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# 1. Storytelling

## 1.1 What is Storytelling?

In an increasingly digital world and with a market crowded with similar products and services, storytelling has become a key strategy for companies and beyond.

It aims to go beyond technical specifications and materials to **emotionally** connect with the audience through an **engaging** narrative.

Storytelling is more than just a fad.

It is a communication technique that aims to create a bond between a brand and its audience by highlighting its history, values and mission. A good storyteller does not just tell facts, but **conveys emotion, transparency and authenticity**.

Telling stories can help companies differentiate themselves, capture attention and build meaningful relationships with consumers.

Stories are a powerful way to communicate, and it is important to do so in a way that is authentic and relevant to one's audience.

In this way, the brand can stand out in a crowded market, giving value to the intangible content that is often what distinguishes a company.

If we had to give a definition of **STORYTELLING** we could say that:

*storytelling is an important communication technique that employs an engaging narrative to convey messages and information. It is a key skill to influence and inspire the audience, creating an emotional bond and connection. The storytelling should be engaging, authentic and relevant to the topic at hand, with the goal of capturing the listener's attention and maintaining their interest. In summary, storytelling is a powerful tool for effective and engaging communication and should be considered a fundamental part of any communication strategy.*

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## *Valentina Coletta - Storytelling: Introduction*

We could say that we possess an inherent ability to tell stories. In fact, if we consider children, we notice that, even without directly showing them how to do it, they are capable of telling numerous stories from seemingly simple events.

As already mentioned, we are constantly immersed in the stories that surround us. If we reflect on this concept, stories have played several significant roles in our existence.

For example:

- they have contributed to our survival, because through the stories of our ancestors we have learnt to avoid certain mistakes;
- they have established a sense of belonging to a group. For example, think of folk narratives with which we identify, creating a bond with those who shared the same stories during childhood, thus creating a feeling of community;
- they taught us! In fact, stories also played an educational role, as we can always learn new lessons from stories, even if only in avoiding situations we already know.

In short, stories are undoubtedly a crucial element in our lives.

We have said that storytelling is a communication technique.

This begs the question: is there a difference between information and storytelling?

The answer is **YES!**

**Storytelling, in fact, is different from information because it is based on narration and creating an emotional connection with the audience, whereas information provides data and facts without necessarily involving emotions or narration.**

Here are some of the main differences between storytelling and information:

1. **Emotion vs. Facts:** storytelling seeks to convey emotions, experiences and emotional connections through storytelling. Information, on the other hand, focuses on conveying objective data and facts.

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2. **Narration vs. Exposition:** storytelling involves a structured narrative that usually includes characters, settings, conflicts and resolutions. Information is most often presented directly and without necessarily following a narrative structure.
3. **Public involvement:** storytelling aims to engage the audience in an emotional journey, encouraging them to feel part of the story. Information provides data, but does not necessarily seek to engage the audience emotionally.
4. **Memorability:** stories are often more memorable than cold, detached information. Audiences are more likely to remember and share stories than a series of data or information without context.
5. **Aim and Objectives:** storytelling is often used **to inspire, persuade, entertain or communicate values, missions and brand identity**. Information is mainly used to convey data or knowledge.

In summary, while information is important and necessary, storytelling is a powerful tool to make information more engaging, memorable and meaningful to the audience. Both have their place in communication, but are used for different purposes and can mutually enrich communication.

Therefore, we can divide the contents into two categories:

**HYPOCONTENTS:**

- the contents are boring, without an engaging plot or psychological depth;
- they are devoid of meaning;
- they are usually descriptive and neutral in terms of information.

**HYPERCONTENTS:**

- narratable and memorable content;
- they convey meaningful information and emotions;
- they fit into an experiential context, creating a shared and sharable imagery.

To summarise the difference between the two categories, we can refer to a market-leading, competent company offering all-round services (hypocontent) and a pay-off like your home, anywhere in the world (hypercontent).

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In the first case we have an HYPERCONTENT that does not generate any emotion while in the second case, a strong bond is created with the audience that tells something UNIQUE and INTIMATE.

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## 2. WHERE TO START

First of all, let us ask ourselves:

### **what is the story?**

The story is a series of events organised in a logical and chronological succession: it is the content of the tale and represents its deep structure.

