

GABRIELLE DOLAN

Bestselling author of *Magnetic Stories*

STORY Intelligence



THE CRAFT OF
AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING
MADE SMARTER WITH AI

In an era where trust is increasingly fragile and AI-generated content is ever-present; this is a must-read for business leaders. Gabrielle is a masterful storyteller and in her new book she explains why authentic human stories are not just important, but essential for cutting through the noise and building genuine connection. This book smartly reframes AI not as a threat, but as an incredibly powerful creative partner, showing how we can use it to amplify and strengthen any story that needs to be heard.

—**Michelle Hutton**, Chief Client Officer, Burson

In a world increasingly dominated by ‘thinking machines’, Gabrielle Dolan brilliantly reminds us that humans are ‘feeling machines that think’. The very title, *Story Intelligence*, signals a vital evolution beyond traditional narrative craft for the age of AI. She guides us not to replace our humanity with technology, but to use it to amplify our uniquely human gift for storytelling. This book is a crucial lesson that logic and data alone will never be enough to truly move people. Dolan’s assertion that ‘experience is the best teacher, a compelling story is a close second’ is a profound truth for any leader looking to inspire action. I recommend this book as essential reading for anyone looking to retain authenticity and connection while mastering modern AI tools.

—**Dr Sue Keay**, Director, University NSW AI Institute

To story is human, but to story for influence requires guidance. *Story Intelligence* shows readers exactly how to craft narratives for maximum impact. If you need this superpower, you need this wonderful book!

—**Paul J. Zak, PhD**, author of *The Little Book of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Living Better*

Professional storytelling is widely acknowledged as a powerful tool. But is it under threat from AI? *Story Intelligence* convincingly argues that AI is not a threat but a highly effective partner in

enhancing storytelling skills. By understanding the core principles of storytelling (succinctly summarised in the book), AI can be harnessed to unlock our creativity. This book is an uplifting and exciting read, especially for those tentative about integrating AI into their creative processes.

—**Maia Gould**, Associate Professor, The Australian National University

As deep tech continues to reshape our everyday and the communication landscape, through synthetic media, and AI-generated misinformation, the need for authentic human storytelling has never been greater. Gabrielle Dolan's *Story Intelligence* is a timely and essential guide for anyone seeking to build trust in a world of manipulated narratives and eroded truth. With Dolan's typical warmth, wit and practical wisdom, she reminds us that while AI can generate words, only humans can tell stories that truly resonate.

—**Prerana Mehta**, CEO, Australian Council of Learned Academies

In a world where executives are told to 'tell their story' but given little guidance on how to do it powerfully, especially when trust in leadership is at an all-time low, this book is the missing piece. Gabrielle's blend of authenticity, storytelling smarts and practical AI strategy is a game changer. Essential reading for those of us helping leaders show up, speak up and shape culture with their voice.

—**Amanda Blesing**, Executive Coach and 3x author for Leading Women

In a world where trust is eroding and attention is fleeting, this book is a timely and powerful reminder of why storytelling matters more than ever. It introduces a compelling new dimension of human capability: Story Intelligence (SQ)—the ability to authentically and purposefully use narrative to connect, engage, and inspire.

Going beyond cognitive intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), and cultural intelligence (CQ), the book makes a bold and original case for SQ as a core human skill—one that not only drives meaningful communication but also fosters deeper connection in an age shaped by technology and cultural fragmentation.

Gabriel skilfully explores how AI can serve as a creative partner in this journey, not by replacing our stories but by helping us uncover and share them more authentically.

This book is insightful, timely, and filled with soul. If you care about meaningful connection in the digital age, this is an absolute must-read. You'll walk away not just thinking differently, but feeling differently—about stories, technology, and about yourself.

—**Dr. Frederique Covington Corbett**, author of
Leadership on a Blockchain and Chief Global
Brand & Marketing, PFP

Story Intelligence is a timely, practical read. If you need to connect with others and build trust (and who doesn't?), this is the book for you. Gabrielle Dolan walks the talk, with real stories, useful tools and a solid case for why authenticity is almost always the answer.

