

HOOKED

HOW LEADERS
CONNECT
ENGAGE and
INSPIRE with
STORYTELLING

GABRIELLE DOLAN • YAMINI NAIDU

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gabrielle Dolan and Yamini Naidu are global thought leaders in storytelling and business communication.

Gabrielle has worked as an independent business management consultant and has held various senior leadership roles in change management, learning and development and project management. Her hands-on experience of the



challenges leaders face in communicating effectively has led her to the power of storytelling. She is a sought-after keynote speaker and contributes articles on a regular basis to a variety of publications. Gabrielle holds a Master's degree in Management and Leadership from Swinburne University and an Associate Diploma in Education and Training from the University of Melbourne. Her current passion is in establishing her vegetable garden on her rural holiday property on the southern NSW coast where she goes often to stop and smell the roses ... well, the basil.

Yamini is an economist by training and a post graduate from the London School of Economics (LSE) and an LSE Scholarship winner. She grew up in Mumbai (Bombay), India, currently lives in Melbourne, Australia and has lived and worked in various parts of the world including Europe, Asia and America. She is an inspirational and highly sought-after keynote speaker and a prolific writer combining authenticity

and humour with rich insights. She has held senior leadership roles and has extensive corporate experience working in a range of industry sectors with senior industry leaders, key stakeholders and company boards. Yamini is passionate about storytelling and through her work she inspires business leaders to experience business results using the power of storytelling. Outside work she is a serial yoga class attendee and a guide at the National Gallery of Victoria.

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Finally we would like to thank you, the reader, for picking up this book and daring to become the inspiring leader you can be.

To all of you we dedicate this book and acknowledge your role in making it happen.

Thank you,

Gabrielle and Yamini

INTRODUCTION

*Storytelling is the most powerful way to put
ideas into the world today.*

**Robert McKee, founder and
presenter of the Story Seminar**

Stories and storytelling can save you.

Stories can save you time and money by fast-tracking trust — and sales — with your clients. Stories can save you thousands of hours in team meetings that have no purpose and little impact. Stories can help you nail that long-awaited promotion and they can help you communicate effectively, saving you your reputation and your company millions of dollars.

Stories can save your relationships with long-standing customers and they can add magic to potentially boring presentations by making your PowerPoint slides meaningful and purposeful.

When we first started out in our corporate careers, we were in awe of leaders who possessed a natural ability to engage and inspire us. When they presented, we sat up and listened. We remembered what they said long after the event. When they suggested a new path to go down, we followed. Why did we have complete faith in their direction? What was their secret sauce? And how could we get some too?

Flash forward to 2005, and there we were sitting on a park bench one warm, sunny day in the heart of Melbourne's CBD

when it hit us: all inspiring leaders tell stories that break down emotional barriers and tap into what we think and feel. Their stories hook us in.

We began to imagine a world in which all business leaders didn't just use facts and numbers, but used facts, numbers and stories to connect, engage and inspire. This world is no longer a dream — it's a reality. In today's business world — in an age of information overload — it is no longer effective to 'just tell people the facts'. As a leader you must use emotion to be successful in business.

In his book *Business Stripped Bare*, Richard Branson explains why business and emotions go together. He writes: 'Engage your emotions at work. Your instincts and emotions are there to help you. They are there to make things easier'.

Back to 2005 ... We are still sitting on the bench having this 'aha' moment, which made us decide to leave the security, comfort and fortnightly salary of our respective employers and start a company that teaches, mentors and inspires CEOs, executives and leaders just like you to tell stories that get killer business results.

Since then we have worked with CEOs and senior leaders of large corporations, as well as small-business owners and entrepreneurs. We have run our workshops in organisations all over Australia and New Zealand, as well as New York, London and in the middle of a rice-paddy field in Indonesia (now *that* is a good story).

We are now ready to share our knowledge and experience — all that we have learned over this time. More importantly, we are ready to share what our clients have learned. In this book, you will find real-world, practical examples, actual stories leaders have shared, the successes they have had and their sheer

determination to achieve. You will find all this and more — all designed to help you become a successful storyteller and leader in your field.

Whether you need to engage your employees to adopt your company's new strategy, become an inspiring presenter, attract new clients or win a lucrative contract, this book will show you how storytelling and stories can help you get there.

