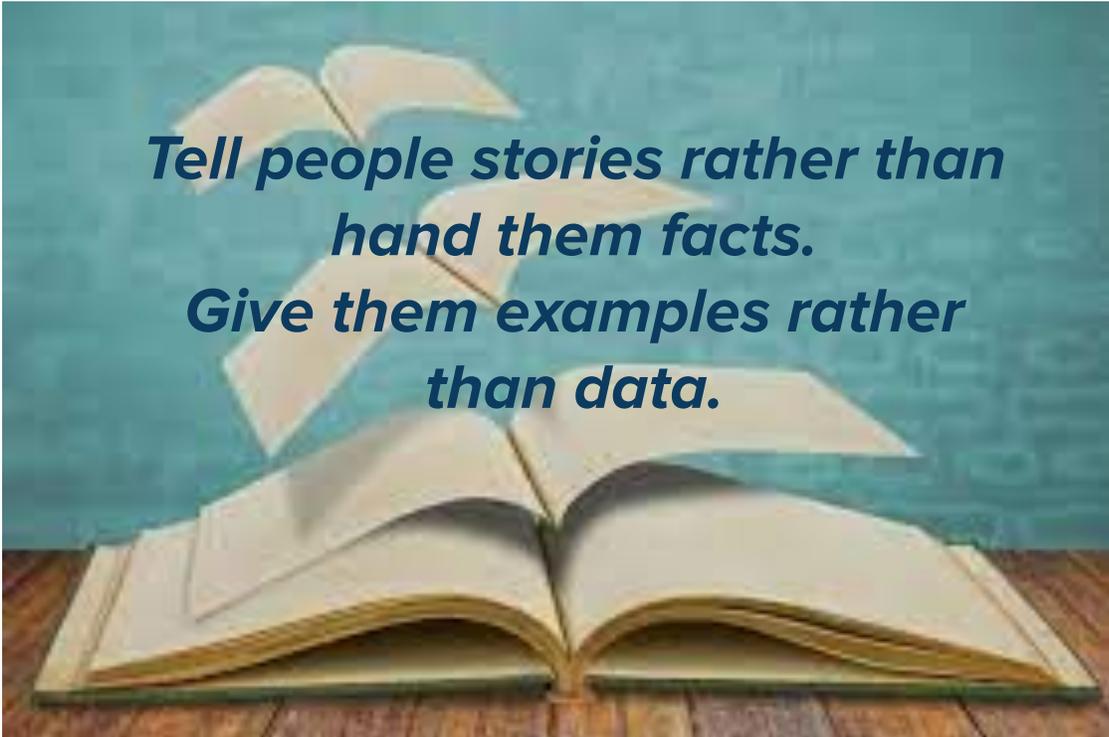
## Efficacy as a communication tool

Stories are one of the most effective tools in creating successful and fulfilling careers because they draw the people and opportunities to us that are the foundation of our success and fulfillment.

Stories help us:

- Build strong and loyal relationships - they are the vehicle through which we create personal connection.
- Attract aligned people and opportunities - they let people see who we are and what we do, and to decide whether they are a match for us.
- Be clear in our communication with others - they are the vehicle through which we can translate our interpretation of facts or events

Stories create an ease in communication that is unique to this format - when we are telling our own stories, in our own words, we are more authentic and relaxed and able to engage our listener. Authentic engagement is one of the strongest currencies in this age of people craving more human connection.



***Tell people stories rather than  
hand them facts.  
Give them examples rather  
than data.***

# Everyone Has Stories

## Story is how we process the world

When most people are introduced to storytelling, their first reaction is that they don't have any stories to tell. But here's the thing: **they do**. We all do. The tricky part is that our stories don't sound like stories to us. They sound like things that happen in the course of our everyday lives. In fact, human beings see the world as a collection of stories - our brains work in narrative. It goes like this: first this happened, then that, and so on.

But when we think of using story as a communication tool, we automatically reach for epic events, those moments where everything changed - you know the ones, when the movie music reaches a crescendo and you feel all the feelings? And if we can't think of any, we think that we don't have any stories, or that stories belong to other people. In fact, it's the shallow-arc stories that make up most of our lives that are most often the ones with the greatest impact, because they are the ones that others can most easily relate to. Taken alone or in context, the meaning we attach to everyday occurrences and how we share that meaning with others is where the magic is - that's **story**.

