

# Notes on Story Telling

## By Bob Ferguson

### 1. Bob's View :

Success is wonderful but very short lived. If you can't repeat it, it is merely a short term boost to your wellbeing. What really counts is our ability to consistently repeat a high standard of performance. In this session Bob's aim is to provide valuable knowledge to help you know what you're doing and a method to help you develop as a story teller.

We shouldn't learn a method of speaking in public. We should build an arsenal of public speaking skills and learn how to decide which one is appropriate to each situation – we are in a permanent balancing act between our needs, the audience's needs and the situation in which we're presenting.

### 2. Why use stories

Why do stories Work

We'll see some of the elements that go into a story later but it's quite possible to explain the narrative and bore your audience to death so what makes a story so powerful – It has emotion added to it. We're going to look at how that emotion changes the way we absorb stories.

Some of the reasons why stories are successful :

1. They involve the audience. The audience start to put their own characters into your story which makes it personal and therefore more memorable.
2. Stories involve emotion and logic and it's the combination of those two that makes it stick in our mind.
3. They're easy for the audience to remember and best of all – they're easy for us to remember.

### 3. The Key Elements of a Story

1. Setting. The audience need to know where and when the action takes place so they can understand what conditions are appropriate to the action.

2. Characters

Protagonist, leading character, champion – generally you but not necessarily

Antagonist, Opposition, villain, inhibitor.

Guru or wise person. The provider of the wisdom to get out of the challenge

If you pick your own characters you will have to explain every necessary characteristic for the story to make sense. If you use archetypes you will transfer a huge amount of information instantly.

3. Plot

It explains how the antagonist, protagonist and challenge are related

#### 4. Conflict

One of the biggest elements in holding the audience's attention. We are at our most attentive when we think conflict will come to the surface.

E.g. The proximity of the detective and the boy who killed the labourer in Jericho

The way the conflict was changed from competitors in Hunger Games to the state.

You can generate conflict very easily by making your protagonist the opposite of an archetype.

#### 5. A Theme

Theme is the underlying message that emerges from your story. It generally is a human message and is driven by the values that the characters hold dear. It can also explain their actions. Common themes are driven by revenge, love, hate, right to be heard, desire to achieve, responsibility to others etc.

## 4. Structures

The structure adds a lot to the speech. It orders the information in a way that makes it easy for the audience to absorb.

Although we look at these things in a linear fashion, they don't have to be told as stories in a linear fashion. We can start anywhere. For example

1. You could start at the beginning and follow it through to the end.
2. You could start at the end and flash back to the beginning. (Rarely right at the end )
3. You could start in the middle or just before the conclusion and go back to the start.
4. You could start several unrelated threads and bring them together at the end to reach the conclusion.

If you look at films you will see many of these and great examples to the story tellers' art

##### a. James Bond

Wonderful use of multiple threads. We see disjointed bits of the story and they come together as the film progresses. Great example of how multiple threads hold our attention. They're also good examples of "setting the next scene" i.e. just giving enough information for the audience to understand what's happening on the next scene.

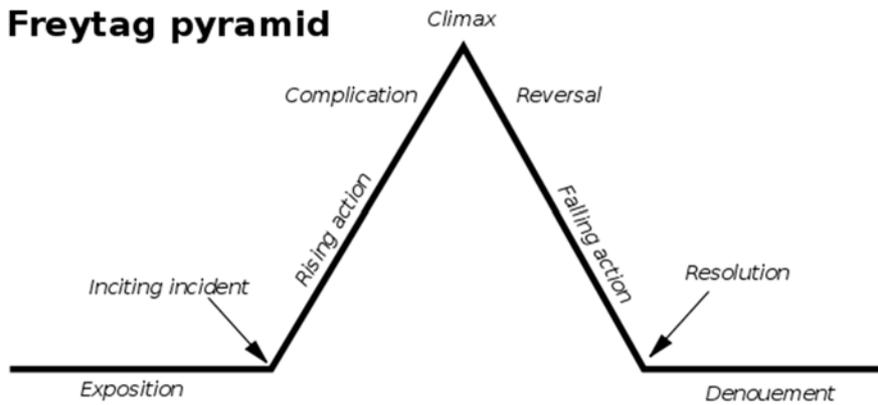
##### b. Joseph Campbell's Hero's quest

A classic challenge structure. The hero sets out on a challenge and fails (we connect most deeply in times of failure). When in the nadir of life a guru provides the wisdom to succeed and the hero goes on to the point of maximum tension when he defeats the challenge and returns triumphal.

c. There are a number of variations of this sort of quest theme and they are as follows.

c1 Freytag's 5 Act

### **Freytag pyramid**



c2 "The three act story:

Act 1 Introduce protagonists

Act 2 Inciting incidents sets protagonist on an escalating journey.