What we love most about business storytelling is how far and wide it can be applied. Storytelling can, and should, be used in presentations, sales pitches, team meetings and coaching sessions, as well as on your website, in emails and across all your social media platforms. After reading this book, you will no doubt find many more communication channels that you will want to apply storytelling to.

You will begin to notice how your day-to-day life experiences can become powerful business stories — from watching your children surf to trying to impress your partner's father. This is all rich material that you can use for your stories — and we will show you how.

The good news is that to human beings, storytelling comes naturally; it is something that we all already do. We have been sharing stories since the dawn of time — in cave paintings, around campfires, at bedtime and more. Importantly, we tend to remember stories.

Do you, for example, remember the age-old story, '1001 Arabian Nights'? We certainly do — it is the story that inspired our company's name.

The king in the story marries a new woman every day and has her killed the next day. The minister responsible for finding each new bride has a tough gig. If he does not find the king a wife, he himself will be killed. (And you thought you had tough deadlines!)

So the minister's brave daughter, Scheherazade, volunteers to be the king's next bride. On her wedding night, Scheherazade tells the king a long, wonderful story but stops right at the cliffhanger ending. The king is beside himself! He wants to know what happens next! Scheherazade tells him she is tired and she will continue the story the following night.

The next night comes and Scheherazade finishes that story and starts a new one. Again she stops right before the ending, telling the king she will finish it tomorrow.

This routine goes on for 1001 nights, by which time the king has not only let Scheherazade live, but also fallen deeply in love with her.

This story is quite possibly one of the first case studies that proves the power of storytelling. When mastered correctly, stories can change the way we think, feel and act.

This book will show you how to use powerful stories in a business context. It will help you to:

- build strong relationships with existing and potential clients, customers and employees
- communicate effectively with everyone around you
- influence and inspire others to take action
- engage Gen Y clients, customers and employees
- illustrate your points and sell your services, ideas or products
- keep ahead of your peers, colleagues and customers
- motivate and influence your team to new heights
- hook your audience in
- kill your competition.

At the end of most chapters we throw you an optional mission (we call these 'How hooked are you?'). They may involve thinking about your current practices or starting to craft your own stories. Of course, they are *your* missions and you can choose whether or not to accept them.

As old Hopi wisdom says, 'The one who tells the stories, rules the world'.

So are you ready to rule your world?

CHAPTER 1

What is business storytelling?

Storytelling can be used to persuade, motivate, and inspire in ways that cold facts, bullet points and directives can't.

Annette Simmons, author of *The Story Factor*

When we started our business in 2005, the term 'business storytelling', or 'organisational storytelling', was nowhere to be seen. It was not bandied about on business websites, on blogs or in the media. It wasn't even on Wikipedia. So we came up with our own definition:

Business storytelling is sharing a story about an experience, but linking it to a business message that will influence and inspire your audience into action.

Like traditional storytelling, business storytelling tells a story, but unlike traditional stories, business stories carry a message to connect, inspire and engage an audience.

In this chapter we will explore the difference between traditional storytelling and business storytelling. We will also look at how metaphors and analogies differ from stories.

A story about storytelling

The definition we gave earlier is one that we came up with and to demonstrate what we mean, we are going to tell you a story. After all, this wouldn't be a book on storytelling if we didn't! We will set up the context of the story before actually sharing the story.

The context

Michael Brandt was Regional Executive at National Australia Bank. Michael was responsible for 16 branches and in every team in every branch he had the same problem: his team members did not meet their weekly targets for sales leads to the sales department—known as quality sales leads.

He held countless meetings where he talked to his teams about this issue and tried to coach them on the importance of referring leads to the sales team. At every meeting, Michael's team members reiterated that they understood their targets and knew what had to be done. Yet most of them failed to meet their targets—even when they were linked to their annual performance bonus.

Michael was at the end of his tether. He had tried everything he could think of over a period of 12 months. His frustration was tangible, and you can imagine how frustrating it must have been for his team members. Michael constantly asked them why they weren't meeting their targets. Why were the majority unable to achieve their weekly sales-leads targets?

Then one day they said to him, 'It's the one thing we hate doing. Every Monday when we come in to work we think, "Oh no, not weekly sales-leads targets again".'

Michael came to our workshop and said, 'I've tried everything for a year to help my team achieve their quality sales-leads targets and nothing has worked'.