


# Your Stories. Your Brand.

UNCOVERING YOUR OWN  
MAGNETIC STORIES



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The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.

*Steve Jobs*



# Introduction

Recently my daughter Alex introduced me to adding wine drops to a bottle of red. Apparently, adding five drops to a bottle reduces the effects that the preservatives in red wine have on you the next morning.

One Friday night the open fire was lit, the bag of chips was opened and the wine drops added to the red wine. It was time to pour a glass of red for both Alex and me.

When Alex went to refill our wine glasses, she picked up the drops next to the wine and asked, *'Mum, you didn't add this to the wine did you?'*

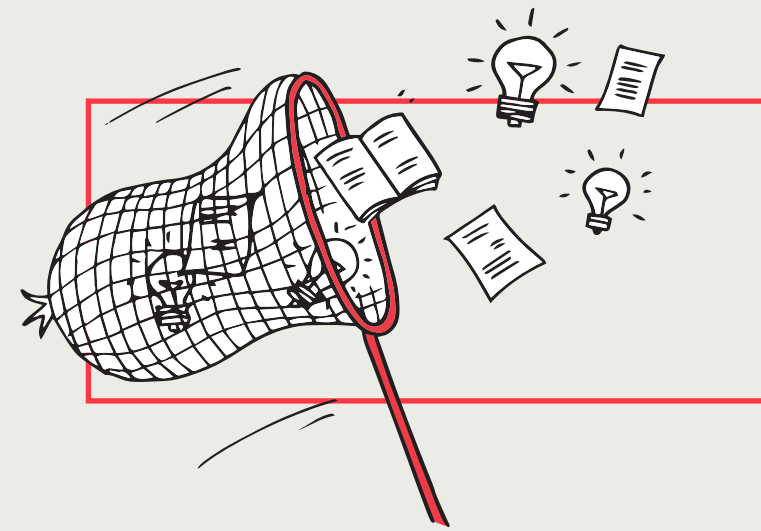
I responded, 'Yes,' wondering why she would ask such a stupid question. Especially considering she was the one that got me using the wine drops in the first place.

Alex exclaimed, *'Because these are eye drops not wine drops ...you have probably poisoned us!'*

My initial reaction was to wonder which idiot left the eye drops next to the alcohol sitting on the bench rather than putting them back in the medicine cabinet. I'd also like to point out that the bottles were the exact same style, just different colours. The eye drops were called Blink – Relief with every blink. Even if I'd read the label, I could have easily thought it said Drink – Relief with every drink. So, it was an easy mistake to make!

Upon further consideration, I decided that I was going to find a way to share this story and added it to my ever expanding list of stories. The story ideas I collect can then be shared to communicate a message. This specific example is a great anecdote that could easily be linked to the consequences of making assumptions.

**When it comes to sharing stories, you will either start with the message or, as this example shows, with the story.**



**Your Stories: Your Brand** has been designed to help you do both. To gain clarity on the messages you want to communicate and help you find the stories you can share to more effectively communicate your point.

While the stories you start to capture in this journal could potentially be used for any message you want to communicate, it will focus on your own personal brand. So, using this journal should help you find and share stories that can amplify your brand.

The process can start with either finding your stories or defining your brand. Both approaches are fine, but I'd like to start by helping you collate all the potential stories you could use. This is because you might find some great stories you could use for other messages besides your brand.

If you would prefer to start with defining your brand, feel free to skip straight to that section.

*Let's get cracking and look at a few ways to find your own stories.*



01



DEFINE YOUR  
**brand**

## WHAT IS brand exactly?

If you search the definition of 'brand', you will find an enormous range of terms and phrases that vary greatly. You will also find many articles on how hard it is to define 'brand'.

My favourite definition of brand comes from Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, who is widely quoted as saying,

**'Your brand is what  
other people  
say about you  
when you're not  
in the room.'**



MY VERSION OF THAT IS:

**Your brand is the stories people  
share about you when you are  
not in the room.**

The stories you share can have either a negative or positive affect on your brand. So the sooner you are aware and take control of your brand, the better.

# 4 Steps to Defining Your Brand

HERE IS A 4-STEP APPROACH TO DEFINING  
YOUR BRAND.

## 01 First step

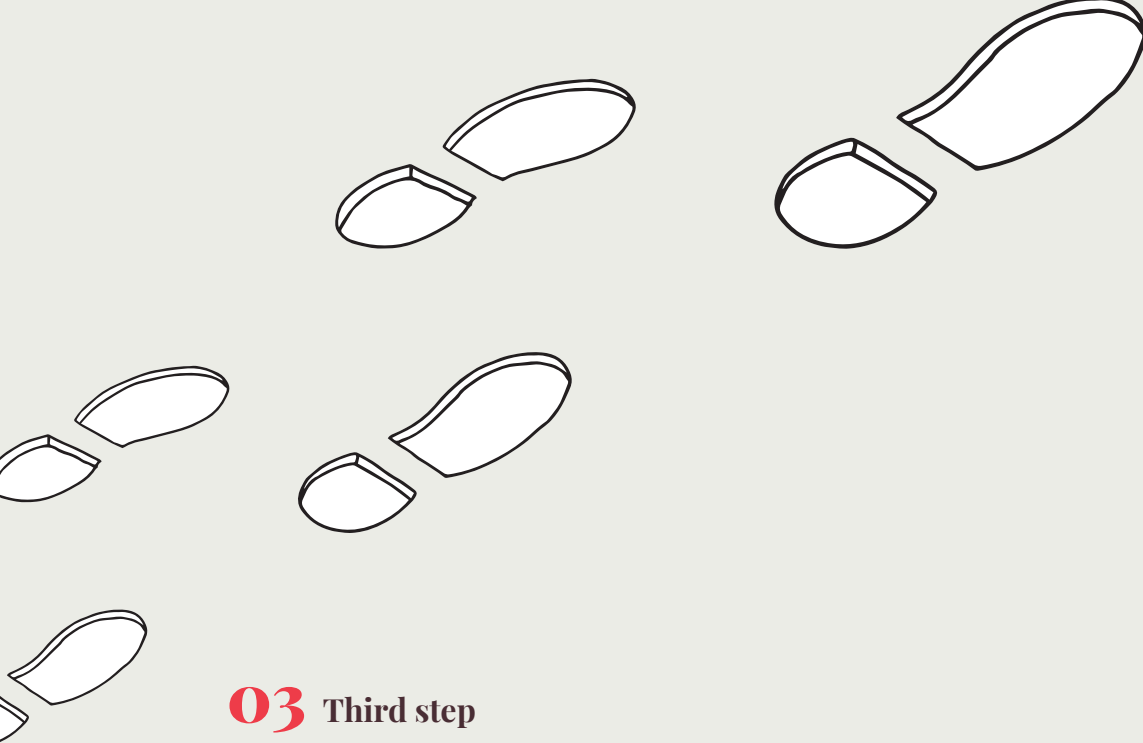
Think about what you want your desired brand to be. What are five words or phrases that you would like people to describe you with? It's important to be realistic here. This isn't a wish list and it's not about you pretending to be someone else. While your words and phrases should be realistic, they can also include room for growth and evolution.