—**Alicia McKay**, author of *You Don't Need An MBA*

Story Intelligence shows us that stories don't just inform, they connect. Gabrielle Dolan reveals how stories cut through logic, tapping into something deeper to build trust, shift thinking and move people. A smart book on the superpower we all carry.

—**Matt Church**, Founder, Thought Leaders Business
School and author of *Future Proof Humans*

Gabrielle's best book yet! At last a sensible use of AI to mine human experience and help us connect better with others. The stories shared left me uplifted and motivated, eager to shift my communication in a meaningful way. Pithy and practical, this book will help you double down on authenticity and level up your impact.

—**Zoë Routh**, Leadership futurist and award-winning author

Gabrielle Dolan has done it again—taking something as timeless as storytelling and giving it a fresh, urgent relevance for the world we live in now. In an age where AI content floods our feeds and trust is harder to earn, *Story Intelligence* is the reminder we all need—that our authentic stories are the heartbeat of connection. What I love most is how Gabrielle doesn't frame AI as the villain but as a tool—a creative partner—when used with intention and heart. This book is smart, real and a must-read for anyone who wants to stand out with their true voice, not just more noise.

—**Janine Garner**, author of *Be Brilliant* and *It's Who You Know*

Story Intelligence is a game changer for any leader who wants to deepen connection, influence with authenticity, and leave a lasting impact. Gabrielle Dolan beautifully unpacks the power of storytelling as a strategic tool—not just for communication, but for genuine leadership. If you're ready to elevate your message and engage on a whole new level, this book is your roadmap.”

—**Jane Anderson**, Business Growth and Communication Expert

Story Intelligence is a smart, practical guide to elevating your storytelling with AI. Packed with sharp insights and practical takeaways, it's a GPS for modern communicators navigating the new rules of storytelling. A must-read for anyone ready to turn AI into a powerful creative partner.

—**Tennille Burt**, Chief Marketing Officer

This is the story of how to tell stories in an age of algorithms. It's smart, brave, and brimming with integrity.

—**Prof. Catherine Ball**, Scientific Futurist

STORY

Intelligence



STORY Intelligence

An abstract graphic consisting of numerous vertical bars of varying heights and widths, each topped with a small dot. The bars are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized city skyline or a data visualization. The bars are white against a gray background.

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AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING
MADE SMARTER WITH AI

GABRIELLE DOLAN

WILEY

First published 2026 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd

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The right of Gabrielle Dolan to be identified as the author of *Story Intelligence* has been asserted in accordance with law.

ISBN: 978-1-394-36087-1



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd. Level 4, 600 Bourke Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia

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Set in 11.5/15.5pts and Plantin Std by Straive, Chennai, India.

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About the author

Gabrielle Dolan, affectionately known as ‘Ral’ to those who’ve met her, is a globally recognised expert in strategic storytelling and real communication. It was while working in senior leadership roles at National Australia Bank that she discovered how stories could enhance communication and leadership effectiveness.

Since that realisation, Gabrielle has dedicated her career to helping people humanise their communications. She travels the world undertaking storytelling workshops and delivering keynote speeches at conferences, where she is known as an ‘edutainer’; that is, someone who educates and entertains.

An accomplished author, Gabrielle has penned seven influential books, including the bestseller *Magnetic Stories: Connect with customers and engage employees with brand storytelling*, which debuted at number two on Australia’s best-selling business books list.

She co-hosts a podcast with Jac Phillips called *Keeping it Real with Jac and Ral*, which ranked in the top 5 per cent of video-produced podcasts on Spotify. Gabrielle met Jac over 20 years ago and the relationship went from client, to friend to podcast co-host. Jac is an amazing, no-nonsense leadership coach.

Gabrielle holds a Master’s degree in Management and Leadership, an Associate Diploma in Education and Training and is a graduate

of the Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education. Her academic achievements underscore her commitment to continuous learning and leadership development... or, to potentially making up for not passing English in her final year of high school!

Gabrielle's dedication to clear and genuine business dialogue led her to initiate the global movement Jargon Free Fridays, encouraging professionals to ditch corporate jargon and unnecessary acronyms in favour of straightforward communication. Her efforts were recognised in 2020 when she was named Communicator of the Year by the International Association of Business Communicators Asia-Pacific region.

