

GABRIELLE DOLAN

Story
TELLING

for **JOB**
INTERVIEWS

*HOW TO USE STORIES, NAIL AN INTERVIEW
AND LAND YOUR DREAM JOB*

Acclaim for STORYTELLING FOR JOB INTERVIEWS



'*Storytelling for Job Interviews* provides us with the skills and techniques for one of our most dreaded situations - the job interview. I wish I had this book 20 years ago!'

- Paul Matthews

Communications Leader (Operations), Transport Sydney Trains

'Within an hour of reading this book, I felt better equipped to attend an interview, conduct an interview and coach my teenage sons towards a Bradman interview performance. I lead a large team and am often interviewing candidates for senior roles. I would find it so much easier to select a candidate who follows the simple, yet powerful, guidance in this book.'

- Natalie Nunn

Asia-Pacific Talent Development Leader, Ernst & Young

‘The process outlined in this book not only helped me successfully get my most recent job, but I continue to share many of the stories in a variety of ways to connect and inspire my team. I cannot recommend it highly enough.’

- Catherine MacLeod
General Manager, Channel Development, NAB

‘This is a must read for anyone who wants to succeed at their next job interview. The ability to connect with your interviewer, show them your personality and demonstrate your capability in the role is the winning combo that will help you land your dream job.’

- Anna Abazovic
Head of Operations, Seek Learning

‘*Storytelling for Job Interviews* is an easy-to-read book for those seeking help with interview performance. I highly recommend it to those with experience, and also those who are starting out on their careers. The storytelling concepts allow you to put the approach into practice immediately. Learn to be yourself and stand out from everyone else in the interview crowd.’

- Jennifer Goulopoulos
Senior Product Manager, Financial Services

‘The key to nailing a great interview is telling your story. Gabrielle Dolan provides expert, practical guidance on techniques that can be used in any interview situation.’

- Ben Taylor
*General Manager Corporate Affairs,
Rabobank Australia and New Zealand*

‘Stories are an ever-present part of our lives so it is easy to forget how powerful they can be. Gabrielle Dolan empowers job seekers to become conscious and skillful in storytelling to help them put their best selves forward in an interview.’

- Chris Green
Managing Editor, Kansas Leadership Centre

‘This book has a delightfully simple but expressive narrative that clearly explains how to best tell your story at an interview and in the first 90 days of your new role. This is a must-read for anyone just starting out or at the top of your game.’

- James Westwood-Beere
Head of Group People Strategy, Woolworths





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About **THE AUTHOR**

Gabrielle Dolan is a global thought leader in storytelling and business communication.

She's worked with thousands of high-profile leaders from across Australia and the world, helping them to become better leaders and communicators using the art of business storytelling. Gabrielle is a highly sought-after international mentor and keynote speaker on these topics.

Gabrielle has worked as an independent business management consultant and has held various senior leadership roles in change management and learning and development for the National Australia Bank. She successfully co-founded One Thousand & One, one of Australia's leading storytelling companies, before launching her own practice in 2013.

She is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education in the Art and Practice of Leadership Development program. Her other academic qualifications include a master's degree in Management and Leadership from Swinburne University and an associate diploma in Education and Training from the University of Melbourne.



In 2015 Gabrielle became an Australian and New Zealand Partner of Thought Leaders Global, where she works with organisations to help them gain a competitive edge through thought leadership. In the same year, she was also nominated for Telstra's Business Woman of the Year award.

Gabrielle is a best-selling author of *Ignite: Real Leadership, Real Talk, Real Results* and *Hooked: How Leaders Connect, Engage and Inspire with Storytelling*. This is her third book.

When she is not writing or working, she can be found wandering in her vegetable garden at her 25-acre rural property on the southern coast of New South Wales. She believes the world would be a better place if there was less manure in business and more manure in gardens.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who have sought my counsel on using storytelling in job interviews. It's those conversations that gave me the confidence to write this book.

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To the tribe at Thought Leaders Global - thank you for the ongoing support and encouragement to keep playing the game.

Thanks always to Peter Cook for enhancing my models with direction, palette and accuracy.

A special thank you to Elise Turner, my friend and executive manager, who designed all the models in this book, undertook the initial edits and generally just makes my life easier.

