

A photograph of a person standing in a dark, desolate landscape at night, looking at a large, bright campfire. The person is silhouetted against the dark background. The campfire is made of logs and is burning brightly, casting a warm glow. The sky is dark and cloudy. The overall mood is contemplative and solitary.

STORY DESIGN 2

Brand Storytelling

1. What is brand storytelling?
2. The importance of a brand mission
3. Storytelling mission
4. Where do I start?
5. 10 use cases
6. The Story Design playbook: a step-by-step guide to design your brand stories

Brand Storytelling

What is brand storytelling?

Brand storytelling is a process of crafting and delivering **a set of brand narratives** and begin to recognize it as an influential source that can be harnessed to diligently map out the end-to-end customer journey, both **internally and externally**.

Miri Rodriguez, storyteller at Microsoft



Brand Storytelling

Brand storytelling is the use of **authentic, emotional** stories in order to create a **connection**, which in turn will drive growth and customer loyalty.

Brand storytelling can take **a lot of forms**: video, social media post, PR campaign, logo, use of colors, tone of voice, ...

The key to a really good brand is **storytelling**.

Brand Storytelling

Brands are often focused on **themselves** and **their own ambitions**: raising brand awareness, changing consumer perceptions, increasing revenue, ...

It's important to find the right balance between **an audience centric** approach and the **commercial objectives**.

Storytelling relies on **the emotional part of the brain**, align commercial goals with the story.

Brand Storytelling

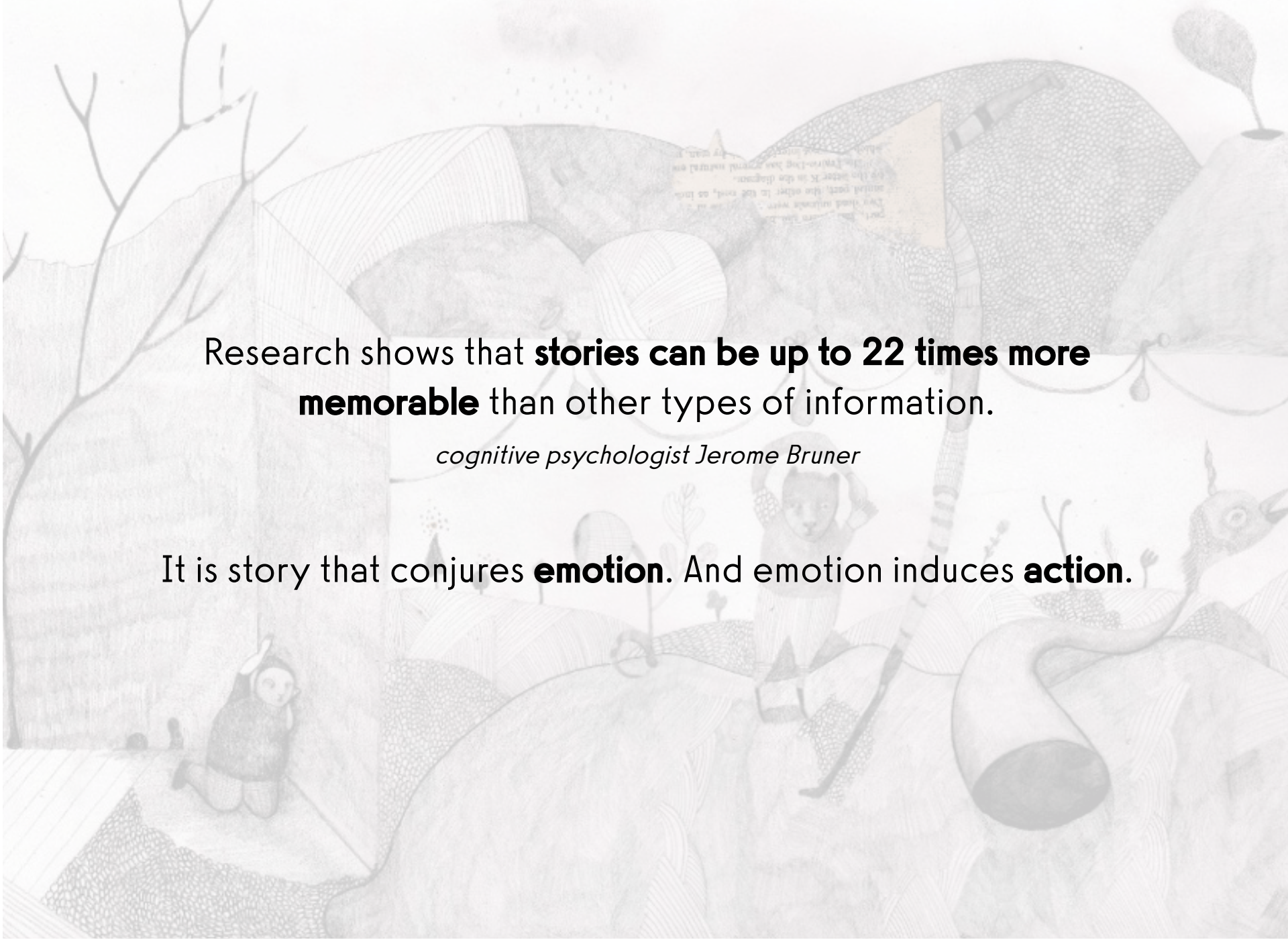
You want to have a main character that feels relatable to your customers:

- Your **customer** is your **hero** of the story.
- You and **your brand** are the **guides**.

If you want to tell a brand story, you will need to find out why your brand even exists by formulating a **brand mission**.