## 02 Second step

Ask five people you have regular interactions with to list five words or phrases they would use to describe you. It could be your manager, some of your team, co-workers, clients, mentors, friends or your partner.

It's important to ask a diverse set of people from different aspects of your life. For example, avoid only asking your family members as this will give you a limited perspective. It's also important to ask people you currently work with rather than a manager you haven't worked for in 20 years. Be selective with your choices, as you want to approach people who will give you honest feedback.



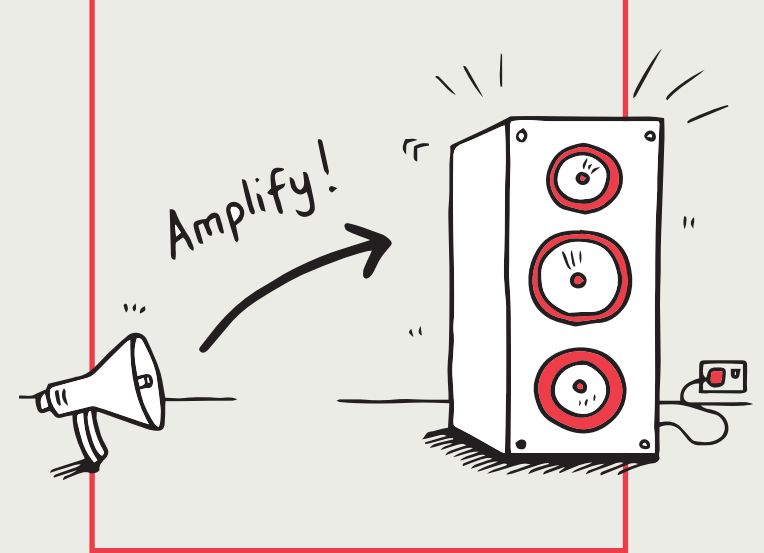


### 03 Third step

It's time to compare the lists. Assess how you would like to be described with how the other five people described you. It's helpful to identify the commonalities and differences as it shows how aligned you are with the brand you project. A substantial variation could indicate a challenge.

For example, if you wanted to be known as strategic but none of the five people described you this way, it would indicate that there is probably some work or change that needs to take place. This is not 'bad', it just means you need to amplify this part of your brand.

Perhaps you wanted to be described as collaborative but all five people referred to you as someone who 'works best alone'. This would be a good opportunity to reassess whether this aspect of your desired brand is too far of a stretch.



### 04 Fourth Step

This step requires you to expand your brand descriptors so that you really understand what each of them involves. For example, if you want to be known as collaborative, what does that really mean to you? If you ask yourself this a few times you might find it has several meanings.

For example, part of my desired brand is integrity. When I think about what that means to me, I come up with the following:

- Doing what I say I will do.
- Acting in the best interests of people I am working with.
- Ensuring I am delivering the best value and service.
- Being transparent and not withholding information.
- Being reliable.

**Your Turn...**

**Do this for each of your brand word/s**

Brand word/s

What does that mean to you?

*Use the lined pages to keep going for all your brand word/s*

## Your Turn

List your Brand Word/s.  
What does that mean to you?

“

Stories  
constitute the  
single most  
powerful  
weapon in  
a leader's  
arsenal.

”

*Dr. Howard Gardner*





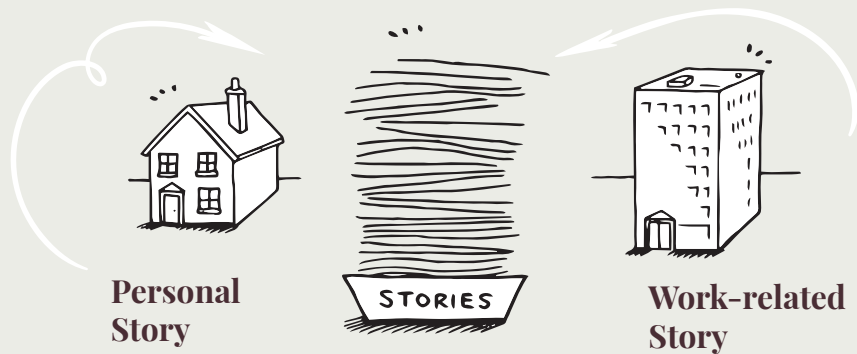
# BRINGING stories together

# BRINGING stories together

## The magnetic brand stories you share

Once you are clear on your brand messages and the potential stories you could use, it's time to match them together. As you link them you might find that one story could be used to deliver two different messages. This is fine and I simply list the story twice.