Gabrielle spends her time between Melbourne and Bermagui on the southern New South Wales coast of Australia. She is married to Steve and they have two adult daughters, Alex and Jess. She is committed to improving her game...specifically on the golf course and pickleball court.

Introduction

On the eve of Halloween in 1938, ‘The War of the Worlds’ hit the airwaves on CBS Radio. An adaptation of HG Wells’ novel of the same name, which was published 40 years prior, it was directed and narrated by Orsen Welles (no relative of the original author).

Instead of being set in 19th-century England, the episode was changed to the current day in the United States. The hour-long program was a simulation of a normal evening radio broadcast with weather updates and music, but after a few minutes, the music was interrupted by supposedly real news, detailing the beginning of a devastating alien invasion and the United States military’s futile efforts to stop it.

One of the so-called ‘reports’ was from a rooftop in Manhattan, where a news reporter describes the invasion on New York City saying, ‘Five great machines wading through the Hudson River like men wading through a brook. There is black smoke drifting over the city and people are diving into the East River like rats, and others in Times Square are falling like flies’. The actor playing this journalist then coughs and collapses. After seconds of silence, a radio operator is heard calling, ‘New York. Isn’t there anyone on the air? Isn’t there anyone on the air? Isn’t there ... anyone?’

Thousands of listeners missed the start of this broadcast, which actually explained it was fictionalised, and mistakenly took it for

genuine news. They believed it to be true and shared the false reports with others, spreading it like wildfire. Chaos ensued as people took to the streets in confusion.

Imagine waking up to that news; what would you think? Fast forward to today, imagine waking up to a video of a world leader heavily criticising another world leader and threatening war, only to find out hours later that it was entirely fabricated. Or seeing a heartfelt testimonial about a product, only to discover that the person speaking doesn't exist.

Sadly, this is no longer just the plot of a dystopian novel acted out for entertainment. It is our reality ... right here, right now.

It's impossible not to notice the influx of fake videos on your social media feed ... of lions swallowing whole snakes or tornadoes ripping through cities ... mostly generated by AI. At the moment, the quality is such that if you look closely enough, or perhaps are more sceptical, you will pick up details that prove them manufactured. Yet, read the comments on these videos and you'll see many people, alarmingly, believe them to be real. The real concern is that as technology improves and is so accessible, spotting the fakes is becoming harder ... even for the very discerning.

AI can generate fake but realistic videos of people saying things they never said, and of politicians or celebrities saying something damaging. Or worse, people in powerful positions can dismiss real videos as deep fakes, and fake news, as their public relations strategy. How can we trust what anyone says or does these days?

As a result, we are becoming more sceptical of what we hear and what we see. It is getting harder to discern what and who we can trust.

Trust is at an all-time low because it's challenging to distinguish what is real and what is fabricated.

For the past 20 years, I have been teaching business owners, leaders and sales professionals how to share stories to create genuine, authentic connection, and I truly believe that with the increase of AI-generated content and the overall decline in trust in society, the craft of authentic storytelling is needed now more than ever.

Storytelling has been an effective means of communication for tens of thousands of years. You need only look at how Indigenous Australians (the oldest living culture) use stories to pass their knowledge and wisdom through the generations.

Interestingly, though, I don't think that AI is the devil. I know people who are so put off by the rise of AI-generated content that they refuse to use it, engage with it or even acknowledge its existence! But to ignore AI so outright would be a terrible and costly mistake. Not just because it's here to stay, and here to advance, but because AI is an incredible tool that offers so many opportunities in all sorts of personal and professional contexts.

When we learn to use AI wisely (for good, not evil, so to speak) and understand its advantages and limitations, we can use it to craft genuine stories faster and smarter.

That's what I want to show you in this book.

'Story intelligence' refers to your ability to use the skills of storytelling in an authentic way that connects, engages and inspires others, especially when mistrust is at an all-time high. There is no dictionary definition for story intelligence, so I created one:

Story intelligence (noun)

The ability to purposefully and skilfully use authentic storytelling to communicate with clarity and to connect, engage, and inspire.

