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STORYTELLING
FRAMEWORKS
LEADERS MUST
KNOW

AND WHEN
TO USE THEM

BY OLIVER AUST

A STORY IS A TALE OF TRANSFORMATION.

Why Storytelling (According to Science)?

Storytelling isn't just a communication tool, it's a science-backed way to capture attention, build trust, and inspire action.

Here's why it works:

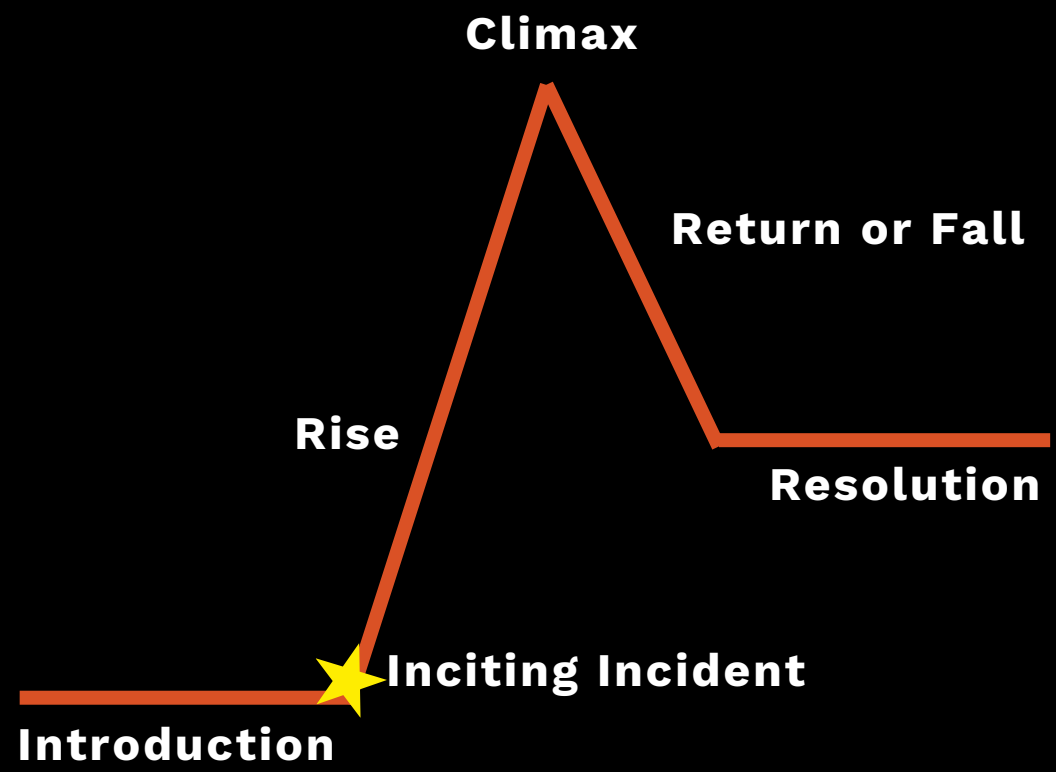
- 1 Attention: A well-told story triggers curiosity and suspense, making people think, "I need to know what happens next!"
- 2 Connection: Stories create emotional bonds. When we share relatable experiences, our audience thinks, "I like you and trust you."
- 3 Persuasion: Facts tell, but stories sell. A compelling narrative makes your message resonate, leading to "You make a lot of sense."
- 4 Motivation: Stories don't just inform; they inspire action. Whether it's investing, buying, or joining, they create "I want in!" moments.
- 5 Stickiness: People forget statistics but remember stories. A strong narrative ensures your message spreads: "I remember your story."

Want to Become a Top 1% Communicator?

If you're serious about becoming a world-class communicator, check out the [Speak Like a CEO Academy](#), my signature 12-week program designed to turn ambitious professionals into top 1% communicators. You'll master storytelling (and 11 other essential skills) through my expert-led courses, practical tools, and live coaching with me and my team.