When we say we don't have stories to tell, we're also saying that we think no one will be interested in our stories - particularly if they aren't of the high-arc variety. But that just isn't true. **People are insatiably curious about other people's lives**. Look no further than social media or the film and television industry (reality series, anyone?) for proof of that.

At its essence, storytelling is about **taking a first-hand experience and telling it to someone else for a purpose - to create an experience for them**. That purpose might be to give the listener hope, inspiration, warning, preparation, or confidence. It might be to make them feel understood. It might be to offer them an understanding of us as the storyteller. Whatever the purpose is, the end goal is to create an experience for both the listener and the storyteller - in your own case, *you*.

If you are living a **Storyful Life** - you serve people well and having experiences in each of the three domains of mastery - you have all of the raw material you need to craft an ever-evolving roster of effective and impactful stories.



## The Power of Stories

### Stories Engage Emotions

The power of stories - compared to information or facts alone - is that stories engage our **emotions**. In fact, stories bypass the prefrontal cortex (where our rational, analytical thinking and skepticism live) and take up residence in our non-conscious brain, where emotions live, and where 95% of our decision making happens .

*“A story is a trick for sneaking a message into the fortified citadel of the human mind.”*

*- Jonathan Gottschall – The storytelling animal*

When we engage emotion, we are best able to **connect** with others, be **compelling** to them, be **memorable** and **command** their attention.

**Connect ::** Stories foster connection with others through several brain processes that are activated as a result of our emotional engagement with stories.

- 1) Our brain releases the neurochemicals dopamine and oxytocin when we engage with story. These are known as the ‘happy’ chemicals - because they make us feel bonded and connected to others.
- 2) Our brain synchronizes with the storyteller’s brain, responding to story events as if they are happening to us. Mirror Neurons create this coherence, and Neural Coupling and Mirroring cause us to feel as though we have become part of the story by synchronizing our brain activity to that of the teller and other listeners. Our brains then map our own experiences, thoughts and ideas over, so we react to the story as if we are living the narrative ourselves. The effect of this synchronization and personalization is to activate our **empathy** with the storyteller - fostering that sense of connection.

**Compel ::** Stories also make us compelling to others, drawing in the people and opportunities that are aligned to us in a way that is based on attraction versus asking, pitching or selling. When people are emotionally engaged by story, they feel connected to the story content and the storyteller, activating feelings of trust, belonging and personal connection. These feelings in turn increase the likelihood that the listener will be compelled or persuaded to take action - whether it’s making a decision, forming an opinion or engaging in a behaviour.

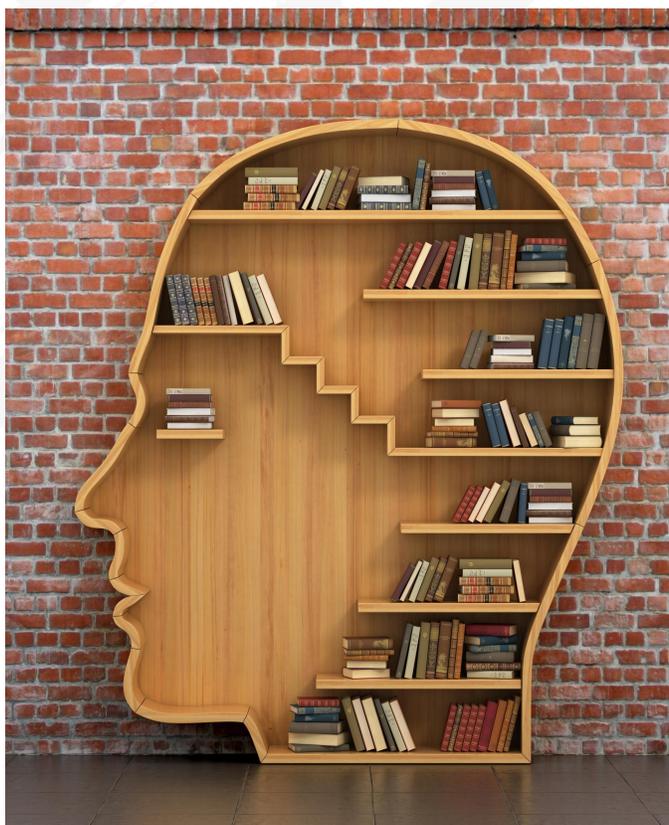
Pioneer “neuroeconomist” Dr. Paul Zak has shown that people are far more likely to donate to a charitable cause after viewing an emotionally impactful story. And in a recent social experiment, a collection of trinkets originally sold for \$129 on ebay were sold again for over \$8000 after personal stories were attached to the description of each object. You can likely think of similar examples in your own context - why we contribute to Go-Fund-Me pages, or buy products or services when we hear great founder stories for the company or brand. When we connect to the story, we are compelled to act.