When you look back over the stories you uncovered, identify which events are personal or work-related. I always find it is good to have a mixture of both.



## IT STARTS TO LOOK LIKE THIS.

MESSAGE	PERSONAL STORY	WORK STORY
Doing what you say you will do	Jess swimming	Cancelling US trip
Not withholding information	Clothes in the sun	Double payment

When you first complete this table, you may not be able to find stories for each message. Don't be alarmed as it is always a work in progress.



As times goes by, you will continually add and replace stories. The purpose of the table is to help you gain clarity on your brand message and subsequently identify the stories you can share that demonstrate your point.

*Have a go matching your brand with your stories...*

## Matching Brand to Story



**Message**

**Personal Story**

**Work Story**

**Message**

**Personal Story**

**Work Story**

## Matching Brand to Story



**Message**

**Personal Story**

**Work Story**

**Message**

**Personal Story**

**Work Story**



## Matching Brand to Story



**Message**

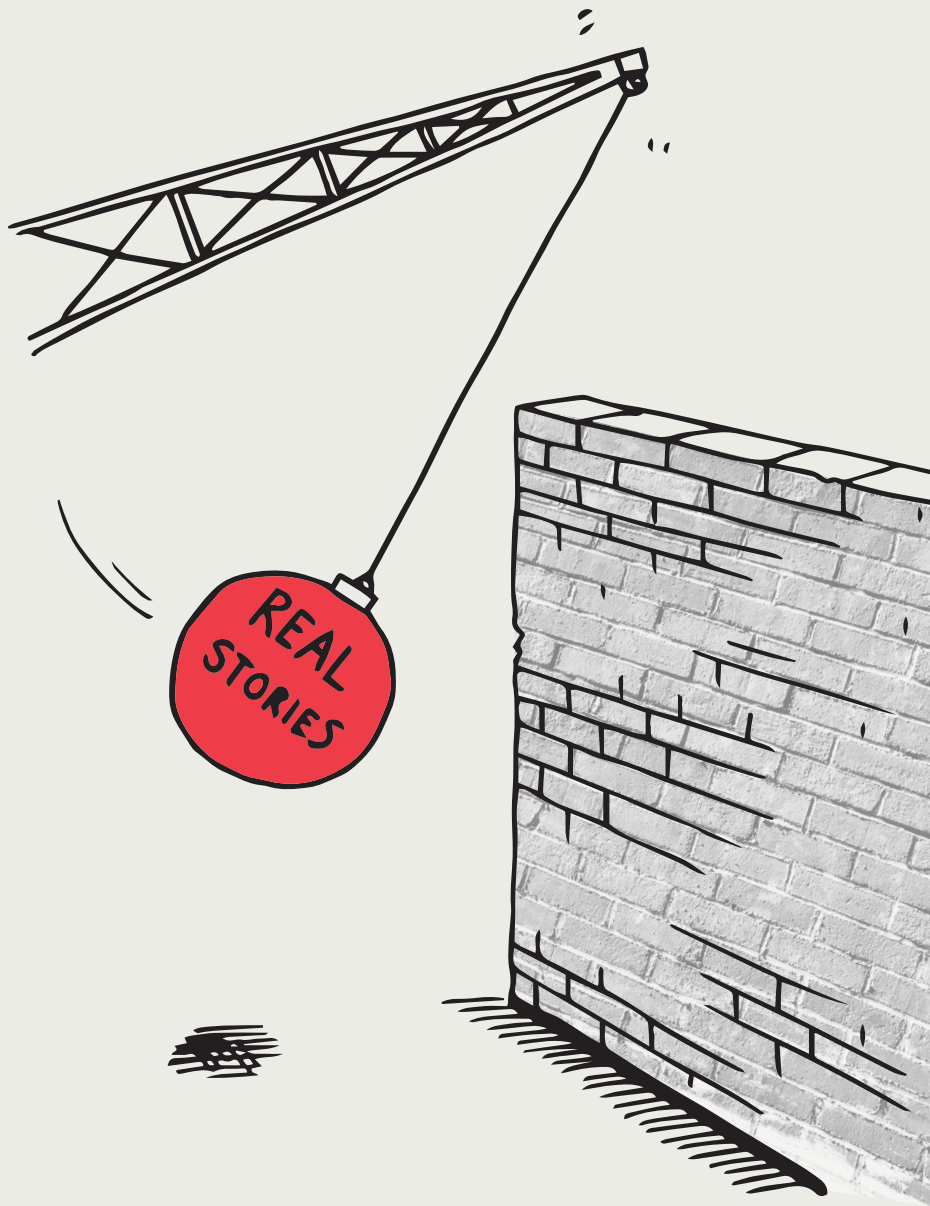
**Personal Story**

**Work Story**

**Message**

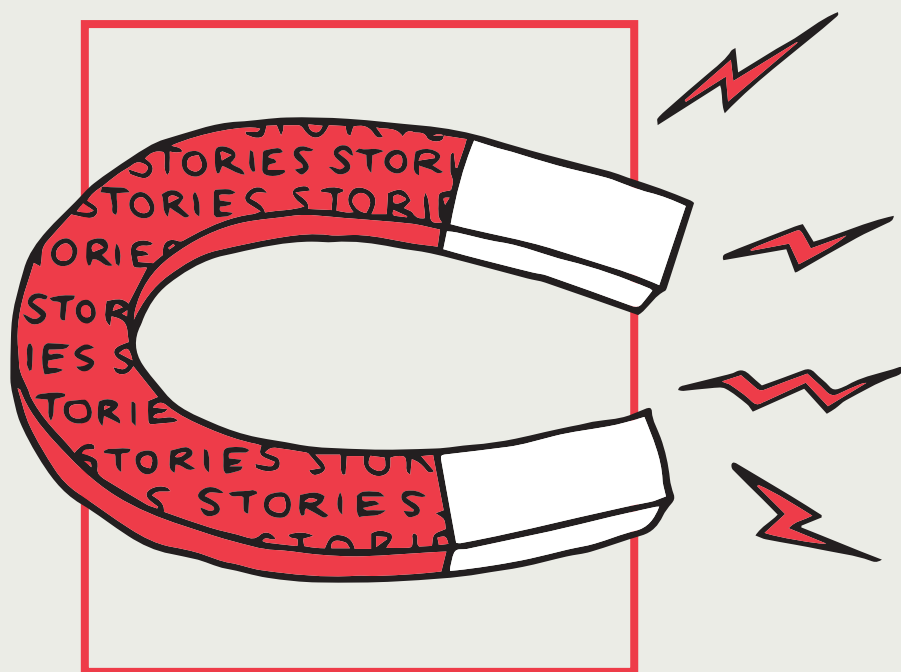
**Personal Story**

**Work Story**

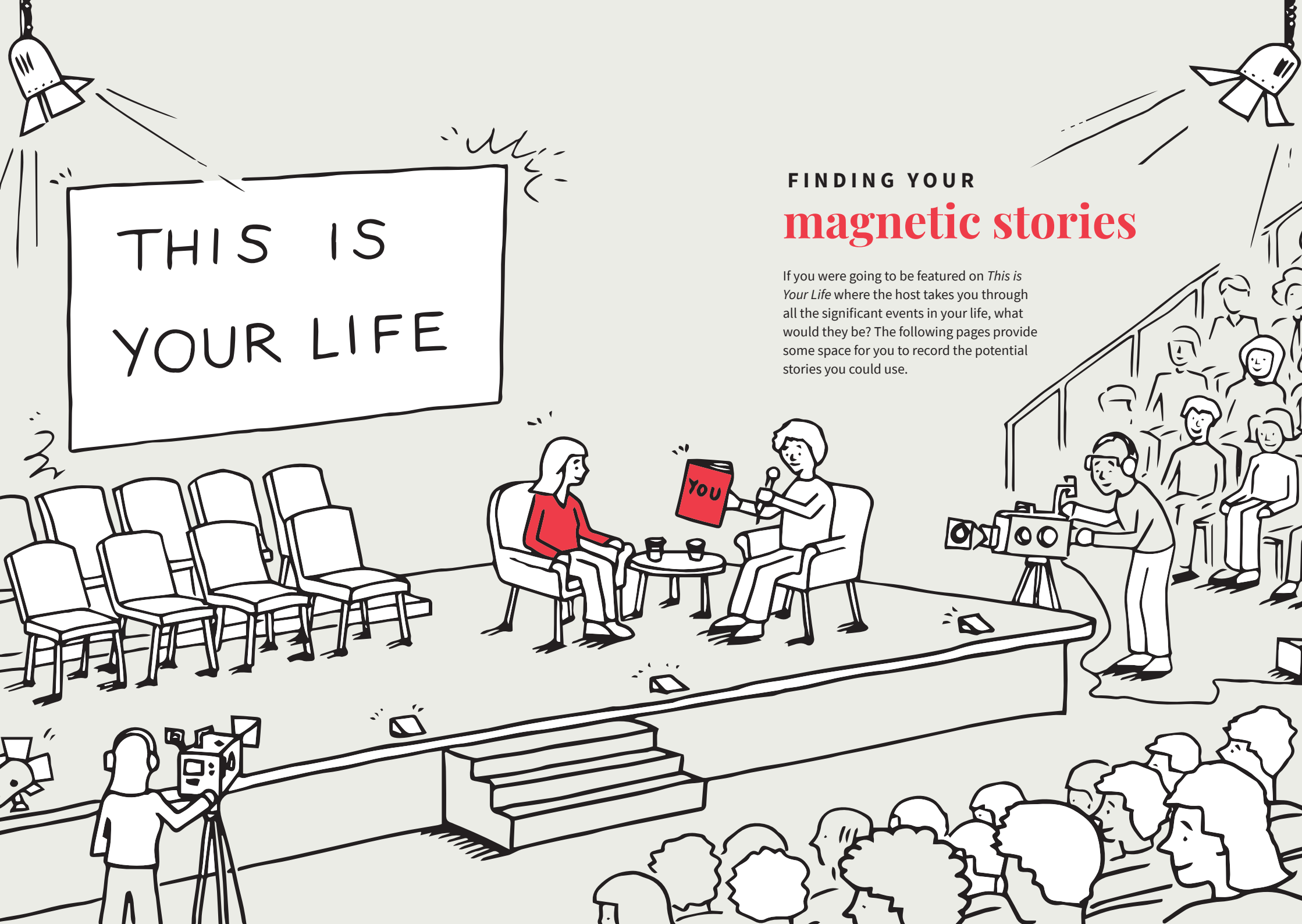


I tell people we focus too much on stats and not story. If we can open up a little bit more to each other and share our stories—our real stories—that’s what breaks down barriers.

*Michelle Obama*



FINDING YOUR  
**magnetic**  
stories



THIS IS  
YOUR LIFE

## FINDING YOUR **magnetic stories**

If you were going to be featured on *This is Your Life* where the host takes you through all the significant events in your life, what would they be? The following pages provide some space for you to record the potential stories you could use.

Your natural tendency will be to automatically record the most significant events in your life. Examples may include moving countries, getting married, having kids, changing jobs, or breaking your arm.

Instead of thinking about this in general terms, try to think of specific aspects about these events. Some of my examples include...

- Deciding to have children after going on a career development course.
- Breaking my arm when I was 12 and not being taken to the Doctor's Surgery for two days.
- Getting married in a pub and wearing a black and gold wedding dress.

The longer you keep thinking, the more stories you will uncover. It's a bit like a metal detector hovering over the sand looking for precious metals. They are often resting just below the surface. Keep at it and you will uncover a range of your own stories that are waiting to be rediscovered.