Speaker notes

Having a brand story and knowing what you stand for at the core of your company's strategy does more than just help guide your marketing activities and create consistent messages that connect with your audience. It also gets her team on the same page. It energizes them so that they know where they are going and why they are going there. If you need some help with figuring out the identity of your brand.



Research shows that **stories can be up to 22 times more memorable** than other types of information.

cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner

It is story that conjures **emotion**. And emotion induces **action**.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/DVaSGBAdoow?enablejsapi=1>



Why storytelling?

The brain produces the following transmitters or **hormones**:

- Dopamine
- Cortisol
- Endorphins
- Oxytocin



Speaker notes

- Dopamine, which contributes to feelings of pleasure and satisfaction as part of the reward system
- Cortisol, also known as the stress hormone, which creates an effect that predisposes the person to act (fight or flight)
- Endorphins, which are responsible for our feelings of pleasure
- Oxytocin, known as the “love hormone”, a hormone and neurotransmitter that is associated with empathy, trust, sexual activity and relationship-building

https://www.youtube.com/embed/L1dWpK_VXWY?enablejsapi=1

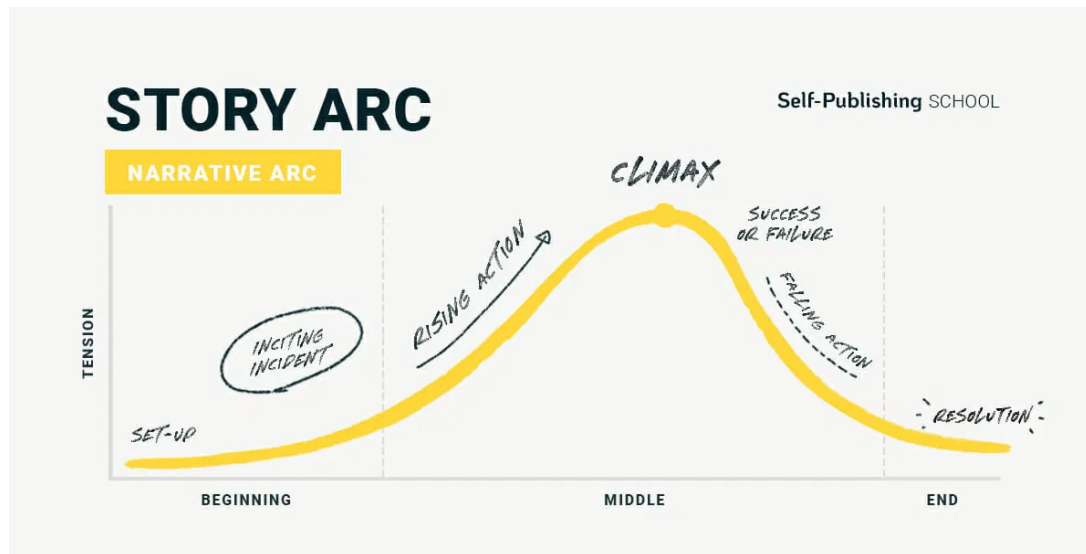


Brand Storytelling

The importance of a brand mission

Brand Mission

An ad, email a meeting, etc. are **all part of a brand story** in the customer's mind and if not designed intentionally to be cohesive, there's a great chance that you may **lose the customer somewhere** along their brand interaction trip.




Brand Mission

As a first step, take a look at your company's **brand mission statement** and begin to decipher if and how it can be **turned into the setting and environment** of your *once upon a time*.



The mission of is to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information. Using our portfolio of brands to differentiate our content, services, and consumer products, we seek to develop the most creative, innovative and profitable entertainment experiences and related products in the world.

A grayscale photograph of a man with a mustache, smiling, surrounded by a large pile of Disney plush toys. The toys include Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Goofy, and other characters. The man is in the center, looking directly at the camera. The background is a dark, textured wall.

*The mission of **The Walt Disney Company** is to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information. Using our portfolio of brands to differentiate our content, services, and consumer products, we seek to develop the most creative, innovative an profitable entertainment experiences and related products in the world.*

A large crowd of people is walking along a path in front of Cinderella Castle at Disney World. The castle is a large, ornate structure with blue roofs and white walls, featuring multiple spires and turrets. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. In the foreground, many people are walking, some carrying bags and others holding balloons. On the right side, a large bouquet of colorful balloons is visible, including Minnie Mouse and Mickey Mouse balloons. The overall atmosphere is festive and busy.

The mission of The Walt Disney Company is to entertain, inform and inspire people around the globe through the power of unparalleled storytelling, reflecting the iconic brands, creative minds and innovative technologies that make ours the world's premier entertainment company.

A black and white photograph of Walt Disney, smiling and surrounded by numerous Mickey Mouse plush toys. The toys are of various sizes and are arranged around him, some in his arms and others behind him. The background is a simple, light-colored wall.

“My business is making people happy, especially children”

Walt Disney



Speaker notes

Making happy, an emotion, something we can relate to.

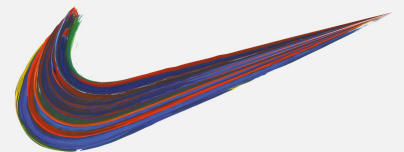
Exercise: Brand Mission

- Find 5 extra brand missions of brands you can think off. You have 90% chance you'll find the mission directly on the brand's website.
- Think about food brands, sports, fashion, education, technology, etc.
- Do they share values? Are they different?
- What can you conclude of all those missions?



To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete (if you
have a body, you are an athlete)

Nike



To refresh the world in mind, body, and spirit. To inspire moments of optimism and happiness through our brands and actions.

