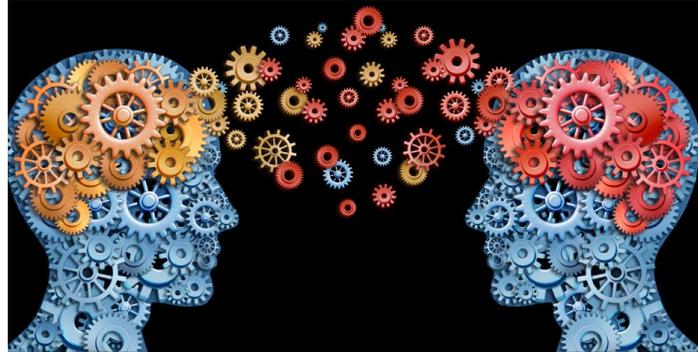


Cortisol, Connections & Constituents:

The Science of Storytelling and How to Engage Your Audience in any Medium



Top Ten Takeaways

1. Humans are wired for stories. From the days of cave paintings to today, with flat screens on our “cave” walls, we communicate through stories in more ways than we realize.
2. A story is “a character-based narration of a character’s struggles to overcome obstacles and reach an important goal.” If you miss one of those key elements, don’t be surprised by a “Cool story, bro” response.
3. Stories convey values. Even fictional stories have a *real world impact* - e.g., Harry Potter impacting views on immigration policy and religious tolerance.
4. What’s the best way to construct a story? I recommend these five stages:
 - The Gasp (Grab attention);
 - The Inhale (“What will happen next?”);
 - The Holding of Breath (“Will everything be ok?”);
 - The Exhale (“Yes! It will!”);
 - The Whew (unless there’s not a “whew” because things are not “ok”).

(e.g., <http://bit.ly/PHPuppyLove> Darling during your workday? You’re welcome.)

5. In each of the five stages of a well-told story, different chemicals are released. I know - you’re a communicator, not a chemist. So just remember: *internal* chemicals (and corresponding emotions) lead to *external* action. Stories with a positive resolution release chemicals like PEA, oxytocin and endorphins, and can leave the audience feeling more relaxed, generous, open, creative and connected. Negative outcomes release chemicals like cortisol and adrenaline, and can leave the audience feeling angry, uncreative and overly focused on short-term responses.



6. A “well-told” story is one that reaches your audience. You will only reach your audience and transport them into the world of your character *if they can relate to that character*.
 - a. Consider your source. I know your boss is wonderful, but he or she may not always be the person best suited to reach every audience.
 - b. Watch your words - and watch this: <http://bit.ly/PolConvos>
 - c. Don't take more time or space than you need to convey your message. Sometimes shorter is better, e.g. <http://bit.ly/BrainOnDrugsPSA>
 - d. Use “social math.” Use relatable images rather than big numbers, e.g., measure in swimming pools, local football fields, etc.
 - e. Show transformation. Before and after. What changed? What caused the change? Why was that change important?
7. As frustrating as it may be, it is *not* your audience's job to care. It is *your* job to make them care.
8. Start with emotion - what do you want your audience to *feel* after they hear the story?
End with action - what do you want your audience to *do* after they hear the story?
9. Be creative - in the stories you tell... in where you place your messages... in how you engage your constituents...
10. The good news is that you have what people need (and want) right now: transparency and accountability. Done right, your communications shouldn't need to compete with click bait; you can become a trusted source to which constituents turn for news of what impacts their lives.

Questions? I believe in what you do and I'm here to help.

Contact me anytime: piperhendricks@gmail.com