During this process, you are likely to uncover stories that you have not thought of for years. You might have no idea of how you can use them but that's OK. There's a chance you won't ever use them, so all we are trying to do at this stage is capture them on paper. Not all the metal you uncover will be precious, but you have to search in the first place to find anything.

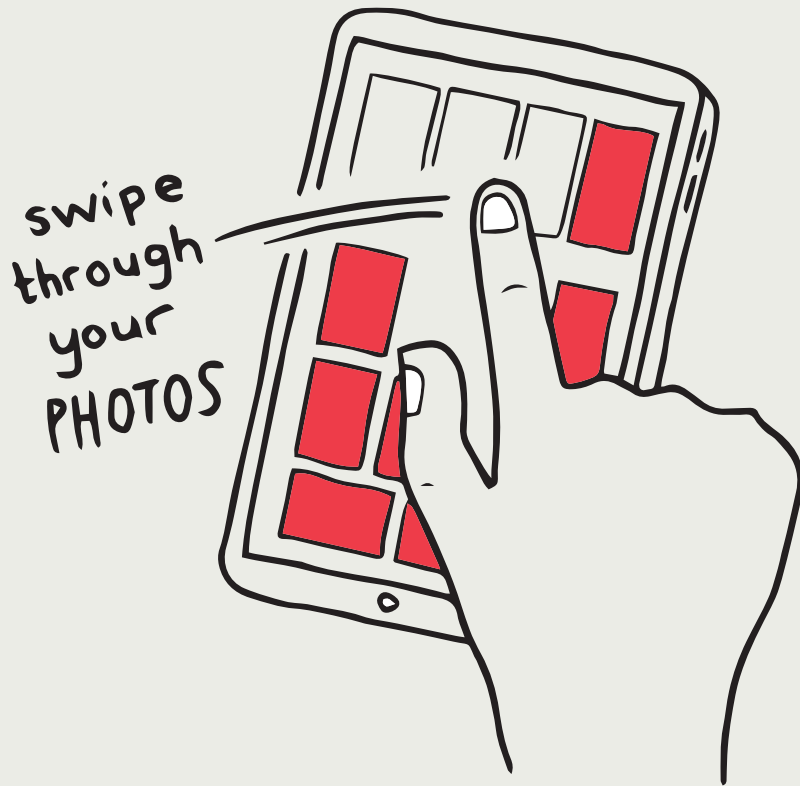


*The following pages are for you  
to start to capture your potential stories.*

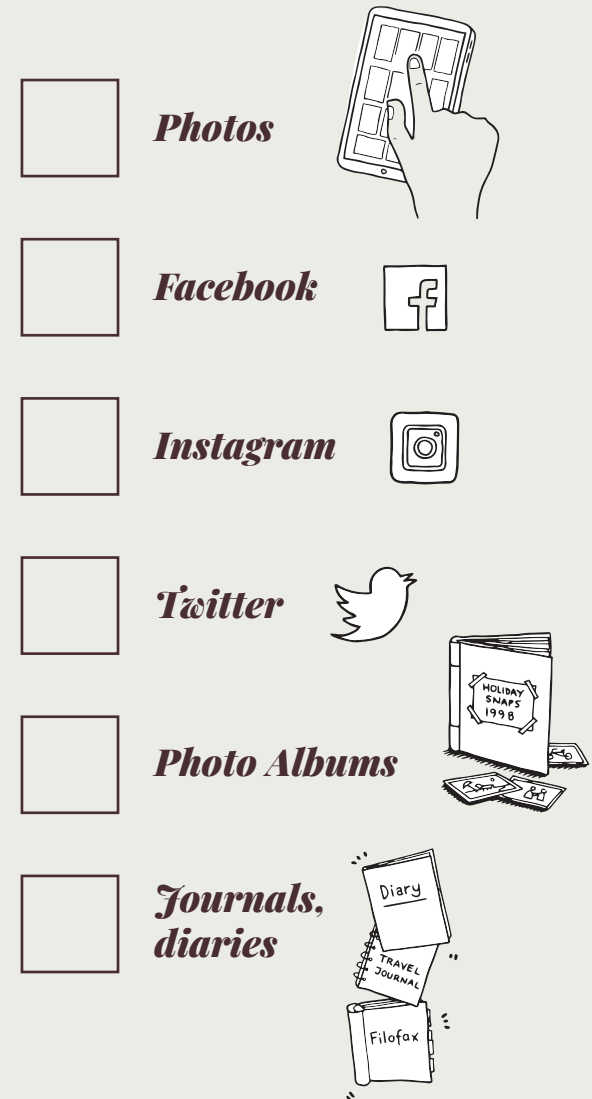


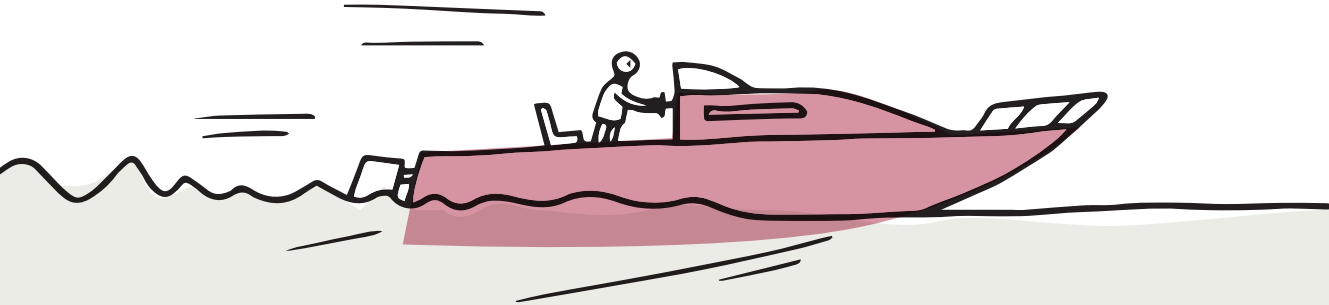
## But wait there is more...