Act 3 Resolution of protagonist's ultimate challenge with an explosive climax.

In act 3 loose ends closed, protagonist at home in a new world, transformed."

c3. Pixar 3 Act

Once upon a time there was a hero

Every day they would (show what they yearn for as well as what they do.

One day – something that changes and starts the journey

Because of that .. Chain of events that gets set in place. Note they are linked by cause not by time sequence i.e. it's more than a series of events.

Until finally – something irreversible happens. It must aspire to change the hero and the world around them.

c4. Boy gets girl

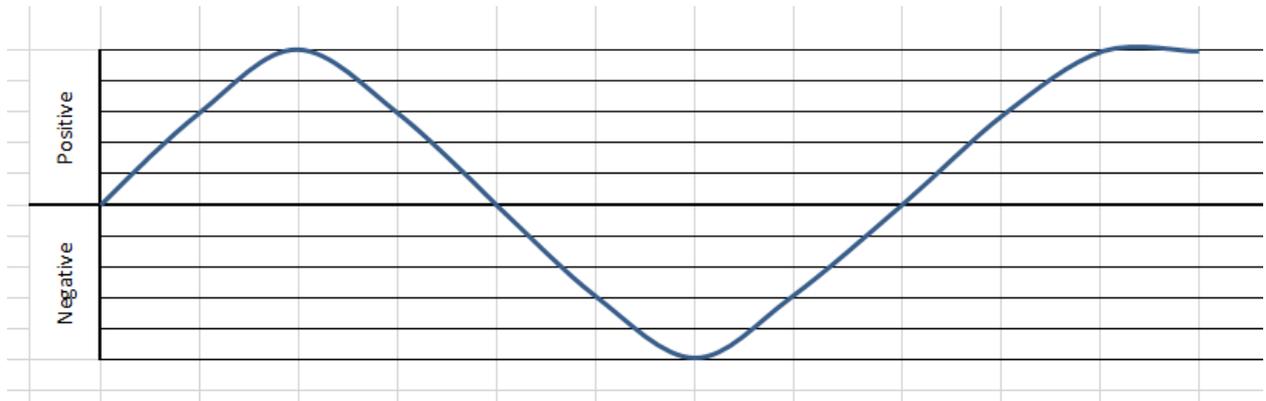
never long enough for a film so almost universally boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back again.

The boy gets girl is also never good enough unless it has a dip in emotion like the boy loses girl section.

Examples. See my attached sheets for the standard speech structure examples.

## 5. Emotional Maps

I love Christmas. It's my favourite time for watching films. Even though I know the plot structure and the outcome I can't help watching films that will make me feel good. That's because of the emotion that a good story carries

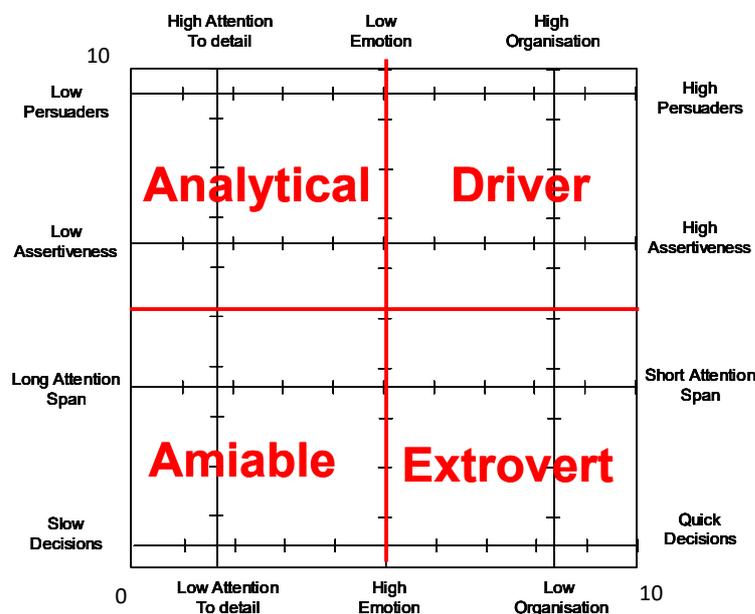


The above picture is a typical story emotional map and perhaps one that's suited to reviewing projects. We start with our objectives, explain the obstacles and perhaps failures (the emotional dip) and then show why we're the right people to keep things on track and get the job done.

I put each stage of my presentation on the graph and work out what I want my audience to be thinking and feeling at that stage. I make my presentation work on those emotions.