## The Power of Stories

### Stories Engage Emotions

**Be memorable ::** Because they are tied to our emotions, stories are “sticky”. In fact, stories are 22-times more memorable than facts alone. And that’s because the part of our brain that is involved in imagination and story work is the same part that is involved in memory. When we listen to a story, the neurochemical dopamine is released, which allows us to remember more easily and more accurately.

Stories also contribute to memorability because they cut through our cluttered external environment, and they focus our wandering internal environment - they **command attention**. We encounter countless stimuli as we walk through our everyday lives, and our human brains engage in up to 2,000 daydreams a day. An engaged mind is a focused mind, and stories engage in a way that other forms of communication or information dissemination simply do not.



# The Practice of Storytelling

## Identifying, Crafting, and Telling Stories for Impact

**Identifying Stories ::** The first step in identifying stories is cultivating your awareness of your stories. This simply means being able to see what others might value or where they may find meaning in the retelling of moments and experiences that happen in your life.

When you are speaking to someone and you observe the moment when you've had an impact on them, when you recognize patterns in the questions that people commonly ask you, or the problems you're asked to solve, you know there are stories waiting to be mined.

**Crafting Stories ::** Once you've identified the story you want to tell, you'll want to craft it in a way that amplifies its effectiveness. There are two ways we like to do this. The first is to think about using a **story type**, and the second is to employ a **simple story framework** to connect the fact pattern. See below for details of both.

### Story Types:

There are many story types, of course, but these three are likely the ones that you'll use most often.

- 1) **Origin Stories:** These are the stories that focus on the start of something: why you went into law, or how going to law school then practicing law fits into the story of your life, or when you decided on your practice area.
- 2) **Journey Stories:** These are the stories that show an evolution in your experiences, mindset and behaviour, either in relation to broad topics such as your career journey overall, or to specific elements of it (the journey of learning to create and cultivate relationships, examine witnesses, craft a case, build business more generally).
- 3) **Moments/Instances Stories:** These are stories of specific instances that are significant in some way. In your career, these might include significant moments in your technical skills, your leadership, your relationship skills or your entrepreneurial orientation.

If you're looking for a starting place for your stories, remember that stories often start with nouns: the people, places, events, and things in your life. You can use these as jumping-off points.

Your choice of story type involves your discernment - what are you trying to communicate and what experience are you trying to create? You will likely find that a single story can be woven multiple ways for different purposes.