Coca-Cola





good food, good life

Nestlé

To spread the power of optimism

Life is Good





Spread Ideas

TedX

A photograph of a Starbucks Coffee storefront on a historic brick building. The building has multiple stories with arched windows and doorways. The Starbucks logo, a green circular emblem with a white mermaid, is mounted on the left side of the entrance. Above the entrance, the words "STARBUCKS COFFEE" are written in large, white, three-dimensional letters. A large green patio umbrella is visible in the foreground on the right, and another smaller one is on the left. The scene is set on a city street with other buildings visible in the background.

STARBUCKS COFFEE

To inspire and nurture the human spirit. One person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.

Starbucks



Our mission is to empower every
person and every organization on
the planet to achieve more.

Microsoft

Brand Mission

Re-evaluate a brand because of the ever-evolving mission statement today: Millennials, Gen Z, Gen Alpha, etc.

Conclusion: Brand Storytelling starts with the brand mission which is the theme of the brand story.

Happiness, empowerment, inspiration, embarrassment, sadness, loss are feelings we can all relate to as humans. It will succeed in connecting and staying connected with its audiences.

Brand Storytelling

Storytelling Mission



1. Story Topics

Who and what is the story about?

Hint: this is where your brand mission statement goes.

Why does your brand exists?

The why gives your brand purpose beyond the product or service. List the topics in your brand mission statement and this will help you to map out storylines for the near future, when you're ready to start designing the narrative.

2. Story Mission

The story mission is the goal you want to give your story. (**Not to be confused with the brand mission**)

What do you hope to accomplish by telling this story?

Aside from your brand mission, the brand story also has a purpose. Similar to a marketing plan, here you explain the ultimate purpose of your brand story. (e.g. gain market share, brand recognition, rebranding purposes).

Are you hoping to inspire your audience to visit your website and learn more about your products?

Are you looking to evangelize your product in a new market?



Story Mission

My story is dedicated to (persona, demographic, psychographic)

so it can help them (mission, end goal)

and make them feel (universal truth)

Story Mission

My story is dedicated to (persona, demographic, psychographic)
the students of Arteveldehogeschool

so it can help them (mission, end goal)
to start a successful career

and make them feel (universal truth)
empowered in a high demanding world

3. Brand Positioning

What is your current brand?

List your current brand architecture (personality, archetype, tone, voice, slogan) to “stay on brand”



4. Key audience

Who is the story for?

You may have more than one audience.

In the story mission, you will likely list who the story is for. But this section is meant to get a little more specific about any and all audiences your brand has so that as you begin the narrative, you are mindful of these audiences.

4. Feelings

What feeling(s) are you hoping to evoke from your audience with this story?

Think briefly about how you want your audience to feel when they come in contact with your brand story.





PEOPLE WILL FORGET
WHAT YOU SAID.
PEOPLE WILL FORGET
WHAT YOU DID.
BUT PEOPLE WILL
NEVER FORGET HOW
YOU MADE THEM FEEL.

Maya Angelou

5. Make it believable

What actionable steps has your company taken to activate your brand mission and story.

What assets do you already have in hand to support your story?

customer testimonials, user-generated content

7. Format and structure

**The manner in which your story will be conveyed
(with a video form?, with a blog series? ...)**



Brand Storytelling

Where do I start?

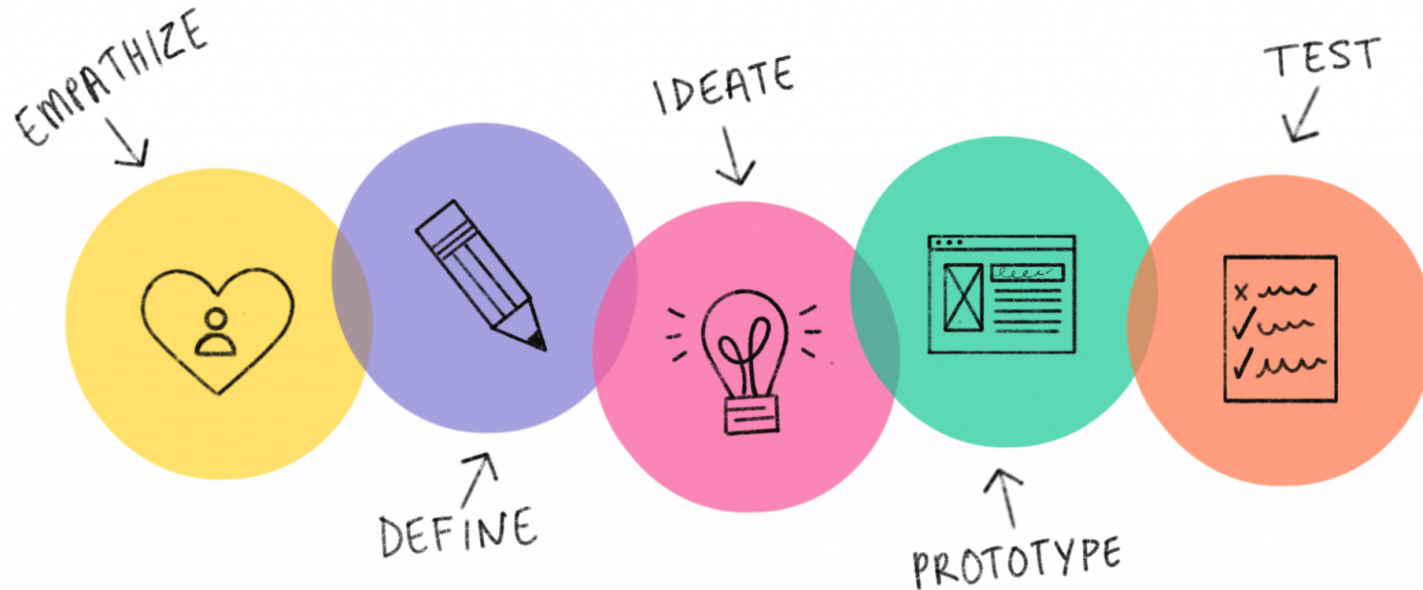


Structure vs Technique

Story techniques are the methods that can be used to design a story, including details of how the story should look and how it should go to market.