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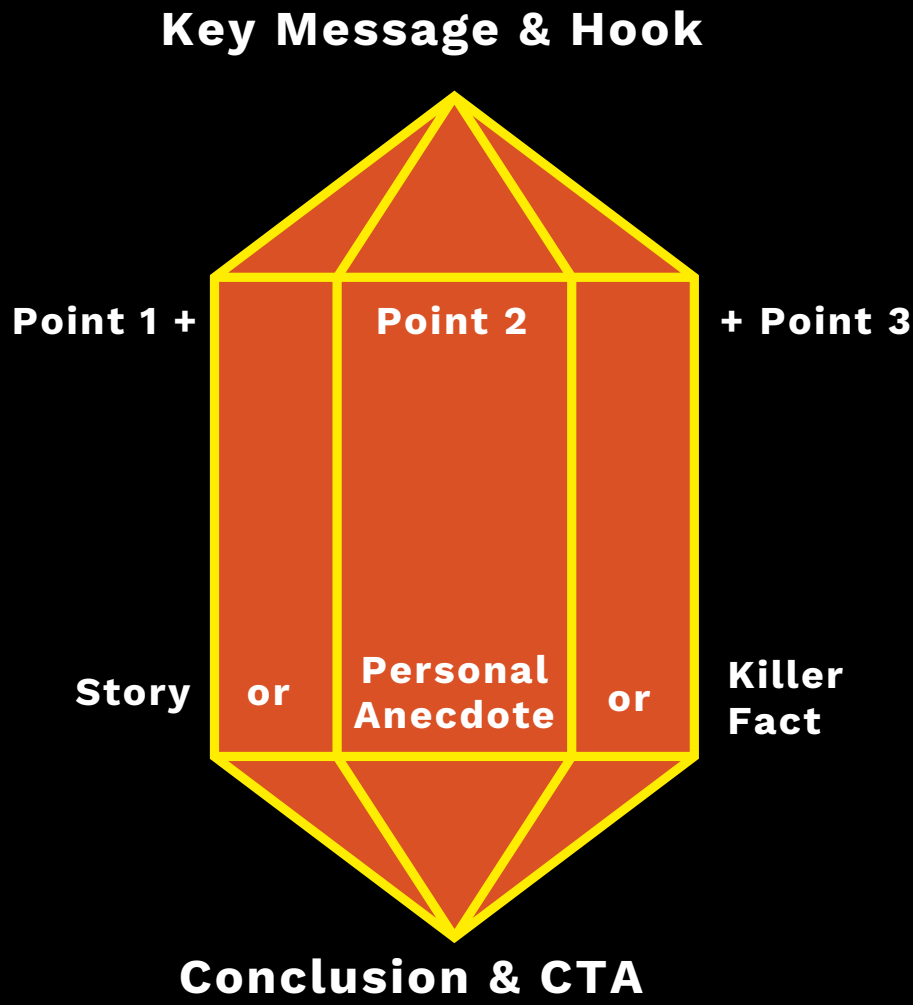
GUSTAV FREYTAG'S PYRAMID



When to use: Useful framework for business leaders to establish credibility when telling their own personal leadership stories.

2

THE CRYSTAL STRUCTURE



When to use: Effective when you need to present a clear central idea supported by interconnected, multifaceted perspectives.

3

DREAM - NIGHTMARE - ACTION



Dream

- ▶ We set the objectives of what we want



Nightmare

- ▶ We analyse the obstacles



Action

- ▶ We make a plan

When to use: A story-based approach to move people to action.

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THE CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



- ▶ **Introduce the Customer**
- ▶ **Present their Challenge**
- ▶ **Show your Solution**
- ▶ **Highlight the Results**

When to use: Use to showcase the value of your product or service by highlighting real customer challenges, solutions, and positive outcomes.

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MY STORY – OUR STORY – THE FUTURE

▶ **My Story:**

Start with a personal experience, insight, or challenge. This builds credibility and emotional connection.

▶ **Our Story:**

Show how your experience reflects a shared challenge or opportunity that resonates with your audience.