# The Practice of Storytelling

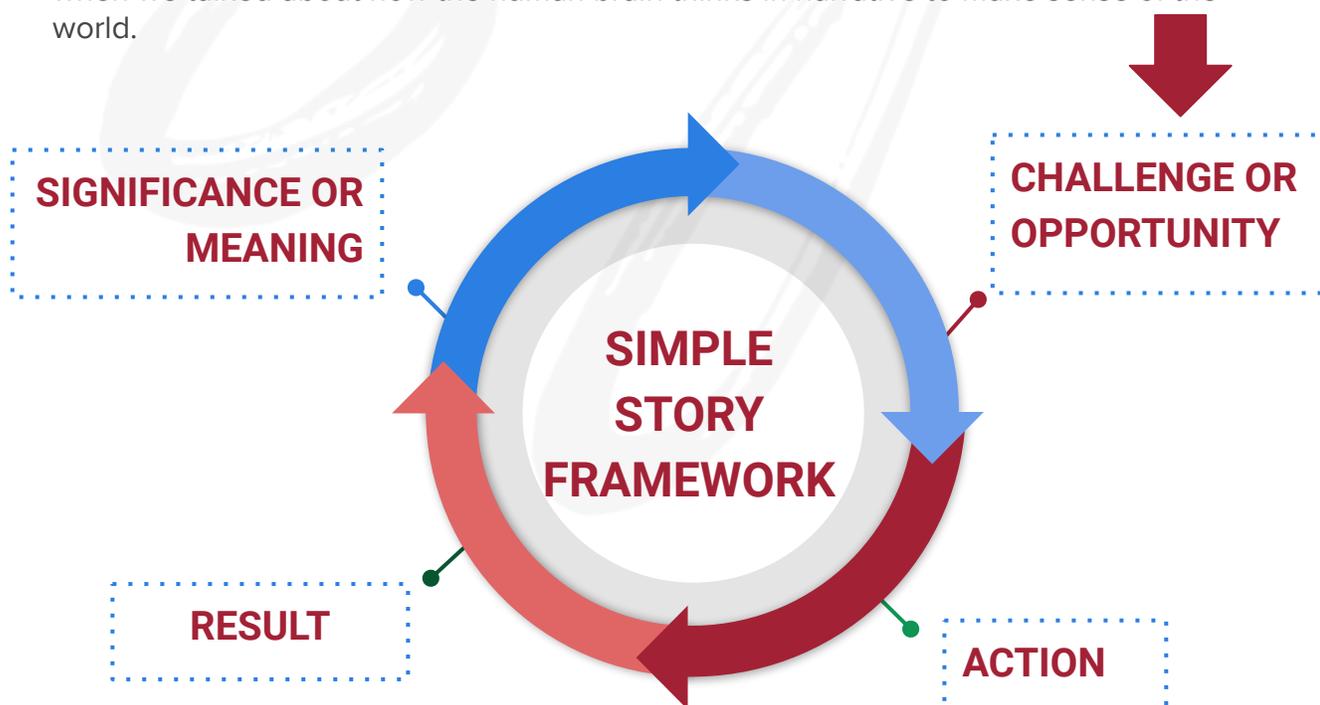
## Identifying, Crafting, and Telling Stories for Impact

### Story Framework:

No matter what type of story you are telling, effective stories all follow this simple framework of narrative flow:

- 1) The beginning is a **challenge or opportunity**: something that happened that presented a pivot-point for you, the storyteller.
- 2) The next step is the **action undertaken in response** to the challenge or opportunity: how you responded and what you did when the 'thing' that happened, happened.
- 3) Then, there is a **result of the action** - and this is generally the point where things are now different or resolved, or at least on their way to resolution.
- 4) And finally, there is the attachment of **meaning or significance** to the preceding events. Often this involves the teller (you) or story subject being changed in some way by the experience.

This narrative arc itself creates connection - independent of the details - because most people relate to this sequence applied to a fact pattern - and here you'll remember when we talked about how the human brain thinks in narrative to make sense of the world.



# The Practice of Storytelling

## Identifying, Crafting, and Telling Stories for Impact

**Telling Stories for Impact ::** Using stories as a communication tool will have impact in nearly every scenario you can think of. We want to demonstrate how telling stories will have a positive impact in two specific scenarios that you all face: building your business, and building your path to equity partnership.

### Building Your Business

As part of building your business, you will be presented with opportunities to answer the question, “what do you do?” as you speak to prospective clients or new contacts. Most people will answer this question by sharing their title or credentials - “*I’m a commercial litigator*” - and then asking for an exchange of title or credentials. This doesn’t open up the conversation to see if you might be of service to this person. If you’re in a position to share credentials, you’re in a position to ask questions.

The answers to those questions allow you to choose the most effective stories to clearly convey your value and purpose in the context of any new relationship. If the answers to your questions suggest that a person’s context might make them a potential client, tell them a story about how you’ve helped someone similar to them. Give them the details that allow them to see themselves in that story - the sense that your client’s experience is like their experience, your client’s needs and feelings are like theirs, and that your client got an experience or outcome that they, too, desire.

You can use the simple story framework in constructing your examples: this was the challenge or opportunity my client faced, here are the actions I/we took to address those challenges or opportunities, and here are the results we attained (both substantively and emotionally - what the outcome of the matter was as well as how the client felt). The significance or meaning is both in your choice of story - you find the example that will be meaningful to this prospect - as well as the conclusion of what the result meant to the client.

Telling stories rather than listing credentials also introduces an authenticity to the conversation that removes the icky sales-y feeling that so many of us cringe at. Telling authentic stories - about your experiences and in your words - makes business development feel easy because you don’t feel like you are using marketing language or trumped-up content. You are just telling your story, which takes all the pressure off.