Massive thanks to my family - Steve, Alex and Jess - for allowing me the space to write and, as usual, letting me share their stories.

Finally to Mum and Dad, who always encouraged me to be the best I could.

Introduction

When I left school, I applied for a job as a computer operator and was pretty rapt to get an interview in which I thought I performed well. The following weekend, I saw the job advertised again and can recall saying to my mum, 'Obviously I did not get the job'. She suggested I apply again. So after thinking, 'Yeah, right. How lame would that be?', I did. I was asked in for a second interview. The manager said to me, 'Your second letter was a lot stronger. Why did you apply for the job again?' I told him it was because I really wanted the job and I knew I could do it and do it well. I was offered the job on the spot.

Fast forward several years later. It was the middle of the night and my young daughter Alex was screaming for her milk. As my husband, Steve, was heating up her bottle he said to her, 'Hang on, the bottle's coming soon. Good things come to those who wait'. I remember snapping at him with, 'Don't you ever say that to our daughter again. It's a stupid saying. Good things don't come to those who wait; good things come to those that get out there and do something about it and when they fail they don't give up, they try something different'.

Though I was a first-time mother in a sleep-deprived state, clearly overreacting, the sentiment is still

something I truly believe. If you try something and it doesn't work, don't give up - but also don't keep doing the same thing.

I've been putting this philosophy into practice since 2005, working with business leaders and professionals to help them overcome obstacles at work, communicate in a more engaging and inspiring way and empower their team through the use of business storytelling. Over the last few years, more and more people have asked me to mentor them and help them use these personal and professional stories as a way of communicating their capabilities in upcoming job interviews.

This book is an accumulation of that knowledge and experience. It will equip you with the tools and techniques you need to stand out against the many other job applicants who are similarly qualified to you. You'll learn to try something different, to tell stories about your personal and professional life that demonstrate your values and how valuable an asset you will be to a team, organisation and your future employer. Ultimately, this book will help you nail that job interview and land your dream job.

For many years, the preferred method of conducting interviews has been the Behavioural Event Interview (BEI) technique. It involves the interviewer asking questions about specific situations, such as: 'Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an angry customer. How did you handle the situation?' You could answer the question with something broad and theoretical like: 'I showed empathy by understanding the customer's complaints and then explained the process and why this occurred'.

If you're interview savvy, you've probably prepared for the types of questions you're going to be asked (a quick Google will result in thousands of these). But how many other people going for that same

job will have Googled and prepared for the same questions, and will answer them in exactly the same way?

What would differentiate you from all the other applicants is a story about a specific situation and how you solved it practically. For example, 'There was this one time when a customer ... I solved the problem by ...' This facilitates a process of two-way communication, and your interviewer will then ask follow-up questions like, 'Why did you do that?' Think of it like a maths test - getting the correct answer is only one part of it; you need to show how you worked it out and got the final result.

So, as you work through this book, you'll look at examples of the four types of stories you need to nail an interview. You'll then identify your own stories to show how you have practically dealt with certain situations and problems from your personal and professional life. You'll then put this knowledge into practice, following five steps to construct your own stories. During this process, you will define what the job position entails, how your capabilities and values match what the employer is looking for and how to select the right story to effectively demonstrate this.

In this book, you'll learn:

- why stories are so powerful in business today
- how stories distinguish you from the rest of the interview pack
- how to land a job in less than three interviews (instead of over 50)
- what four story types you need to nail a job interview
- how to put storytelling techniques and skills into practice
- how to define, find, match, construct and prepare stories
- how to prepare for tricky questions like:
'What's your biggest weakness?'
- how to use your stories in the first 90 days of your new role and beyond.

So what are you waiting for? Let's get to storytelling work.

CHAPTER 1

From boring **TO BRADMAN**

Sir Donald Bradman was an Australian cricketer in the 1940s and is widely acknowledged as the greatest cricketer in history. He had an unprecedented and extraordinary batting average of 99.94 – to put that into perspective, the closest anyone else got at the end of their career was 60.97.

When I was young, I played cricket endlessly in the backyard with my brothers and in the street with my cousins and friends. Every game would start the same way. Two kids would be chosen as the captains and they would then take it in turns to pick their teams. Normally the captains would choose the best cricketers first or would choose their closest friends.

