

"I was invited to join the partnership! Which of course I accepted! It was an incredible feeling, with a flood of relief and excitement....The partners who interviewed me said how strong my interview had been."

Partner - Magic Circle Law Firm

HOW TO TELL

STORIES

THAT OPEN

DOORS



Peter Botting

HOW TO TELL STORIES THAT OPEN DOORS

UNLOCK INFLUENCE, CONNECT
DEEPLY, AND INSPIRE ACTION

Storytelling is ~~one~~ of the most powerful tools in human communication.

The right story builds trust, persuades decision-makers, creates opportunities, and leaves a lasting impression.

Learning to tell stories opens doors, whether in interviews, sales pitches, networking, or leadership.

Storytelling is a skill that can transform your professional and personal life.

This guide walks you through the steps to craft and deliver stories that captivate and influence.



UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE

Every story should serve a purpose: inspire, persuade, educate, or connect.

What's your why?

If your goal is to secure an investor meeting, your story should demonstrate credibility, vision, and potential.



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Tailor your stories to the listener's values, challenges, and interests. But also their language, jargon, and prior knowledge.

Ask questions, then listen hard. Closely watch their reactions and gauge what resonates most.



START WITH A HOOK

Capture their attention immediately. Open with a striking fact, anecdote, or emotional moment.

Never start with your résumé, they really don't care about you.

Start with them.

Start with a challenge you overcame (that they can relate to!), that directly relates to the opportunity.



USE A CLEAR STRUCTURE

Compelling stories follow a simple structure

Situation: Set the scene and context

Challenge: Present the conflict or obstacle

Action: Describe what you did

Result: Highlight the outcome and lessons learned



MAKE IT PERSONAL

Authenticity makes stories relatable.

Share your perspective, emotions, and experiences.

Saying “I was terrified before my first pitch, but I...” is more interesting and compelling than any generic statement.



HIGHLIGHT TRANSFORMATION

Show change or growth.

Stories that illustrate progress, resilience, or problem-solving resonate far more than a boring list of static achievements.

Things happen in stories.



EMPHASIZE THE TAKEAWAY

Every story should leave the listener with a clear insight or lesson.

Connect your story's outcome to the listener's interests or goals.

Can they retell the story without it being warped in the retelling?

No significant hire or investment is actioned by one person. Tell your story so it can be retold without you.



USE VIVID DETAILS

Specific visual details make stories memorable.

Mention sights, sounds, and emotions.

“The 18 person boardroom fell silent as I presented our 12-month plan...” is more engaging than “I gave a presentation.”

If it doesn't trigger their internal YouTube, you've failed.



KEEP IT CONCISE

Aim for brevity. Short is always better.

Avoid unnecessary details that dilute impact.

A story that is too long loses the listener's attention.

Trigger their questions - do NOT download on them all that you know!

Academics are the WORST at this!



USE EMOTION STRATEGICALLY

Emotion drives connection and action.

Show conviction, excitement, frustration, hope, or determination.

But stay authentic. Be real.



PRACTICE DELIVERY

Storytelling is performance as much as content.

Practice tone, pace, pauses, and gestures.

However long you have rehearsed, it's not enough.

Record yourself. Listen to it 12 times. Still like it? I thought not. Keep recording, listening and improving.

Friends and families are rubbish at feedback. They don't want to be mean. Kindness kills.

Feedback beats validation every time.



ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS

Be ready to expand on any parts of your story if asked.

Questions are great opportunities. Treat every question as “Tell me more.”

Questions show interest, or signposts things you should have said.

Anticipate areas of interest, questions or scepticism from your audience.



ALIGN STORIES WITH GOALS

Your stories should reinforce your personal brand, expertise, or value proposition.

Every anecdote should demonstrate why you are the right person for the opportunity.



USE ANALOGIES AND METAPHORS

Complex ideas are easier to understand and remember when illustrated through visual shortcuts or comparisons.

Explaining market disruption as “like a sudden tidal storm in a bay full of people relaxing on pleasure boats” creates a mental image of the panic and fear.



SHOW, DON'T JUST TELL

Actions speak louder than words.

Demonstrate key points through visually-triggering examples rather than abstract statements or what I call un-evidenced claims.



BUILD A STORY BANK OR LIBRARY

Collect and build a collection of stories for different contexts: networking, interviews, leadership, or sales.

My DARC+ system is great for keeping this focused.

Having ready-to-use narratives saves time, is great for pitches and speeches, but also for Q&A.

It also builds your confidence.



MAKE STORIES INTERACTIVE

Invite participation or reflection.

Ask questions or relate the story to the listener's experience.

Look for nods or smiles.

Interrupt your story and check if they are still with you.

Keep their eyes off their phones.

Don't be dull.



CLOSE WITH A CALL TO ACTION

End stories with a clear next step or takeaway that encourages action.

You want to stop pitching and get into a conversation about the future as soon as possible.

How you could work together. How it would work.



LEARN FROM FEEDBACK

Notice which stories resonate and why.

You will learn which stories need to be binned, which need to be tweaked.

Famous comedians rehearse their stories in Comedy Clubs up to 60 times before they take their jokes to Netflix.

Refine your stories like they do, based on audience reactions.



PRACTICE CONSISTENTLY

The more you tell stories, the more natural and persuasive they become.

Treat storytelling as a skill to develop, not a one-time effort.

You can't outsource this. Yes, a storytelling COACH can help a lot. But you are the one on stage, you are the one in the limelight.

You have to do the work.



FINAL THOUGHT

Storytelling isn't just about entertainment, it's a strategic tool to open doors.

By crafting authentic, structured, and purposeful stories, you can connect with others, inspire confidence, and open doors to opportunities that might otherwise remain closed.

Your narrative becomes your advantage, your influence, and your voice in a crowded, noisy world.

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EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW COACHING
FROM **6-TIME TEDMED**
AND SXSW
SPEAKER COACH

Peter Botting



Whether you are fighting to become Partner; seeking promotion or appointment to the Board; changing career or company; or struggling to jumpstart your career after redundancy... professional storytelling-based executive-level interview coaching could give you the edge and transform your life. And your income.



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