### **And the tale?**

The tale is the presentation of the story, elaborated in written or oral form. It is the **form of the content told**. It always has a plot and a genre and as such is conveyed in the interlocutor's mind.

### **And the narration/story?**

It is the act of narration as conveyed by the specific narrator. Narration is digression.

An example of this is the TV series or 'long film' where, as time expands, it is possible to delve into the stories of individual characters.

Therefore, **the combination of a narrative and a story results in storytelling**.

### **But why is storytelling so important?**

Storytelling is important because **it is a strategic choice that enhances a brand's values, increasing its economic value and enabling effective, extraordinary and memorable brand management**.

It is a choice that is part of a content strategy. In this regard, we use the term content marketing, i.e. a strategy that creates useful, valuable content, focused on people, needs and emotions with a specific purpose defined beforehand.

### **We said, therefore, that storytelling means:**

- communicate through stories the values of the brand and its audience;
- creating a narrative project that requires methodology, tools and different skills.

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### 3. THE STEPS OF A STORYTELLING PROJECT

A storytelling project is more than the content to be told. It is a project in which the 'what' to tell is only one of the elements to think about.

There are four phases that make up a storytelling project, namely:

- **listening:** this is the phase in which the target audience is identified and the points we have in common with it
- **design:** this is the phase in which the values, narrative lines and what we want to tell are established
- **creation:** this is the phase in which you give 'shape to the story' through the structure, words, images and emotions that you want to give it
- **bringing to life and dissemination:** these are the stages in which we choose the tools to bring the story to life and the tools that will be used to convey our story

Now let us analyse the individual steps.

#### 3.1. LISTENING:

Before producing a story, the story must be sought and found. We must listen to our audience, to its needs. Listen to the company, and flush out the stories of its evolution. Listening means opening up, feeling like the other person. **In short, IDENTIFY WITH.**

Only by learning to listen and empathise with those around us can we create memorable stories.

Bridge stories that connect us to the world, to reality, to people and to ourselves.

**Here are five tips for storylistening:**

1. **listen and IDENTIFY WITH**
2. **ask questions, prepare them if necessary**
3. **record, photograph and take time**

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4. identifies the right interlocutors
5. create an archive of cues, ideas, phrases for inspiration

**Remeber:**

**Stories always have different points of view. They convey values.**

**They carry problems, solutions and morals.**

**To write stories you must exercise the ability to feel like the other.**

Therefore, it is important to ask yourself the following questions in the listening phase:

- Who is my audience?
- What do they do?
- What, how and where does they live?
- What does they share with me?
- What is the point of view?

### **3.2 DESIGN**

To establish a NARRATIVE line, it is useful to focus on the following questions before starting:

- Why do I want to tell? What is my objective?
- What connection, emotion do I want to arouse?
- What is the core of my narration?
- What values does it communicate?
- Is it coherent with my values and those of the audience?

The narrative line is not just part of a single story but is part of the brand, of a product as a whole, of a bigger story.

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Therefore, aspects that are apparently not narrative must be taken into account, such as: the icons (packaging, label, shopping bag), the sounds (the can of Coca-Cola that opens, the sound of the Ferrari engine), the product modalities. the sensory content, the symbolic and value heritage.

### **3.2.1: THE STRUCTURE**

After establishing the first parameters, we need to think about the structure of our story!

A story has a structure, a pattern to rely on that guides its content.

A content built according to **story-driven logic or guidelines**.

The **story** always has four elements:

**CONTEXT:** point of view; the situation

**PROBLEM:** the tension; the rupture

**SOLUTION:** the decisive action

**RESULT:** the moral; the ending

These elements allow us to convey our message through emotion and identification. or story-based narration,

To take these elements even further, we can say that the key elements of story-driven, or story-based narration, involve:

1. **Well-developed characters:** well-defined and developed characters are crucial to engage the audience. These characters should have a distinctive personality, goals, motivations and challenges to face. The audience should be able to identify or empathise with them.
2. **Engaging plot:** a well-structured plot presenting a conflict or challenge is essential. The plot should have a beginning, a development, a climax and a resolution. This structure creates suspense and keeps the audience's attention.