If Don Bradman, the greatest cricketer of all time, was in that line-up he would undoubtedly

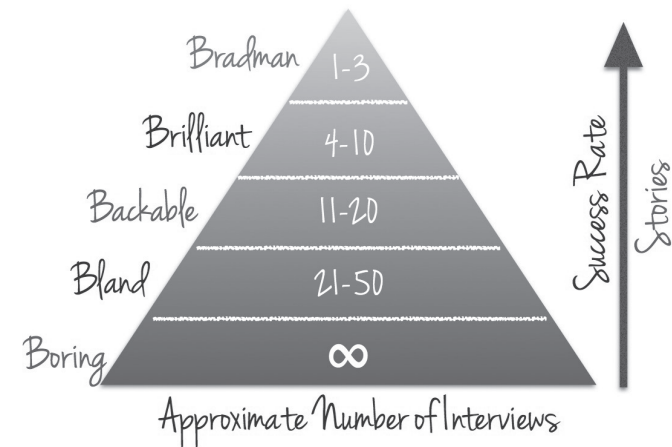
have been picked first every single time – unless the captain had a very strong allegiance to his best friend, but it would have to be very strong to risk losing Bradman to the other team, which you would if you didn't pick him first.

So let's imagine you're being interviewed for a job, lining up alongside all the other contenders. What Bradmanesque qualities do you have that would ensure you get picked first every time?

You don't have to know who Don Bradman is to play out this scenario. The analogy works for any other person or athlete that you consider a leader in their field – Serena Williams, Pele, Nadia Comaneci or Babe Ruth, for example.

Figure 1 is a model that shows the number of interviews you probably go for before you are successful at getting a job. The closer to being a Bradman you become, the more you're using stories in your interviews and the fewer interviews you have to go to before you're successful.

Figure 1: The Bradman interview success model



Where are you now?

Do you feel like you go for hundreds of interviews and never seem to get anywhere? Have you ever considered that you may be presenting yourself in a *boring* or *bland* way? That's not to say you are a boring or bland person; it's just likely that you don't use any stories at all in job interviews, or you use them incorrectly, in a way that gives away nothing about your personality to the person interviewing you. In other words, you're playing it safe.

What about if you're *backable*? You probably share relevant work-related stories that demonstrate your skills, capabilities and experience, but are left wondering why you're not getting picked. You tick all the boxes; you can do the job. But there's something missing that would make you stand out as *brilliant* compared to the other candidates.

If you're prepared to share a combination of personal and professional or work-related stories you'll be seen as a *brilliant* candidate. You've probably been very successful in the past getting jobs and have not had to go to many interviews because of that high success rate. But what if you're up against a Bradman, Serena Williams, Pele, Nadia Comaneci or Babe Ruth? (Which you will encounter at some stage of your career.)

To be a Bradman, and continue to be a Bradman, you've got to put in some hard work. You must dedicate time and energy to prep for any interview. As a young child, Don Bradman would hone his cricketing skills over and over: not only hitting a cricket ball with a cricket bat, but also hitting a golf ball with a cricket stump against corrugated iron to make the ball rebound in unpredictable directions. Wherever you sit on this model right now, there is always room for improvement. That's where learning to tell stories will help.

What is storytelling?

Storytelling is not a new concept. Ever since humans have been able to communicate they have done so through stories. Just look at the Aboriginal culture in Australia. It's the oldest cultural history in the world that's still alive today, thanks to generations of master storytellers and their Dreamtime storytelling.

It is only recently, however, that the business world has realised and embraced the power of stories. Storytelling in business is now not only accepted as a key leadership competency and communication skill, but is encouraged and highly sought after.

Just because something is labelled a story, however, doesn't mean that it is a story. There's a big difference between storytelling in business and storytelling you use at home with your family and friends to explain what you had for dinner or what your cousin Jill did last week.

So what is a story?

A story has a sequence and structure around a specific event. It contains sensory and emotional detail.