Once you think you have finished grab your phone and swipe through your photos. You will be amazed at how some of those photos will spark the story behind the image. Remember to add them to your list. Facebook or Instagram posts can also trigger some memories. A retro alternative could involve searching through old photo albums or travel journals.



## Finding more stories...





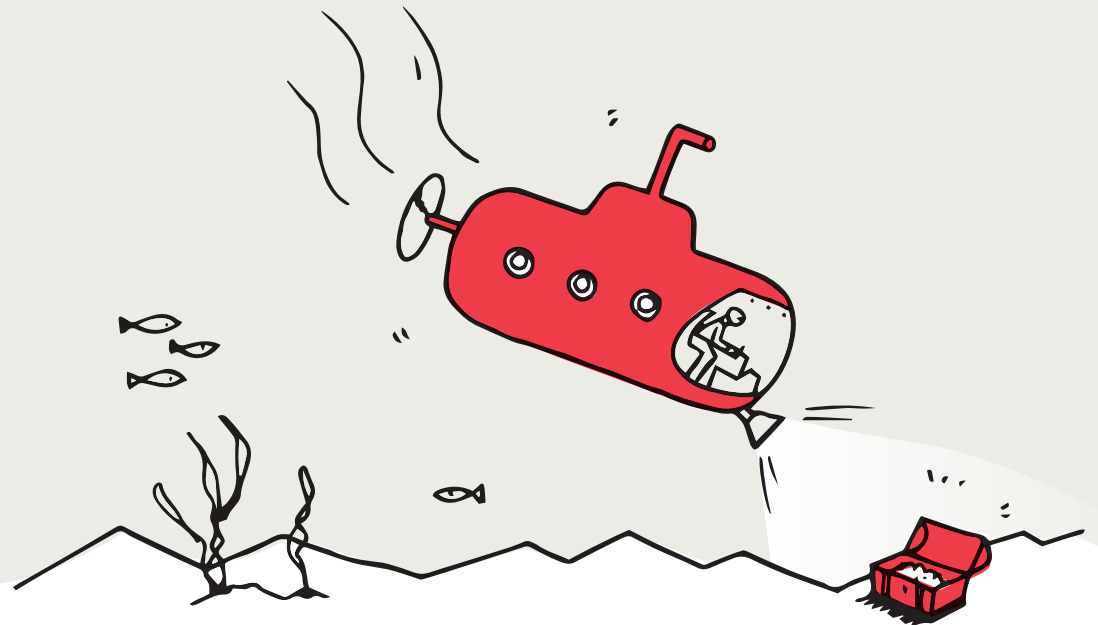
## Not done yet....

Once you have done that, work through the following questions to see if these trigger any more stories. These questions are designed to get you to think a little deeper and come up with more stories.

When we look for stories in our past, we usually skim across the surface and only see the most obvious memories, but there are often more stories to find.

See if the questions on following pages trigger any other potential stories you can add to the list.

*These questions may also help when it comes to defining your brand.*




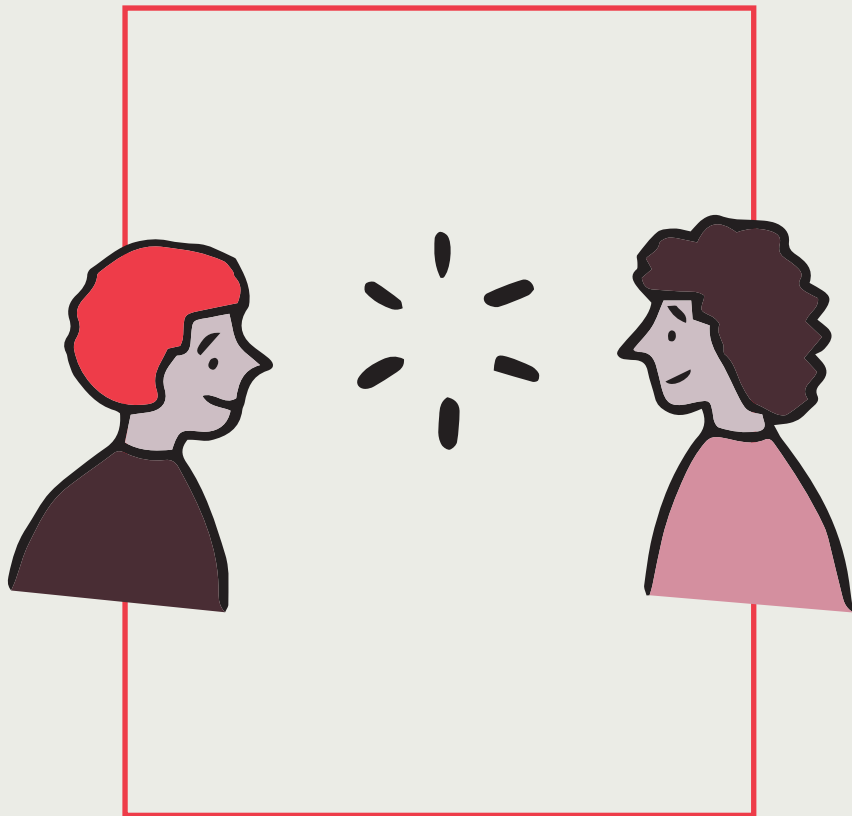


- 01** Think about a time that made you feel proud. What was it and why did it make you feel that way?
- 02** Think about a time that made you feel angry. What was it and why did it make you feel that way?
- 03** Think about a time you felt truly fulfilled. What made you so content and happy? What were you doing? How did you feel? Why do you value this so much?
- 04** Do you have regrets in your life? If so, what are they and why do you regret them? How has a regret changed the choices you've made? What would you do differently if given the chance?
- 05** Think about a time when you had conflicting values. What did you do, and why?

