

Essay Behavioural Change

Impactful story

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Introduction

I have something to describe to you, but I hope I can explain it very clear. Because I am capable of communicating pieces of processed information, but how adequate will you receive my initial message?

While giving explanations to other people, they won't always receive the information as the sender intended to. I believe that the sender is required to formulate an understandable message for the receiver. That's why I'm interested in why story is an essential part of today's society and what would be a fitting way to improve a story.

Story and behavioural change

A story can sometimes give a more understandable explanation than factual information by using PowerPoints and reports (Denning, 2011). To rephrase; stating facts doesn't always persuade the audience towards action. "Because storytelling is the most natural way of communicating it is easier for the narrator to create connection, purpose, and meaningfulness with the listeners" (Baas, 2019). Denning gave an inspirational TED-Talk about this and gave an example.

Steve Denning is specialized in organizational storytelling and proves that the best way of persuading organizations into action is by using the story element. He shares an example where he wanted to change a bank into a knowledge-sharing organization. Nobody was supporting that idea because it didn't match the initial organization's strategy. Even when he tried to convince the people by using figures and rapports, his concept still got rejected. Finally, he created a story about a villager in Kamana and persuaded his colleagues that knowledge-sharing saved him. They were enthusiastic about the concept and promoted this to management themselves.

So what can story contribute to behavioural change? "Stories are still the best way to create stronger connections with key constituents" (Briggs, 2018).

Media-rich age

When the first television was broadcasting programs around the late 50s, creative talent got the unique opportunity to experiment with new forms of storytelling (Kanarick, n.d.). At that time, there weren't many mediums available that transmitted many incentives to the audience at ones. It was something new, something exciting. Televisions were expensive for most households, which means only specific families could afford one. Those who couldn't afford it probably didn't care about watching TV or came over to watch at someone's home.

In today's digital age, mainstream media are becoming more accessible to the public, which allows storytellers to distribute their projects at a faster rate. Now we can create new media and sorts of content as never before. Therefore, "content such as online games, mobile movies, interactive television shows, web advertisements, and web edutainment (educational entertainment) are concepts that did not exist in previous periods" (FutureLearn, n.d.).

Unfortunately, it also requires the audience to focus on multiple things at ones at random times. It's crazy to think about the impact media has on our behavioural change. Because what people did before the internet age started, "simply doesn't translate to today's world of multi-tasking, infinite choices, and throbbing impatience" (Smith, 2019). Are we able to focus and process multiple pieces of information at ones? It has scientifically been proven that the human brain isn't able to multitask (Staughton, 2017). Which means that processing just one story is more impactful than processing multiple stories at ones.



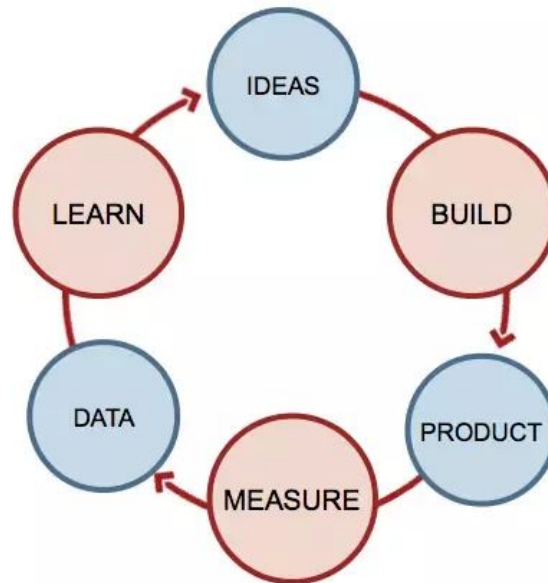
We are used to have multiple media open at ones.

Story improvement

What methods can be used to improve the understandability of a story? For example, a company's identification. I took the liberty to be inspired by a company that sends IT-students to resolve customers their computer problems at their homes. After all, it took that (very long) sentence to explain what the company provides. It isn't as understandable as a shoe factory or a fishing rod discussion group. However, there should be suiting methods that can clarify this mentioned company in a better way.

In the movie industry, stories can be improved by building, testing and adapting a project by making a learning loop in an agile way (Higgs, 2014). This is something Film4 did on their work "20,000 Days on Earth". A term that comes across while looking at this learning loop is called 'personalized storytelling'. In combination with 'adaptive storytelling' (change the story based on the audience's interest), this method uses characteristics of the audience to improve the initial

story-path into a more interesting one (Vayanou et al., 2012). In other words, you make a customized story based on what the audience would like to experience.



Agile learning loop as a simplified diagram

So if you want to narrow that very long company identification, make a start somewhere and test if the target audience can understand it. Write down their remarks and start rebuilding the identification.

Steve Denning gave an example in his TED-Talk about the American Presidential elections in 2000: George W. Bush against Al Gore. “If elections were determined on a rational basis Al Gore would be winning this election by a mile” (Denning, 2011) because he had twenty-four years of national and international experiences and foreign policy triumphs. George W. Bush had neither. Both candidates got the chance to tell their stories on a television debate. However, Al Gore lost the election by telling the wrong stories; “They have the opposite effect of what he’d hoped to achieve” (Denning, 2011). Fast-forward to 2007, Al Gore is spreading change messages around the world for large enthusiastic audiences and even won an Oscar and Emmy and a Nobel Peace Prize. That’s what can be achieved by improving stories and listening to what your audience want.

Conclusion

Even when presenting straight facts, the story element is essential when explaining very complex concepts. It even makes audiences enthusiastic about that conceptual idea and enables them to

be inspired. That's why choosing the right storytelling-method is becoming more crucial in today's society.

Applying the appropriate medium for the story is very important as well. Because there are many types of media available that requires the audiences to get used to a specific phase of multi-tasking, duration and type of storytelling. Video, for instance, requires the human senses to process information in a different manner than a book. This essay could've made a better impression when it was something else than a document. Like a game for example.

That is something you, as reader, can only decide. Because while the story comes together, it's important to experiment with learning loops and ask your (potential) audience for feedback. Adapt their remarks about the story and test it again (like I did with this essay). It should become more understandable and impactful to the target audience.

So if anyone is looking for a new way of explaining ideas in an impactful manner, storytelling can be just the method you need.

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