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3. **Relevant setting:** the setting in which the story takes place should be relevant to the message you want to communicate. The setting contributes to the atmosphere of the story and can influence the audience's perception.
4. **Emotions and emotional connection:** an effective story generates empathy and emotional involvement. It must arouse emotions in the audience, which could be related to joy, conflict, sadness, fear or excitement.
5. **Key message:** each story should communicate a central message or theme. This message may be explicit or implicit, but it should be clear to the audience.
6. **Visual and sound elements:** the use of visual elements, such as images, videos, graphics and animations, together with sound elements, such as music, sound effects or narrative voice, can enrich the narration and capture the audience's attention.
7. **Audience involvement:** a story-based narration can engage the audience through interactions, questions, emotional involvement and active participation.
8. **Continuity and coherence:** the story should be cohesive and coherent from beginning to end. All story elements should agree with each other and support the main message.
9. **Tone and style:** the tone and style of the narration should suit the audience and the message. They can vary from a light and humorous tone to a more serious and reflective one.
10. **Learning or change:** often, stories include a process of learning or change on the part of the characters or the audience itself. This process can add depth to the story.

These are the key elements that contribute to successful storytelling. The ability to combine these elements in a creative and engaging way can result in memorable and meaningful stories.

To design and develop a story in a structured and complete manner, we can use the 'storytelling canvas' model ".

This tool is often used by authors, scriptwriters, marketers and storytellers to organise the key elements of a story in a coherent and engaging way.

The storytelling canvas may vary in its form and structure, but generally includes the following elements:

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1. **Characters:** this section of the canvas focuses on the main characters in the story. Here the characters are described, including their names, characteristics, goals, challenges and personalities.
2. **Environment/ setting:** this element covers the setting in which the story takes place. It includes details of the physical environment, historical period, culture and any other relevant aspects.
3. **Plot:** the plot represents the flow of events in the story, from beginning to end. It is divided into beginning, development, climax and resolution.
4. **Key message:** here you specify the message or central theme of the story, what you want to communicate to the audience.
5. **Emotions:** this element identifies the emotions you want to arouse in the audience and how they will be integrated into the story.
6. **Visual and sound elements:** this section covers the use of visual, sound and narrative elements that will enrich the story, such as images, video, music, sound effects or narrative voice.
7. **Learning or change:** indicates whether and how the characters or the audience will go through a learning process or change during the story.