Story structure is the foundation of the story, cemented in the elements like character, plot, conclusion, emotion, universal truth. It's the basic arc.

Storytelling with design principles



Storytelling with design principles

- **Empathize** - What emotions are you seeking to evoke?
- **Define** - Who are your story characters and what happens to them?
- **Ideate** - How many story design concepts can we get?
- **Prototype** - Which story concept's will work best for your audience
- **Test** - What emotions did the story evoke?

DESIGNING THE STORY

Step one: EMPATHIZE

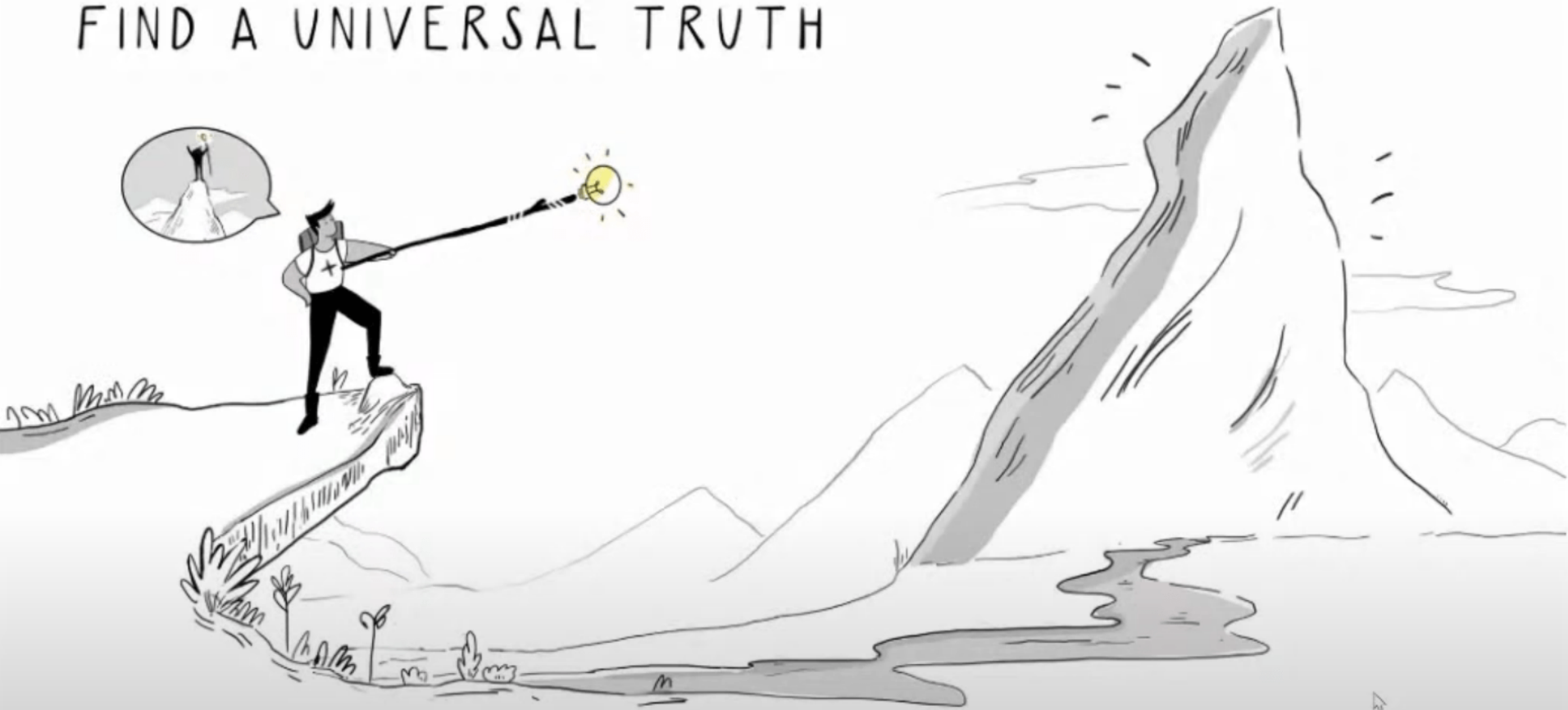
The experience of understanding
another person's...



Speaker notes

- Humanizing the brand is not about “speaking like a human”, it’s about showing up as one.
- Taking time to listen
- Taking inventory on social channels
- Ethnographic observations and surveys are a great way to help gauge where your audience is, how they’re feeling and what type of narrative you should telling them given the current climate.
- Finding empathy in storytelling means understanding which needs the brand fulfills for the customer and, as a result, what feelings the brand story evokes.

FIND A UNIVERSAL TRUTH



WHAT FEELING IS YOUR STORY GOING TO SPARK?

A truth we all connect with, regardless of background, age, gender, religious or political affiliation. A universal truth is an inclusive feeling that makes the story individually relatable to every person in the audience.

COGNITIVE EMPATHY



They are humans

Speaker notes

There are three level of empathy:

Cognitive Empathy, reminds that are audience is human. Leveling ourself of that perspective.

It enables us as content drivers to deliver content with empathy, to zoom out and understand the environment on what is happening.