From the client perspective, stories create less stress in the decision to buy or engage. If there is a match, there is a match, and if there isn’t there isn’t. When you have compelling stories about who you are and what you do, it creates an immediate emotional connection with your audience. Once you are connected, they will want to hear more. They will be interested in what it is that you do, how you do it and if there is an alignment, they will want to take the next step so that they can work with you.

# The Practice of Storytelling

## Identifying, Crafting, and Telling Stories for Impact

### Building Your Bid for Equity Partner

As we've asserted throughout this program, today's bid for equity partner is less about a promotion for time invested, and more about an acquisition of a thriving and promising business.

Stories are a powerful tool in building a case to support your bid for equity partnership, not only in connection with building your business to a level that it's worthy of acquisition, but also as evidence of all of the hallmarks that denote a suitable equity partner.

While you may be asked to tell these stories at the point of decision (in a formal interview for example), they are even more powerful if you tell them all the way along your career path, as they build the investment that decision makers have in you. The aggregate of these stories truly is greater than the sum of the individual stories you tell.

We go back to our **Ideal Foundation Mindset** that we introduced to you at this beginning of this program to find those hallmarks. You want to tell stories in connection with each of the three Mindsets:

- **Service Mindset ::** What stories can you tell that showcase the **loyal relationships** you have built with clients and referral sources and that speak to how you built them? What are the stories that demonstrate the **great moments in your service**?
- **Strategic Mindset ::** What stories identify the **profile and influence** you have attained in communities that matter to your own practice and/or those of your firm?
- **Owner Mindset ::** Talk about the examples of your leadership in advancing **the** interests and well-being of the firm - in the external community, in its internal culture; find stories that show your journey as an 'owner' - how you've grown in your mindset, your skillset, and your impact.

Told along the path to partnership, using the simple story framework (challenge/opportunity, action, result, significance/meaning), these stories will create an emotional connection with you and your efforts that will leave an indelible impression of your desirability as an equity partner.

# Activity

## Identify and Deconstruct Master Storytellers

Think of someone you know or have seen speak that you consider a **masterful storyteller** - this person could be a colleague, a friend, a conference speaker, a celebrity or personality or even a professor or teacher you've had in your life.

Identify what it is that makes their stories - and their storytelling - so **compelling and effective**. See if you can deconstruct their stories and way of telling them into what makes them:

- **Connect with you**
- **Compel you**
- **Be memorable to you**
- **Command your attention**

Try to be specific in thinking about the stories your master storyteller tells, the perspective from which the stories are told, the language and tone used by the storyteller, etc. Use the space below to capture your thoughts if it's helpful.

<b>Storyteller Name:</b>	
<b>How do their stories <i>Connect</i>?</b>	
<b>How do their stories <i>Compel</i>?</b>	
<b>How are their stories <i>Memorable</i>?</b>	
<b>How do their stories <i>Command Attention</i>?</b>	

## Challenge

### Craft Your Stories

For your **Storytelling Challenge**, think about the stories you can tell in connection with building your business and your bid for equity partnership.

- Think about the examples that showcase your professional excellence, service mindset, strategic mindset and owner mindset.
- How might you craft or hone these stories in light of what you've learned about storytelling? For each of your stories, answer these questions:
  - ◆ Would you change the perspective from which you're telling the story?
  - ◆ Would you highlight different elements?
  - ◆ Does your story follow a complete arc (see the Simple Story Framework)?
  - ◆ Is it best told as an origin, journey or moment/instance story?

Your answers to the above will depend on who your audience is and what experience you're trying to create for them. Use the following prompts to craft or hone each of your stories.

**Note: We suggest you set up a document where you can capture and craft your stories, and edit them over time and for different audiences. So just copy this next section into a document, and cut and paste it for each story you wish to craft.**

**Story Purpose** (*think about audience + desired experience*):

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**Event or Experience** (*think challenge or opportunity*):

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**Story Type** that best suits the purpose (*remember: Origin, Journey, Moment/Instance*):

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#### My Simple Story Framework

- 1) What was the challenge or opportunity?
- 2) What actions were taken?
- 3) What was the result?
- 4) What meaning or significance will be relevant to my purpose and audience?



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