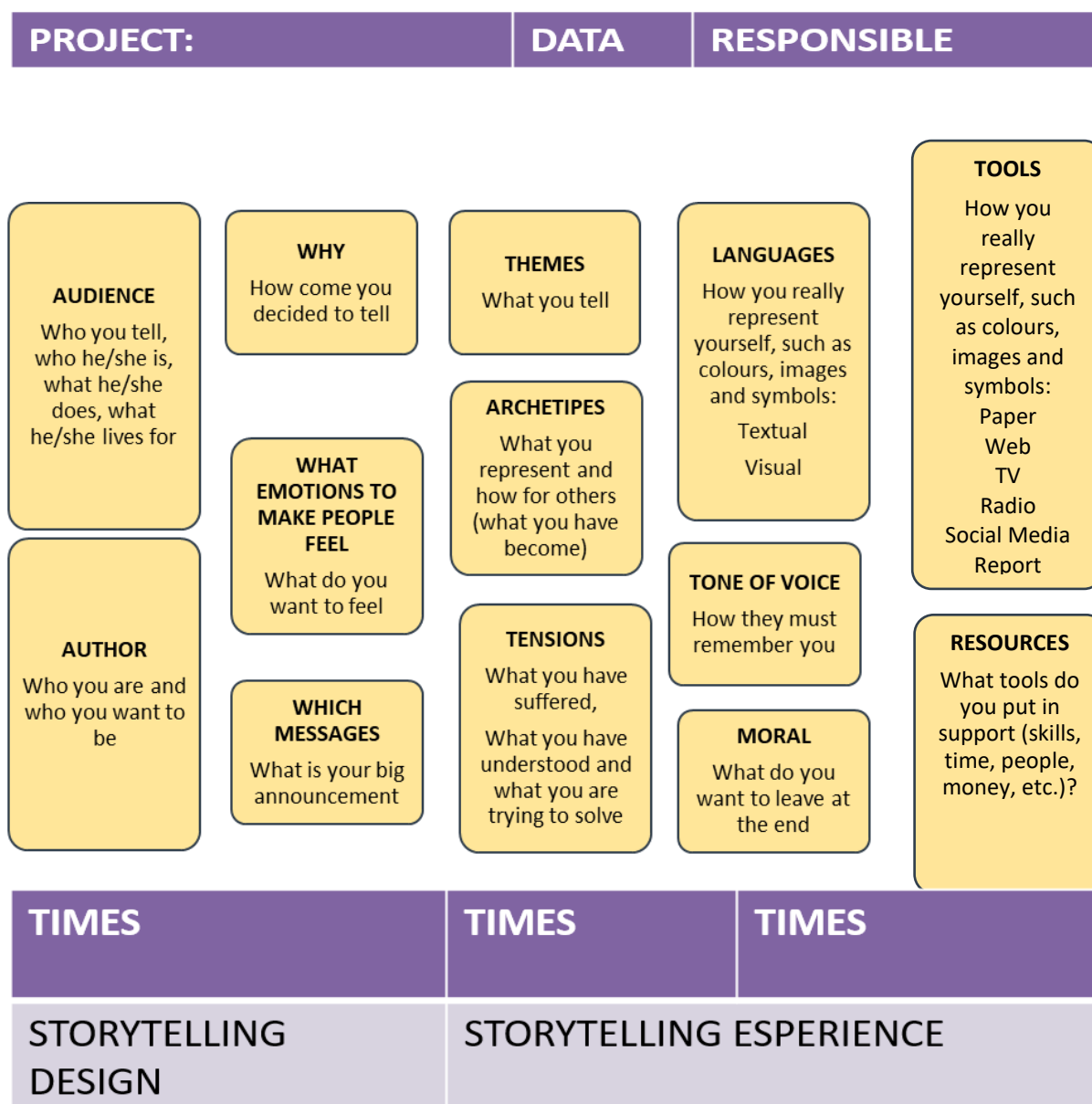
The storytelling canvas serves as a visual guide for story planning, allowing the various elements to be coherently organised. This tool helps maintain an overview of the story and ensure that all aspects are cohesive and contribute to the desired message and experience.

From the canvas, each aspect is subsequently deepened to build the story (of the brand or an individual fragment).

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Examples of storytelling canvas model:



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**Examp~~s~~ of storytelling canvas model:**

**Story name**

**PURPOSE**

Audience	Key Message	Story	People and Places	Campaign
	Call to Action		Style & Tone	
Outcomes			Indicators	

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**IN SUMMARY:**

Before starting effective storytelling, it is useful to ask yourself a number of fundamental questions in order to develop an engaging narrative targeted at your audience, i.e:

1. **Who is my audience?** - Who are the people I am addressing with this story? What are their needs, interests and values?
2. **What is my objective?** - What do I want to achieve with this story? Do I want to inspire, persuade, inform or entertain?
3. **What is my key message?** - What is the central message I want to communicate through this story?
4. **Who is my main character?** - Who or what will be the protagonist of my story? What are his or her characteristics and evolution?
5. **Where does the story take place?** - What is the setting of the story? Is the setting relevant to the message I want to communicate?
6. **What is the conflict or challenge?** - Every good story has a conflict or a challenge to overcome. What is the one in your story?
7. **What is the resolution?** - How will the conflict be resolved or the challenge addressed? What are the results or lessons learnt?
8. **How will I engage the audience?** - How will I make my audience identify with the story? What emotional or engaging elements will I use?
9. **How will I use language and narrative structure?** - What narrative techniques will I use to make the story interesting? How will I organise the plot?
10. **What will be the visual or audio details?** - Will I think of visual or sound elements, such as images, sounds or videos, to enrich the story?
11. **How will I measure the success?** - How will I assess whether my story has achieved its goals?

Answering these questions will help you plan and create a more engaging, targeted and meaningful story for your intended audience.

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