A lot of brands shifted their mission during COVID

The more we do that the more we can relate to each other.

EMOTIONAL EMPATHY:



We are human

Speaker notes

Second level of empathy. Enables the brand to show up human, to exert certain levels of vulnerability. You brands humanity and authenticity.

COMPASSIONATE EMPATHY



I am human

Speaker notes

Explore our very individual human condition, outside of the actual brand. This is more introspective, by exploring this you are highly continue upskilling your empathy.

Designing the Story

Step two: DEFINE



Speaker notes

Defining your story mission and elements: character, plot, conclusion.

Take time to make a good list of characters for your brand story. There could be main characters, secondary characters, stationary, dynamic, flat or static characters.

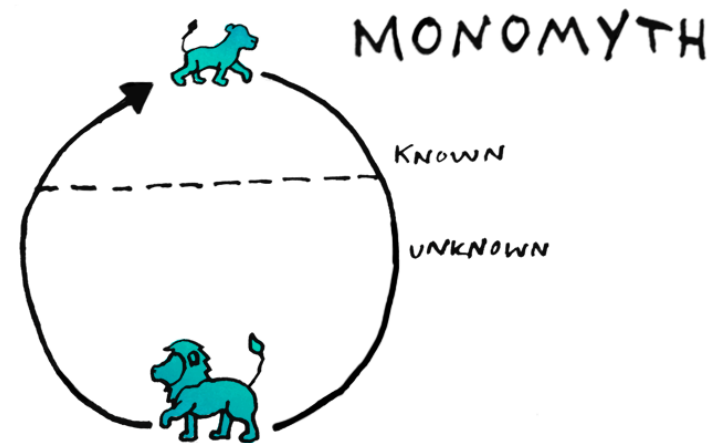
Think back to the basic story arc and envision how each of these characters will unfold in each of the story scenes: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and conclusion.

For Microsoft, the brand story theme and universal truth is empowerment.

The brand story plot is not necessarily stating the problem your product or service solves in the market, but the *conflict* the character is experiencing in the story and how this storyline is going to awaken those feelings we want our audience to connect to.

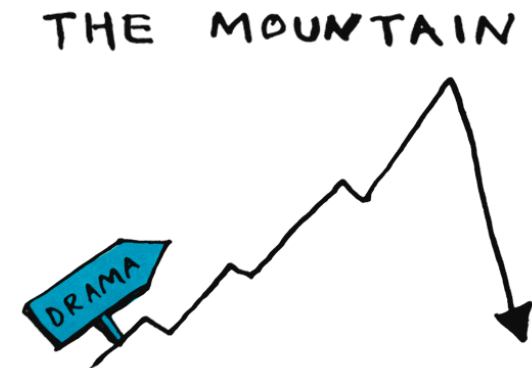
1. Monomyth

- The hero's journey
- Found in many folk tales, myths and religious writings from around the world.
- In a monomyth, **the hero** is called to leave their home and sets out on a difficult journey.
- Move from somewhere they know into a threatening unknown place.
- After overcoming a great trial, they return home with a reward or newfound wisdom – something which will help their community



2. The Mountain

- Similar to the monomyth
- It's different because it doesn't necessarily have a happy ending.
- The first part of the story is given to setting the scene, and is followed by just a series of small challenges and rising action before a climactic conclusion..
- It's a bit like a TV series – each episode has its ups and downs, all building up to a big finale at the end of the season.



3. Nested Loops

- You layer three or more narratives within each other.
- It's different because it doesn't necessarily have a happy ending.
- You place your most important story – the core of your message – in the centre, and use the stories around it to elaborate or explain that central principle.
- The first story you begin is the last story you finish, the second story you start is second to last, etc
- Movie [Inception](#)

NESTED Loops



Speaker notes

Nested loops works a bit like a friend telling you about a wise person in their life, someone who taught them an important lesson. The first loops are your friend's story, the second loops are the wise person's story. At the centre is the important lesson.

4. Sparklines

- Sparklines are a way of mapping presentation structures.
- Graphic designer Nancy Duarte uses sparklines to analyse famous speeches graphically in her book *Resonate*.
- The very best speeches succeed because they contrast our ordinary world with an ideal, improved world. They compare *what is* with *what could be*.

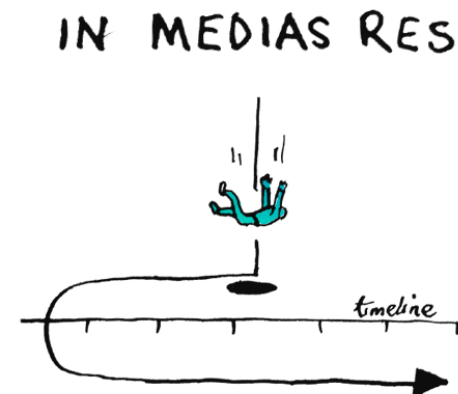


<https://www.youtube.com/embed/DBLw4Hi0SE8?enablejsapi=1>



5. In media res

- In medias res storytelling is when you begin your narrative in the heat of the action, before starting over at the beginning to explain how you got there.
- Try hinting at something bizarre or unexpected – something that needs more explanation.
- Give your audience just enough information to keep them hooked, as you go back and set the scene of your story.



Speaker notes

By dropping your audience right into the most exciting part of your story they'll be gripped from the beginning and will stay engaged to find out what happens.