If we use AI-generated stories that are not authentic, we run a serious risk to our reputation and a potential damage to our brand. So the trick is to not rely wholly on AI, but to use it as a creative partner to help uncover stories we can share to engage and inspire others; and to refine those stories and supercharge our productivity, creativity, communication skills and impact.

Think of storytelling as your Batman, and AI as your Robin, your reliable and eager sidekick.

Together, in this book, we will:

- analyse the power of storytelling and why it is needed now more than ever in a world of declining trust
- bust the myth that AI is cheating or unethical (not true if used correctly)
- deconstruct what makes a great story and how to spot a fake
- explain the limitations and advantages when it comes to AI and storytelling
- follow a framework to find stories, both with and without AI's help
- share AI tips and techniques that will improve and refine your storytelling capability
- increase your confidence to share stories in different situations, from business presentations to personal speeches
- demonstrate how others have used stories in their personal and professional lives.

To do this, part I of the book ('Understanding story intelligence') unpacks what storytelling is and what makes it so powerful.

We'll look at the latest research, which shows the decline of trust across the globe, and why authentic storytelling is needed now more than ever. We'll also put AI to the test when it comes to generating and creating stories so that you can understand its limitations and its benefits and spot a fake a mile off.

In part II ('Increasing your story intelligence'), we will delve into a comprehensive storytelling framework and explore the four types of stories you can share in certain situations. We'll also look at how you can find stories ... both with and without AI. Then we will put AI to work harder and smarter, using it as your creative partner, to help enhance your stories while maintaining your authentic voice.

Finally, in part III ('Sharing your stories'), we'll look at a variety of stories that people have shared in specific contexts: from presentations, to sales, coaching moments and delivering speeches; the results and feedback from the stories; and an analysis of why they worked. I hope these stories provide you with the inspiration to share your own stories and create the right impact and trust with others.

Now, before we get into things, it's important to note that the term 'AI' (artificial intelligence) is very broad and refers to the concept of machines or software mimicking human-like behaviour. Generative AI (Gen AI) is a subset of AI that focuses specifically on creating new content such as generating text, images, music and more ... and that is what I mostly refer to and use in this book. (If you are interacting with a chat function on a website it is most likely Gen AI.)

The two AI platforms I use and refer to in this book are ChatGPT and Claude. In some instances, I have included direct copy from these platforms to show you how they work and what they produce. When the copy is unaltered, I have used a different font to highlight this.

Note, this book will not, however, explain how ChatGPT works (there are so many great books already written on this including *The ChatGPT Revolution: How to simplify your work and life admin with AI* by Donna McGeorge). But rather, it will show you how to use AI as your creative partner to help increase your story intelligence.

So let's get ready to craft some authentic stories, made smarter with the help of AI.

PART I

Understanding story intelligence

Story intelligence is very similar to emotional intelligence in that it refers to your ability ... in this case, to tell a great story (as opposed to how emotionally intelligent you are).

Just as some people are naturally better at tennis, singing or physical coordination, some may have more emotional intelligence, and others more story intelligence. In either case, the skills are always learnable and you can become better at them.

So, in this part we will explore what storytelling actually is and why stories are so powerful. We will also discover why authentic stories are needed now more than ever in a world of rising distrust. Plus, we'll begin to look at using AI as a creative partner, which means understanding the advantages and limitations of AI-generated stories.

What is storytelling and why is it so powerful?



When our daughter Alex was two years old and I was pregnant with our second child, Jess, we decided to put a swimming pool in our backyard.

I had always had a pool growing up and it had brought so much enjoyment. We would spend hours in that pool with all our friends, family and neighbours and I thought it would be amazing to provide the same experience to our girls.

Of course, we taught Alex and Jess how to swim as early as possible, and as they got older they would have friends over to swim. But the pool wasn't very big so when there were lots of people over for a swim, we had a strict 'no jumping in the pool' policy.

As opposed to just stating this rule to Alex and Jess, I reinforced the importance of it by sharing a story from when I was a little girl.

The story was about when their Auntie Ali (my younger sister) jumped into the pool on top of me and her knee collided with my front tooth and broke it in half (my tooth, not her knee). Auntie Ali got into a load of trouble from Nana for jumping into the pool.