- 06** Think about a time you were really apprehensive about doing something, but you did it anyway. What was it and why did you do it? How did you come to the decision to go ahead with it? What was the end result?
- 07** What is something you are really embarrassed about and wish you never did it? What was it and why did it embarrass you?
- 08** Is there a time in your life that you were given some advice and didn't take it? Did it turn out for the best or do you wish you had taken it on board?
- 09** What values did your parents instil in you? Provide a specific example of them teaching you a value.
- 10** Do you have a favourite teacher, coach or mentor? What was the most significant lesson they taught you?

*Use the next pages to really  
explore these questions*





# STORYTELLING tips

## STORYTELLING tips

### ONLY HAVE **ONE MESSAGE** IN YOUR STORY.

Avoid trying to communicate  
your whole brand in one story.



### KEEP YOUR STORIES **SHORT**.

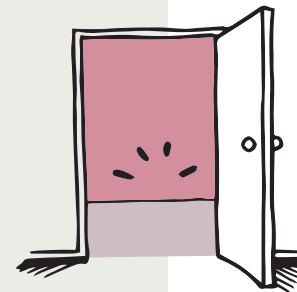
Make sure you have stopped  
talking before they have  
stopped listening.



### **SHOW HUMILITY** IN YOUR STORIES SO THEY DON'T COME ACROSS AS BRAGGING.

### PRACTISE YOUR STORIES...

It will only make them better.

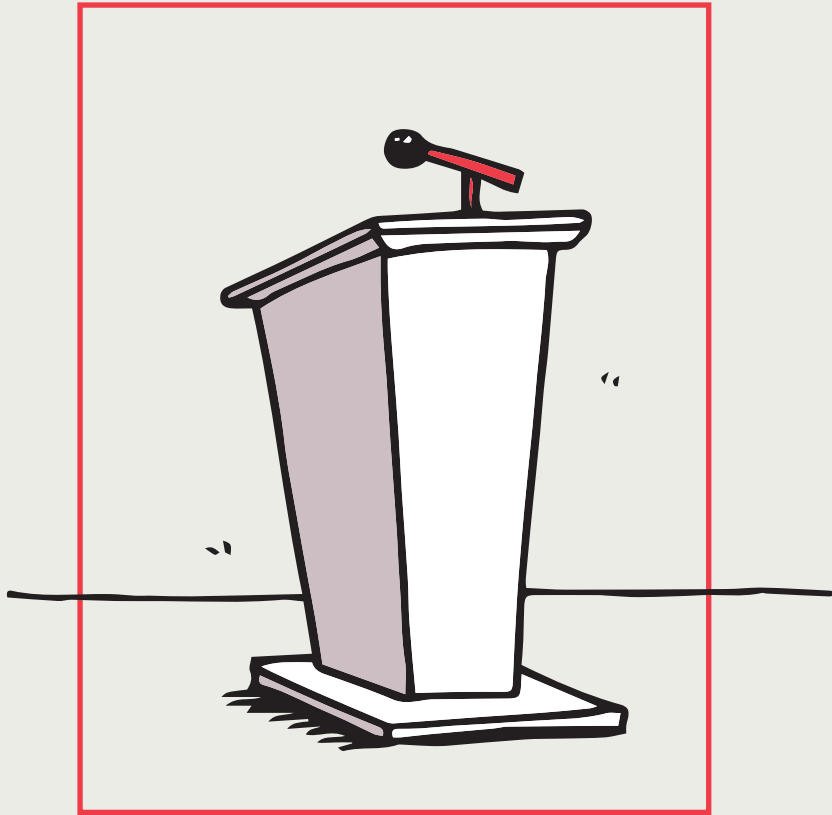


### **FIND DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES** TO SHARE YOUR STORIES.

**What unites people?  
Armies? Gold? Flags?  
Stories. There's  
nothing in the world  
more powerful than  
a good story. Nothing  
can stop it. No enemy  
can defeat it.**