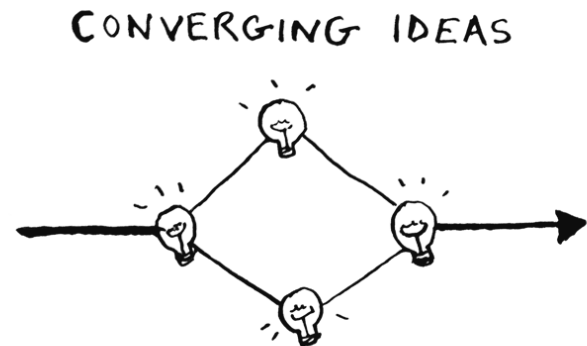
But be careful – you don't want to give away too much of the action straight away. Try hinting at something bizarre or unexpected – something that needs more explanation. Give your audience just enough information to keep them hooked, as you go back and set the scene of your story.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/8L6LJ28IdPk?enablejsapi=1>



6. Converging Ideas

- Converging ideas is a speech structure that shows the audience **how different strands of thinking** came together to form one product or idea.
- It can be used to **show the birth of a movement**. Or explain how a single idea was the culmination of several great minds working towards one goal.
- Similar to the nested loops structure, but rather than framing one story with complementary stories, it can show how several equally important stories came to a single strong conclusion.



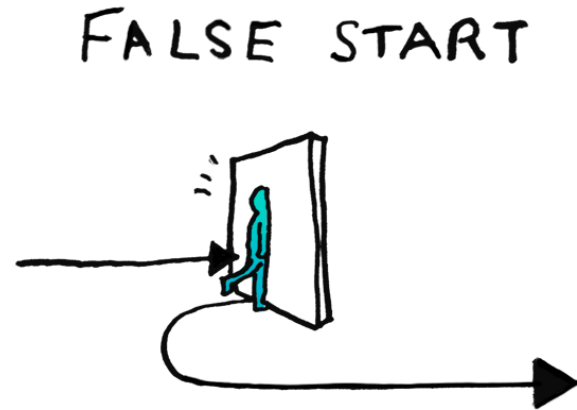
Speaker notes

Lord Of The Rings: all of the characters' stories eventually come together at Mount Doom when Frodo Baggins destroys the One Ring.

Rustin: Activist Bayard Rustin faces racism and homophobia as he helps change the course of Civil Rights history by orchestrating the 1963 March on Washington.

7. False Start

- A 'false start' story is when you begin to tell a seemingly predictable story, before unexpectedly disrupting it and beginning it over again. You lure your audience into a false sense of security, and then shock them by turning the tables.
- This format is great for talking about a time that you failed in something and were forced to 'go back to the start' and reassess.
- Movie [NYAD](#)



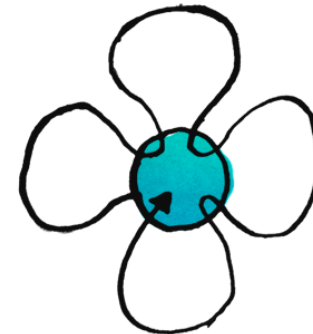
Speaker notes

It's ideal for talking about the things that you learnt from that experience. Or the innovative way that you solved your problem.

8. Petal structure

- The petal structure is a way of organising multiple speakers or stories around one central concept.
- It's useful if you have several unconnected stories you want to tell or things you want to reveal – that all relate back to a single message
- By showing your audience how all these key stories are related to one another, you leave them feeling the true importance and weight of your message.
- [Example](#)

PETAL STRUCTURE



Designing the Story

Step three: IDEATE



Speaker notes

The ideation phase is where you give your story more depth and create a space for story ideas and concepts to flourish. Something to note is that if you're designing the brand story on your own, or with a limited team of people, you will undoubtedly instil personal biases in them.

There are many creative ways to generate ideas for stories. These activities include sketching, mind mapping, journey mapping and SWOT analysis

Step 3: Ideate

- Establish and keep the goal for each session
- Establish the rules of the game
- Be diverse and inclusive
- Inspire the team
- Choose your creative tool
 - Like [FigJam](#) or Miro

Remember that every story should tie back to the brand mission

Speaker notes

Establish and keep the goal for each session - Find stories that best resonate with your audience. Each brainstorming activity should be dynamic and creative.

Establish the rules of the game - The person ideating must understand the expectations and rules to play by during each brainstorming session.

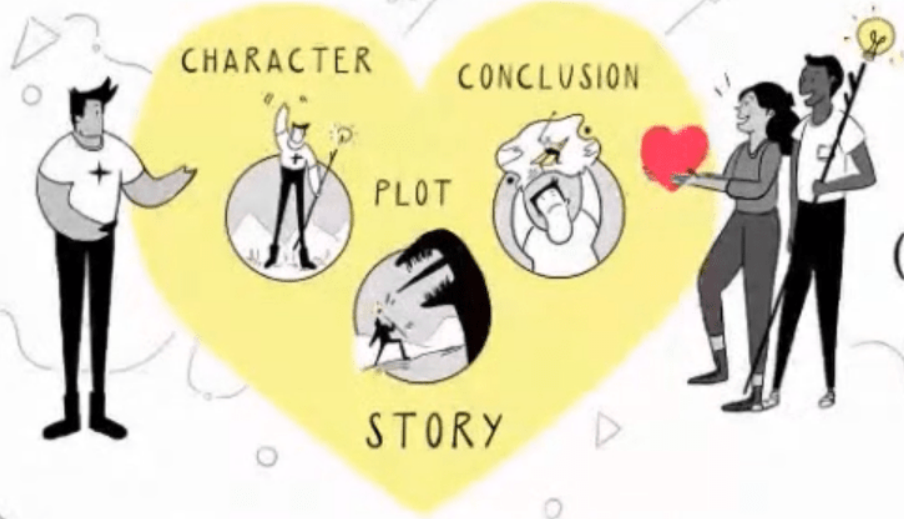
Be diverse and inclusive - The success of giving a story comes from gathering groups of people with different lived experiences, personalities and talents who can contribute diverse opinions and skill sets during the session