▶ **The Future:**

Paint a vision of what's possible. Offer a clear path forward and inspire your audience to take action.

When to use: Ideal for vision-setting, change leadership, and rallying teams or customers around a shared purpose.

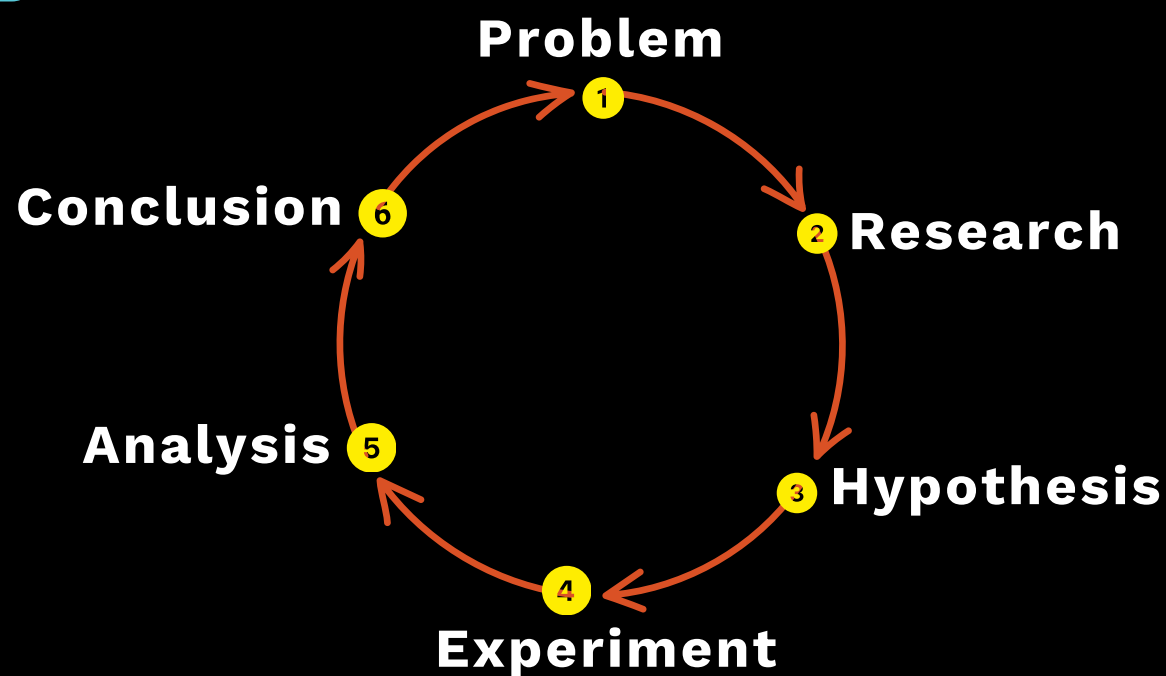
6 THE PIE-IN-THE-FACE STORY



- **Set the Scene:** Briefly describe the context and build-up.
- **The "Pie-in-the-Face" Moment:** Highlight the failure, mistake, or embarrassing incident.
- **Reflection:** Share the lessons learned from the experience.
- **Resolution:** Show how you grew, improved, or succeeded afterward.

When to use: Use to build trust and relatability by showcasing vulnerability, lessons learned, and growth from setbacks.

7 THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD



When to use: When you need to present an unbiased data-driven story. While not officially a “story structure” it is a valid method for telling evidence and data-based stories.

8 BEFORE – AFTER – BRIDGE



Before

- The way things are now.



After

- Tell them to imagine how their life will be like.



Bridge

- Here's the path to get there (product, service, method).

When to use: Ideal for product launches or sales conversations.

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THE HERO'S JOURNEY

The classic story framework where a person goes on an adventure, faces challenges, and emerges transformed.



Crisis

- Outline the journey to provide a clear roadmap for your story.
- Define the stages: starting point, challenges, turning point, final success.

When to use: Inspire your team or customers.
Example: After completing a major project or in sales by positioning your customer as the hero.



