

9/14/16 Storytelling Meeting

Our group is about getting voices heard, and more importantly, getting speakers to include more of their story. For me, I am enamored by Pixar – outside of their technical prowess, it's their storytelling.

One of their rules?



Why do people need to hear your story, from you? and now?

Another important question: As with all effective communication, the first question you should ask before any question, conversation, email, and speech.... What do you expect to happen as a result of your talking?

➡ Your story, your speech, becomes infinitely more powerful when you when you can answer those questions. You step apart from all the competition because you begin to place the emphasis on the audience, and not you.

Following Pixar's model, ask yourself:

- Do you appeal to some core truth about the human condition?
- Do you empathize with your audience, assuring them that you know how they are feeling this way, and then
- Offer to show them why they are feeling this way.in a manner that is not preachy or condescending?
- Do you strive to teach emotional understanding?

** It's time to embrace your medium.

** Break away from the bad speech habit of having a beginning, a middle, and an end, but strive to write and present story like Hollywood does: by setting up, presenting the conflict or confrontation, and then taking people through the resolution.

Stories (as in movies and books) have 5 main components: the characters, the **setting**, the **plot**, the conflict, and the resolution. These pieces allow smooth transitions, in a logical way that the reader can follow and where the action can develop naturally. Your stories don't have to be that intricate or complicated, but that's the flow people are used to having.

Stories are not just for motivational or inspirational speeches. They are for professional speeches, business speeches, pitches, training, teaching... all types. This is because stories provide the opportunity for people to connect to you, for you to inspire and motivate.

Most past narratives and set the stage. Use characters to provide context, reveal emotions, people involved who are real.

Demonstrate the conflict or confrontation by showing how the character (or you) actually transforms because of the challenge. Provide context in that moment – what they person is going through, what they are feeling, what causes the change and the shift in thinking. Demonstrate how things got resolved. You are taking the audience on a journey, and you are navigating, so provide the emotion and elements for them to bridge, make connections, and comprehend the story.

Most times you will not be able to simply spout out a story. You will need to discover, expose, think, discover and think about your story in general and through the lens of its components above. You will need to ask yourself questions, give yourself time to let things marinate, and open a dialogue with yourself.

Your story portfolio which you should begin creating now, can be a few sentences to a significant portion to interwoven. Most good stories are 2-3 minutes in length. Your presentations, your story is ultimately all about your audience, not you.

Part of the mission of the Emerging Speakers Bureau is to make voices heard. That all voices matter. **Each individual has a story.** Each story is worth telling. Every person's story deserves to be heard, and to make an impact. In order to do that, we need to unleash the powerful stories within you. And for some of you, that means giving yourself the permission to go deep, and go beyond the obvious story, the obvious conflict but to take the time to really look at and understand your stories. Your story matters, and it needs to be heard.

You need to practice this story all the time – different versions, different audiences, different angles. You practice until you are the maestro leading the symphony. Here are Pixar's 22 rules of storytelling:

#1: You admire a character for trying more than for their successes.

#2: You gotta keep in mind what's interesting to you as an audience, not what's fun to do as a writer. They can be v. different.

#3: Trying for theme is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about til you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.

#4: Once upon a time there was _____. Every day, _____. One day _____. Because of that, _____. Because of that, _____. Until finally _____.

#5: Simplify. Focus. Combine characters. Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff but it sets you free.

#6: What is your character good at, comfortable with? Throw the polar opposite at them. Challenge them. How do they deal?

#7: Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously. Endings are hard, get yours working up front.

#8: Finish your story, let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time.

#9: When you're stuck, make a list of what WOULDN'T happen next. Lots of times the material to get you unstuck will show up.

#10: Pull apart the stories you like. What you like in them is a part of you; you've got to recognize it before you can use it.

#11: Putting it on paper lets you start fixing it. If it stays in your head, a perfect idea, you'll never share it with anyone.

#12: Discount the 1st thing that comes to mind. And the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th – get the obvious out of the way. Surprise yourself.

#13: Give your characters opinions. Passive/malleable might seem likable to you as you write, but it's poison to the audience.

#14: Why must you tell THIS story? What's the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? That's the heart of it.

#15: If you were your character, in this situation, how would you feel? Honesty lends credibility to unbelievable situations.

#16: What are the stakes? Give us reason to root for the character. What happens if they don't succeed? Stack the odds against. (NB: for emerging speakers – give your audience the reason and chance to root for you, what odds have been against you, your failures and where / why / how your succeeded – what shifted?)

#17: No work is ever wasted. If it's not working, let go and move on - it'll come back around to be useful later.

#18: You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best & fussing. Story is testing, not refining.

#19: Coincidences to get characters into trouble are great; coincidences to get them out of it are cheating.

#20: Exercise: take the building blocks of a movie you dislike. How would you rearrange them into what you DO like?

#21: You gotta identify with your situation/characters, can't just write 'cool'. What would make YOU act that way?

#22: What's the essence of your story? Most economical telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.

Homework / Things to think about up front, for building your presentation:

1. ID your specific target audience(s).
2. What's your outline, create your draft. Get it reviewed by me, or a fellow bureau member.
3. Id how you plan to deliver.
4. Storyboard and get it reviewed.
5. Create some slides. Have them reviewed or present at a Bureau meeting.
6. Strategy: ? This depends on what your end goal is: build a list, build exposure, build credibility, make money, etc.