Inspire the team - Before brainstorming, inspire via introduction of games, foods, colors, art or activities that build an immersive and inspiring experience

Choose your creative tool - Like figjam

Remember that every story should tie back to the brand mission

If it doesn't
have a character,
plot and conclusion,
it's not a story



Stories are for
your audience,
not to your audience
(empathy, authenticity)

Ideate, ideate, ideate



Designing the Story

Step Four: Create Concepts (prototype)



Take them through an unforgettable
- but relatable - journey

Speaker notes

Start prototyping the ideas, use video, writing, drawing and even visual elements such as color and typography. We're looking to finalize the story structure. Through the prototyping process, you can begin to deduce what works, what doesn't and why.

Designing the Story

STEP FIVE: TEST

ASK YOURSELF:
DID THE STORY
EVOKE THE EMOTION
WE WANTED?



Brand Storytelling

10 Use Cases



https://www.youtube.com/embed/S1zXGWK_knQ?enablejsapi=1

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/ouZ4a5Su2WQ?enablejsapi=1>

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<https://www.youtube.com/embed/iX-KpCq-R4Q?enablejsapi=1>

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/nMITXMrrVQU?enablejsapi=1>

Host stories

Get inspired by success stories from hosts around the world.

35 articles



These property managers used Airbnb tools to boost occupancy

A couple in Paris showcased their listing with quality photos and guidebooks.

2-min read



This property manager increased bookings with Airbnb tools

Find out how a Host in Colorado manages more than 120 listings.

3-min read



A Superhost's journey from listing her home to owning an inn

Get inspired by a Superhost who went from hosting at weekends to owning an inn.

7-min read



This man's Peace Corps experience taught



Hosting helps this Texas rancher expand



A nomadic duo's tiny houses let guests

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/QXY5TyCUTlo?enablejsapi=1>

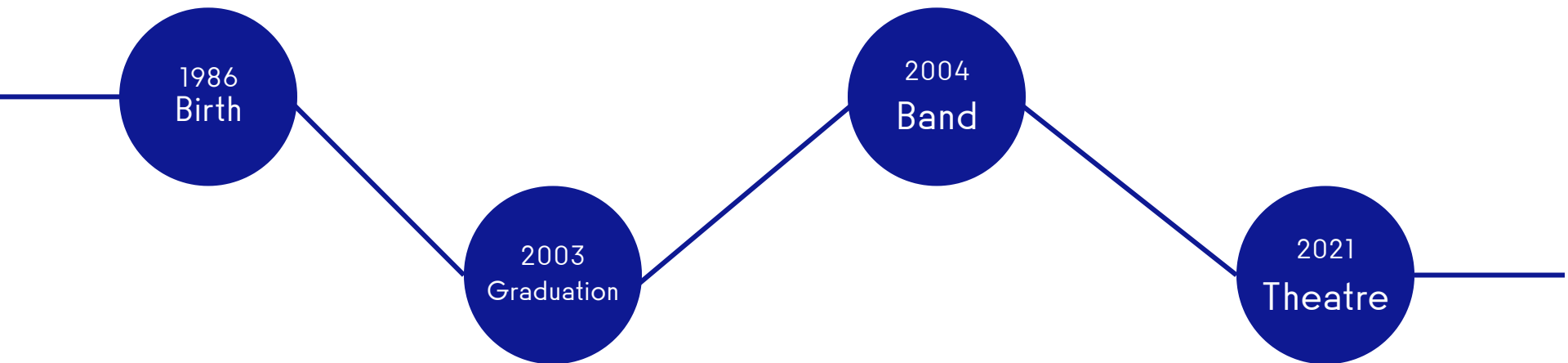
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/UQ15cqP-K80?enablejsapi=1>

Brand Storytelling

Creating your personal brand

1.1 Story Mapping (1/2)

Put together your origin story in milestones. Create a map of your life, start with your birth until you are in the present. This will help you to create your story. Take a piece of paper, start drawing somewhere.



1.1 Story Mapping (2/2)

Ask your neighbor or a colleague how you show up to them. This can be difficult, try to be honest. It will help to define the personal brand.

If someone is rather shy, or outgoing, arrogant, let them know. They can evaluate by themselves if this is correct. We do this in a respectful way.