*Tyrion Lannister,  
Game of Thrones*





**SHARE**  
**your**  
**stories**

WHERE YOU COULD  
**share your  
stories**

ODCASTS

ation  
sales  
pitches



PODCASTS

team  
meetings

*interviews*

professional  
development

presentations

*coaching session*

*website*



BLOGS

NEWSLETTERS

VLOGS

*inductions*

*meetings*

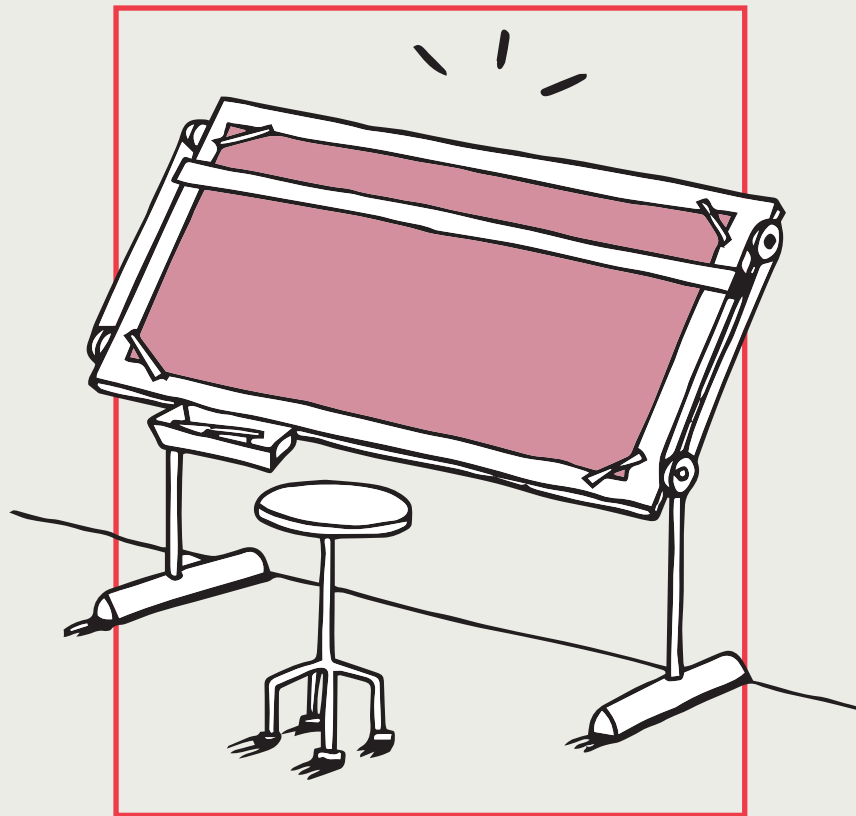
*where else?*



## Time to share

List ideas for where you  
could share your stories here..

06



# CREATING brand stories



## CREATING brand stories

### The magnetic brand stories you create

Once you are clear on your brand, it is not just about the stories you share but also the stories you create. If your brand is authentic it should come pretty naturally to live this way. For example, if you want to be known as generous then you need to be generous. The more realistic and authentic your brand is, the easier it is to live it.

This is still about being you and being real. It's not about pretending to be someone else. But could you find opportunities to demonstrate your brand? Moving from words to actions. For example...



IF YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN AS *generous* WHAT  
COULD YOU TODAY TO SHOW THAT?

IF YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN AS  
*challenging the status quo,*  
WHAT COULD YOU DO TODAY TO SHOW THAT?

IF YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN AS *reliable,* WHAT  
COULD YOU DO TODAY TO SHOW THAT?



## Remember,

Your brand is defined by the stories people share about you **when you are not in the room**. While you can't control exactly what people say, you can definitely influence them.

*You can influence this by the...*

- Things you do that create stories.
- Stories you proactively share.

A while ago, a long-time friend of my Dad passed away. When I informed my friends that knew him, one person returned my message with this story...

*I remember a really nice story about Mr McCarthy from over 25 years ago. At the time, he worked in the finance office at the same hospital I worked at. When your Dad dropped off a piece of my furniture that he had restored, I told him about how I had been rejected on long service leave. Your Dad commented on how that felt wrong.*

*That night I had a phone call from Mr McCarthy, who had spoken to your dad. Anyway, he listened to my story and said he thought a mistake had been made. He then asked me to complete some forms. The next thing I knew, my long service leave was approved. I was so unbelievably grateful to him.*

**This story reinforces how our actions today create tomorrow's stories.**

*What are you doing today that will generate the stories people share about you tomorrow or maybe even decades later?*

## Displaying your brand

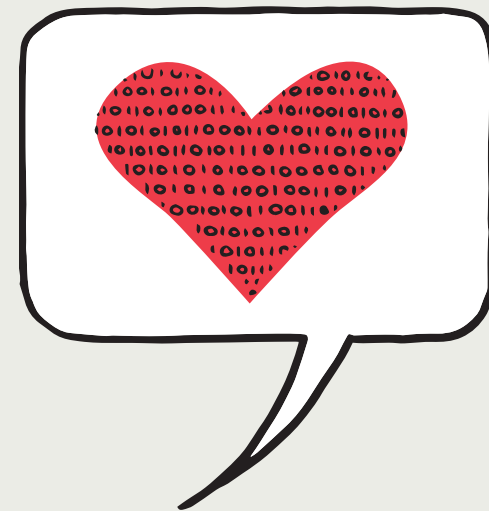
How could you  
demonstrate your brand?

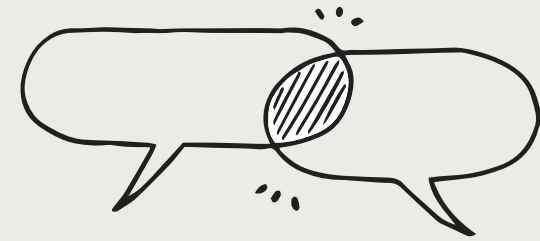
“

Maybe stories  
are just data  
with a soul.

*Brené Brown*

”





# Thank you

FOR HAVING THE COURAGE  
TO FIND AND SHARE YOUR STORIES.

FOR HAVING THE STRENGTH  
TO SHOW VULNERABILITY AND HUMILITY.

FOR HAVING THE WISDOM  
TO BE AN AUTHENTIC LEADER.

AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING  
SUPPORT OF THE WORK I DO.

Together we can change the world  
one story at a time.

x *Ral*

# Stay connected

THE BEST WAYS TO GET IN TOUCH  
AND STAY CONNECTED ARE:

<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:gabrielle@gabrielledolan.com">gabrielle@gabrielledolan.com</a>
<b>Websites</b>	<a href="http://gabrielledolan.com">gabrielledolan.com</a> & <a href="http://jargonfreefridays.com">jargonfreefridays.com</a>
<b>LinkedIn</b>	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/gabrielledolan">gabrielledolan</a>
<b>Instagram</b>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/gabrielledolan.1">gabrielledolan.1</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/gabrielledolanconsulting">gabrielledolanconsulting</a>
<b>Twitter</b>	<a href="https://twitter.com/GabrielleDolan1">GabrielleDolan1</a>
<b>Podcast</b>	Authentic Leadership
<b>YouTube</b>	Gabrielle Dolan



# Resources

YOU CAN FIND LOTS OF FREE RESOURCES ON MY WEBSITE [GABRIELLEDOLAN.COM](http://GABRIELLEDOLAN.COM) SUCH AS:

- *7-Day Storytelling Starter Kit*
- *White paper - The Science of Storytelling*
- *White paper - Real Communication*

*Plus links to all my books, blogs, videos and podcasts.*



“

Those who  
tell the  
stories rule  
the world.

”

*Hopi American Indian Proverb*



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