



SparkLit
GROUP

Mastering the Narrative

Storytelling With Impact Workbook



Storytelling as a Strategic Mindset

Long before there was AI, humans have been telling stories. Stories help us connect with each other, and if you can tell one well, it helps you be more authentic and distinctive.

Fortune magazine reports that storytelling is among the top thought leadership trends for 2026. We say being a good storyteller is both a good business practice and way more fun than endless PowerPoint slides.

And for those of you engineers out there (We see you. We are you.), take heart from this quote from Brene Brown, *“Maybe stories are just data with a soul.”*

So, grab your pen and your imagination and follow along with us in this workbook to build your storytelling muscles.

Lynne & Dan
The SparkLit Group

The Story-Spotter Mindset

The Goal: Learn to see the stories all around you.

Concept: Stories aren't just for novelists; they are the bedrock of internal team alignment and external stakeholder buy-in. Plus, good stories are fun to tell and listen to! But to be a storyteller, you must first be a **Story-Spotter**.

Reflect: Look back at the last 30 days of a current or recent project. Where did a "surprise" happen? Where did a team member go above and beyond? When did something change?

Prompt: List three "micro-moments" from this current or recent project that felt significant (even if they weren't "big" news).

1.

2.

3.

The Simple Three *(credit: Donald Davis)*

You might have heard that stories have “a beginning, middle, and end.” Toss that idea out the window and try this three-part framework instead.

The Model:

1. **Normal:** How things were, the previous status quo, the seemingly stable plateau, the calm before the storm. Typically has hidden downsides (stagnation, harms, etc.).
2. **Explosion:** The significant change or rearrangement of conditions. Often unexpected. The storm. Typically has danger, confusion, chaos.
3. **New Normal:** The calm after the storm. Things are better than before. Typically shows growth, improvement, and a call to action.

Example – The New Job

Normal: I went to work at the same place every day and did the usual things.

Explosion: I quit my job and started a new venture.

New Normal: I am more fulfilled.



Exercise: Write down a current situation, something that might turn that situation upside down, and what new situation that might create.

Normal:

Explosion:

New Normal:

Four Story Pillars

From Kindra Hall's *Stories That Stick*.

The Four Pillars:

1. **Identifiable Characters:** Someone we can identify with, cheer for, or root against.
2. **Authentic Emotion:** A feeling the audience can relate to, expressed or evoked by the story.
3. **Specific Details:** The realistic "texture" that makes the story credible and relatable.
4. **A Significant Moment:** The zoomed-in point in space and time where the story unfolds.

Example: The iPod ("1,000 Songs in Your Pocket")

Character: YOU (The listener).

Emotion: WOW (The feeling of freedom/limitlessness).

Specific Detail: 1,000 songs and in your pocket.

The Moment: You are walking down the street listening to your favorite songs.



Exercise: Pick a character or two for your story. Think about the emotion you want the story to express or evoke. Make it real with a few significant details. Put it in the context of a specific moment.

Character(s):

Emotions:

Details:

Moment:

The Pixar Story Spine

Pixar's famous formula for Finding Nemo, Toy Story, and other great movies.

It builds out the two previous formulas in more depth.

Once upon a time... [Character / Context]

Every day... [The status quo / the normal / details]

Until one day... [The inciting incident / explosion]

Because of that... [Moments & consequences]

Because of that... [More moments & consequences]

Until finally... [The resolution]

And ever since then... [The new normal]

EXAMPLE: Toy Story

Once upon a time... Woody was Andy's favorite toy

Every day... Woody led the toys at playtime.

Until one day... Andy received a Buzz Lightyear toy.

Because of that... Woody got jealous.

Because of that... Woody and Buzz got lost.

Until finally... they worked together & became friends.

And ever since that day... they were both favorites.



Exercise: Sketch a story inspired by your own experience. It could be from 10 years ago or this morning, personal or professional, fact-based or with some poetic license.

Once upon a time...

Every day...

Until one day...

Because of that...

Because of that...

Until finally...

And ever since then...

The Audience Profile

Every story has an audience – how well do you know yours?

Who are you telling your story to?

What do they already know?

What do they want to achieve?

What will surprise them?

How do you want your story to make them feel?

Finding Stories To Tell

Prompt: List a few "Story Seeds." These are snippets of ideas that you can grow into full frameworks later. They might include:

- Unexpected win or loss
- Near-miss / lesson learned
- User reaction or quote
- Team adaptation or pivot
- Risk averted

Story Seed 1:

Story Seed 2:

Story Seed 3:

Storytelling as a Practice

Put it all together in a focused practice and move from theory to mastery.

See the stories around you. Make a regular practice of noticing life through a story lens.

Create opportunities to tell stories: Try to include one "Storytelling Pillar" (like a Specific Detail) in every email you write this week.

The Feedback Loop: Recruit a "Story Partner," someone you can test stories with and who can help you make them better.

Action Plan: What is one meeting in the next 14 days where you will use a framework from this workbook?

Meeting:

Framework to use:

For Further Reading

Stories That Stick by Kindra Hall

The Storytelling Animal by Jonathan Gottschall



Story Notes

Which framework feels most natural to you? Why?

What story do you want to tell this weekend? Sketch it out below using the framework that resonates.



Ask bolder questions. Build better futures.

From startups to schools, health centers to climate tech innovators, The SparkLit Group brings teams together to build skills, unlock creativity, strengthen collaboration, and turn ideas into actions that solve BIG problems.

Our innovation workshops, executive coaching, and strategic consulting are designed to help you tackle your most meaningful challenges.

Want to give your team hands-on coaching for creative problem solving and collaborative innovation? Want to be a more effective, connected, and courageous leader? Want to tell a better story?

Let's light the spark.

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