Struggle

- Present a challenge to create tension and interest in the story.
- Engage with the problem to demonstrate problem-solving and resilience.



Resolution

- Show the solution to provide a sense of closure and achievement.
- Wrap up effectively to reinforce the story's impact and lessons learned.

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THE INNOVATION STORY

A structured approach to convey experiences by breaking them down into three key components.



Context: See it

- ▶ Present the future in aspirational terms. Show how change leads to opportunities.

When to use: Ideal for getting buy-in for new technologies and innovation when people are hesitant to embrace change



Emotion: Feel it

- ▶ Build empathy by describing the gap between desire and dilemma.



Evidence: Believe it

- ▶ Provide supporting data that illustrates the promise of your big idea.

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THE PIXAR FORMULA

Breaks down storytelling into simple, relatable steps.

Once upon a time



Describe the initial situation.

Every day



Explain the routine.

One day



Introduce a change or challenge.

Because of that



Show the consequences or actions taken.

Until finally



Conclude with the outcome.

When to use: Create a relatable narrative. Ex: Explaining a new business strategy or sharing a team success story.

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THE CHANGE STORY

Tell a story that connects the past to a better future, showing why change is needed and how to get there.



➤ **Honor the Past:** Recognize past efforts and successes to open hearts and minds.



➤ **Present a Compelling Mandate:** Articulate the critical need for change and its significance.



➤ **Outline an Optimistic Path:** Provide a clear, positive roadmap for moving forward.

When to use: Introduce big changes or new ideas in an organization. Ex: Redefining company culture or introducing a major strategic shift.

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DEFINE, AGITATE, SOLVE



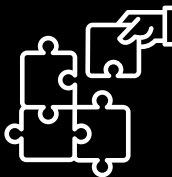
Define

- Clearly state the problem your audience is experiencing to show you understand their situation.



Agitate

- Intensify the problem by highlighting its challenges and emotional impact.



Solve

- Present your product or service as the clear solution that eliminates the problem.

When to use:

Effective in problem-solving pitches to directly address concerns and offer solutions.

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THE HOLLYWOOD 3-ACTER



Excite

- Grab attention with a compelling hook.

Example: “What if I told you that one story could change the course of your career?”



Disturb

- Highlight the challenge, problem, or stakes to create emotional investment.

Example: “Most leaders struggle to inspire action because their messages lack emotional depth.”



Assure

- Provide resolution and a clear path forward.

Example: “With the right story structure, you can turn any speech, pitch, or presentation into a moment that moves people.”

When to use:

Ideal for high-stakes presentations, keynotes, and pitches where you need to engage, challenge, and persuade your audience.

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THE FOUNDER STORY

Your origin story isn't just about where you started, it's about why you started.



- ▶ **The Beginning:** The founder's life and the challenges they saw.



- ▶ **The Call to Adventure:** The moment that sparked the business idea.



- ▶ **Facing Challenges:** Outline the obstacles encountered.



- ▶ **The Turning Point:** Explain how they overcome those obstacles.



- ▶ **The Success:** Highlight the business's growth and impact.

When to use: Perfect for brand storytelling, keynotes, sales conversations, and positioning yourself as a thought leader.

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THE CRISIS STORY



A Crisis is an Evolving Story

- ▶ Every crisis unfolds in stages. Acknowledge the urgency, uncertainty, and stakes to keep your audience engaged.



Who is the Villain?

- ▶ People instinctively look for someone—or something—to blame. Identify the true threat without fueling division.



Can You Make Something Else the Villain?

- ▶ Shift focus to an external force (e.g., a virus, economic uncertainty, cybercriminals) to unite rather than divide.

When to use:

Essential for crisis communication, media responses, and leadership messaging during uncertainty.

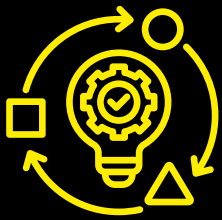
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THE COMPANY STORY



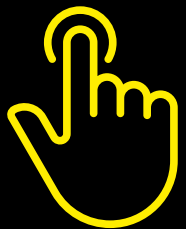
Define Key Milestones

- ▶ Outline the foundational moments that shaped your company: the inception, major innovations, expansions, or pivots.