Make sure your delivery emotions are congruent with the emotions you want your audience to feel.

## 6. Audience



The four characters above have different story (and general communication) needs but we can look at the difference in the sides.

The left hand side likes bottom up information, building from basics to the conclusion.

The Right hand side likes top down communication. Headline, executive summary and only the information they want.

The left hand side people want slower information with more time to think.

The right hand side want faster information and to be in control.

Customise your stories to follow. Let your stories build in stages for the left hand side and do short sharp vignettes for the right hand side.

Pace. The right hand side want fast communication the left hand side want slower. If you want to see how fast you can tell a complete story look at the 2014 Budweiser Super Bowl advert. 60 seconds. The audience have to fill in the gaps. If you use the right stereo types they'll happily do some work for you in fact some audiences will want to.

Involvement. Stories must all be relevant to hold attention. Make sure you refer to WIIFM to keep the stories relevant. Analogy stories don't work too well with the Right Hand Side.

The people on the bottom are always more emotional than the people on top but the people on the top will still be influenced by feelings.

## 7. 5 Story Telling Techniques

Personal stories are always best. If you can find an example from your life to illustrate the point it's always better than a third party story.

Sell the next click. As per James Bond films don't give out any unnecessary information.

Be true to your personality but think of your audience. Think of my personal experience with ESA and pace and lead. Remember to pace and lead i.e. enter their world then lead them to yours.

Step in and step out of the speech to check in with the audience. Some audiences don't want to hear the full story then think of the points so tell a bit and step out in order to make it personally relevant.

Best things to use at the start are Hook, Humour and Cliff-hangers. Tell the audience WIIFM with your hook. Help them relax with some humour and then leave them on a cliff edge. Remember if using humour: self-deprecating is good but don't erode your authority.

Keep changing the scene of the action as per James Bond to keep the audience's attention up.

It's not always possible in business presentation but where you can add dialogue. Dialogue gives you the opportunity to add real character to the people in your story. Just make sure that your delivery style matches the character (posh pirates don't work)

## 8. Development as a story teller.

To develop as an excellent story teller, I recommend three things.

### 1. Always record every presentation you do.

By far the best feedback is to record everything you do. It lets you hear your delivery and when you use humour you'll hear how the audience reacts. Keep an archive of all your speeches. If you have to give a similar talk again don't start with a blank sheet, listen to what you've done before.

### 2. Log book

Keep a log book of everything you do and ideas you have for future presentations. Ideas for improving presentation crop up at the oddest moments so keep a method of recording these gems for use later.

### 3. Pick a good evaluator

Find someone who you trust to give high quality feedback in the audience. Ask them for what they like, what they think could be improved and how they felt about you hitting your objectives.

Always try a variety of styles. If you're using the three improvement techniques above, you'll see what suits you and your audience.

Remember your objective is to balance your needs, the audience's needs and the situation under which you deliver so you'll need variety to adjust to meet all three.

Structure	Key Points	Purpose
<b>General Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start/middle/end</li> <li>• Intro/body/conclusion</li> <li>• Must have a hook in the intro to answer the question – What’s in it for me.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lets Audience know where they are</li> <li>• Gets the audience interested in the first few seconds.</li> </ul>
<b>PREP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position/Proposition</li> <li>• Reason</li> <li>• Example</li> <li>• Position/Proposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuading</li> <li>• Committed to cause</li> <li>• Selling</li> <li>• Q/A &amp; Interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Past/Present/Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we got to where we are</li> <li>• Where we’re going</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronological</li> <li>• Visionary statement</li> </ul>
<b>Problem/Cause/Solution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What’s the problem?</li> <li>• How did it come about?</li> <li>• What is the solution (Actual or proposed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business or technical reporting</li> <li>• Problem solution records</li> <li>• Selling (not strong)</li> </ul>
<b>AIDA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grab Attention</li> <li>• Build Interest</li> <li>• Generate Desire (Benefits –what good will come if I do this)</li> <li>• Action – how to get it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales</li> <li>• Call to action</li> <li>• In desire sell “I want that”</li> </ul>
<b>Tell/Tell/Tell</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell em what’s coming in intro</li> <li>• Tell them in detail</li> <li>• Summarise data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Business and technical factual reports</li> </ul>
<b>Story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have <b>no</b> summary</li> <li>• Must hold attention because no skeleton – done by each bit must force the question “What happened next”</li> <li>• Leave open loops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surprisingly – stories</li> <li>• More entertaining than factual.</li> <li>• Can be used to portray complex information to un-qualified audience -“Christmas lectures”</li> </ul>

### Standard Speech Structures