1.2 Purpose: Brand Mission

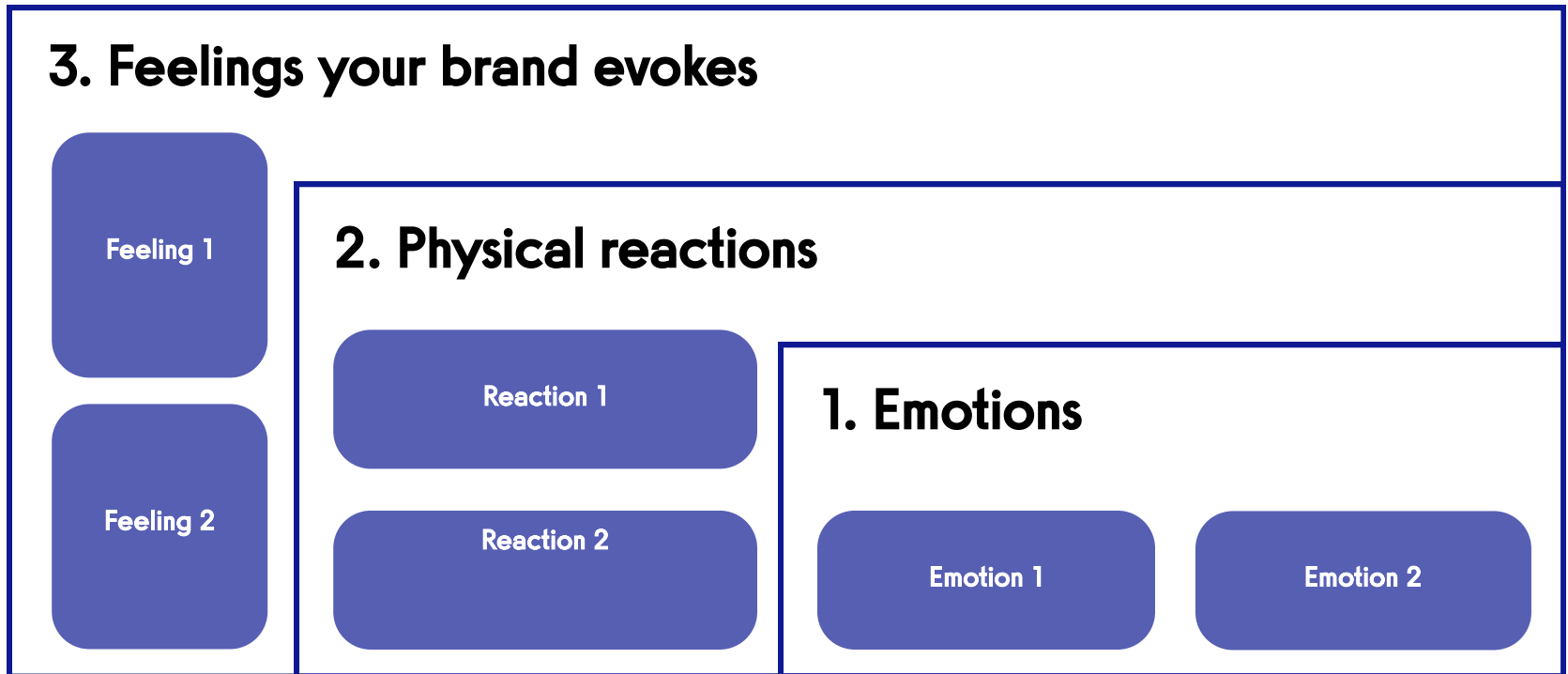
My brand exists to / I am (How do your products/services help your customers?)

Because the world needs (Customer need that your brand solves for)

In order to (Long-term impact of your brand or its legacy on the world)

Remember: a brand mission statement is a short and action-oriented promise that communicates your brand purpose and objectives.

1.3 Brand feeling



Tip: use [Plutchik's wheel of emotions](#)

Speaker notes

Using the plutchik's wheel of emotions as a guide and affectives only, start from the innermost box (emotions) and work your way chronologically to the last one (feelings). From level 1 to level 3, informing each answer from its preceding level.

1.3 Brand feeling (example)

- **Level 1**: emotions, a sense of belonging and inspiration may give the emotions of **Happiness**. Emotion 1: Happy
- **Level 2**: physical reaction, if a person is happy, they are likely to smile and positively engage. Physical reaction 1: **Smiling**, physical reaction 2: **engaging**
- **Level 3**: Feelings my brand evokes are comfortable, **joyful**, **inspired**, **motivated**,...

Goal: to have a visual representation of your brand feeling

2.1.1 Cognitive Empathize

Music my audience
listens to

What my audience
wears

How my audience
smells

My audience's
favorite thing

Colors my
audience like

Foods my audience
eats

Books my audience
reads

Conditions or
illnesses my audience
suffers from

2.1.1 Cognitive Empathize

Instructions: Use the mood board template to collect images that visually represent the humanity and human conditions of your audience. Feel free to add more categories if you're inspired to do so! The more you can envision your audience as a human being, the more empathetic you will become toward them in your brain.

Goal: You will be able to visually communicate the humanity of your audience

2.1.2 Emotional Empathy

Instructions: Write a letter to someone who you love and who loves you (your brand) but lives far away and hasn't heard from you in a while. In this letter, explain what you've been up to, how your brand has evolved since they last saw you and any new events and milestones that have contributed to this evolution.

Time: 10 minutes

Goal: you will have a practical understanding of how emotional empathy for branding works.

2.1.3 Compassionate empathy

In a very introspective manner and without any self-judgement, fill in the blanks to check in with yourself and your current mood. Do this periodically and as often as possible for better results.

Goal: Acquire a new mode of behaviour to better empathize with your audience

2.1.3 Compassionate empathy

Today I'm feeling _____

If I could describe my mood in one word today it would be _____

Something that is depleting my energy today is _____

Today I'm grateful for _____

Today I wish I was _____

Something that makes me happy today is _____

Something that I would like to change about me today is _____

2.2 Define

Use [this definition matrix](#) to answer each question per unit listed. Notice the question “why” is asked more than once. That’s on purpose! It’s prompting you to think one step deeper into the motivation behind your story design. Provide as much details as possible per question.

Goal: you will have drafted the basic story arc for your brand story.

2.3 Ideate

Now you will generate ideas by brainstorming. In the upcoming lessons we will learn how to do this with [the dragon dreaming method](#).

2.4 Prototyping & Testing

This depends on the ideas you have generated. After prototyping you will test your work on a test-audience and see how they react.

During the course we are going to use the [Das Arts method](#) to evaluate the work.

Brand Storytelling

Bonus: extra use cases

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/jD8tjhVO1Tc?enablejsapi=1>

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/QNv9PRDIhes?enablejsapi=1>

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/sym3UZvKjhA?enablejsapi=1>