Highlight Moments of Transformation

- ▶ Showcase the challenges faced and how the company evolved. People connect with resilience and problem-solving.



Create Emotional Touchpoints

- ▶ Bring your story to life with human connections. Feature customer success stories, founder motivations, or key team moments that define the company culture.



Showcase Vision & Mission

- ▶ End with a powerful statement on why your company exists and what change it aims to bring to the world.

When to use: Ideal for branding, investor pitches, website storytelling, and team alignment.

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OBSTACLE - STRUGGLE - GOAL



▶ ACT ONE: OBSTACLE

The protagonist faces a challenge that forces them to act.



▶ ACT TWO: STRUGGLE

The protagonist fights to overcome their challenge while learning and evolving.



▶ ACT THREE: GOAL

The protagonist overcomes their obstacle and achieves what they set out to do.

When to use: Perfect for branding, leadership storytelling, sales pitches, and persuasive content that needs to build emotional engagement and drive action.

**The Problem**

- ▶ Clearly define the market gap or pain point that your company is solving.

**Your Solution**

- ▶ Showcase how your product or service uniquely addresses this problem.

**Business Model**

- ▶ Explain how your company generates revenue and scales profitably.

**Underlying Magic**

- ▶ Highlight what makes your solution unique or defensible.

**Marketing & Sales**

- ▶ Demonstrate how you reach and convert customers.

**Competition**

- ▶ Identify market alternatives and explain your competitive edge.

**Your Team**

- ▶ Introduce key team members and why they're the right people to execute the vision.

**Projections**

- ▶ Present key financial metrics and growth forecasts.

**Timeline & Status**

- ▶ Provide a roadmap of past milestones and future plans.

**Call to Action**

- ▶ End with a clear, compelling ask for investors.

When to use: Perfect for startup investor pitches, fundraising decks, and positioning your company for growth.

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THE HEROINE'S JOURNEY



Starting Point

- ▶ The heroine begins feeling like an outsider, disconnected, or different from those around her.



Call to Adventure

- ▶ Instead of a quest for external success, the heroine seeks a place where she truly belongs.



Main Objective

- ▶ The goal is not to conquer external enemies but to build or find a supportive community.



Types of Conflict

- ▶ The heroine faces emotional struggles, societal expectations, or internal doubts rather than physical battles.



Path of Transformation

- ▶ Growth comes through relationships, collaboration, and embracing vulnerability.



Return / Homecoming

- ▶ Instead of returning with a trophy, the heroine reshapes her world by fostering connection and change.

When to use:

Perfect for leadership, branding, and storytelling that emphasizes inclusivity, collaboration, and emotional resilience.

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THE LEADERSHIP STORY



Problem

- The challenge you faced.



Solution

- How were you able to lead others through a challenging set of circumstances?



Benefit

- What positive outcome?

When to use: Perfect for leadership keynotes, coaching, team-building, and inspiring others through real-life experiences.

Ready to Become a Top 1% Communicator?

The Speak Like a CEO Academy covers the 12 essential leadership communication skills:

- 1 Presentations That Persuade
- 2 Storytelling That Inspires Action
- 3 The Art of the Pitch
- 4 Executive Presence & Charisma
- 5 Personal Branding & Thought Leadership
- 6 Writing With Clarity & Authority
- 7 Social Media for Influence & Visibility
- 8 Leadership Conversations
- 9 Media & Podcast Interviews
- 10 Public Speaking & Body Language
- 11 Video & On-Camera Presence
- 12 AI & the Future of Communication

This 12-week program combines my expert-led courses, actionable materials, and live coaching sessions to help you become a Top 1% Communicator.

You'll have direct access to me and my team, along with a community of ambitious leaders. We're here to challenge you, support you, and celebrate your growth.



**Join the
Speak Like a
CEO Academy
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