When you share a story in a business context, such as a job interview, your story must have the following three ingredients for it to have impact:

1. *purpose* – what is the point of your story? This is not about sharing random stories that leave your interviewer thinking, 'What has this got to do with anything we're talking about?'
2. *authenticity* – is this story true? Never, ever make up stories – no matter how tempting it might be to land your dream job. Lying is not worth the damage it can cause to your credibility

Storytelling is sharing a story about an experience, but linking it to a message that will influence and inspire your audience to action.

and you never know when it might come back and haunt you.

3. *congruence* – does this story really portray who you are and what you believe? Don't say you live and breathe teamwork when you actually prefer to work in complete isolation.

You will learn to put these points into practice as you work through this book, finding and constructing your own stories.

How stories help in job interviews

The Greek philosopher Aristotle devised a model over 2500 years ago that is still relevant today. Aristotle said you need three elements to successfully persuade and influence:

1. *logos* (sound logic) – the data, facts and research
2. *ethos* (personal credibility) – the degree of trustworthiness and credibility you have
3. *pathos* (emotional connection) – the extent you connect with someone and they connect with you.

When you're in a situation like a job interview, your main aim is to persuade and influence the interviewer and decision makers that you are the right person for the job. To do that, you not only need to have logical reasons why you are the right person, but you also need to build personal credibility and an emotional connection so that they trust you and feel a connection with you. The trickiest part is that you need to do that better than everyone else and relatively fast, considering interviews generally only go for about an hour, sometimes less.

Most people in job interviews spend way too much time on logic. They state all the facts: 'I'm the right person for the job because I've worked in a similar role ... Have 20-plus years' experience ... Just love sales!' Know what the end result is? You come across as boring and bland and when it comes to the crunch, you just don't seem to have the 'right fit' for the organisation you're interviewing for.

So how can you build trust and credibility and foster an emotional connection with your future employer to land your dream job?

Tell a story, of course.

CHAPTER 2

Four stories to **NAIL AN INTERVIEW**

Now that you know what a story is and why you need stories to land your dream job, let's look at the four story types you need to have on hand for any job interview (Figure 2).

1. Literal story

A professional or work-related story that demonstrates a specific capability you have (more on capabilities later). If you're applying for a similar job in a similar industry, then the majority of your stories will be literal.

2. Learn story

Usually a work-related story, though sometimes it can be a personal one, that shows what you learned from a particular experience. The purpose of a learn story is to demonstrate one of your values (more on values later).

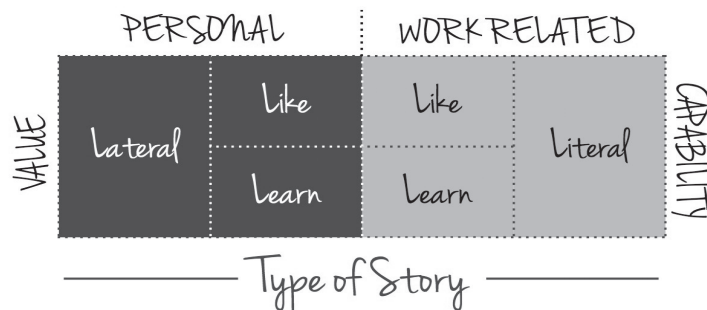
3. Lateral story

A personal story that you can use to demonstrate a specific value you have. This story will show how you align with the organisation's values and how you will fit in with their culture.

4. Like story

Usually a personal story that shows how capable you are at something, though sometimes it can be a work-related story from a different job role or industry as the one you're interviewing for. You may be just starting your career, changing careers or industries or returning to work from a long absence such as paternity/maternity leave or a career break.

Figure 2: Four story types you need to nail an interview



As you work through this book, you will identify a variety of different stories for each of the four story types. You may find that several of your stories could be used for several of the story types. That's OK. As you hone your skills and gain confidence in the storytelling process, you'll be able to mix and match your stories according to the job role you're going for.

You do not need an identical number of stories for each type. You may find you'll be heavy in one and light in another. For example, if you're applying for a similar job, you may have a lot of literal stories and perhaps only one or two like stories. Perhaps you're returning to work after an extended time, or this is your first job, which means you will have a lot of like stories and minimal literal stories, if any at all. Don't worry! We'll go through the process together in the book and identify and construct as many potential stories as we can.

So let's look in detail at the four story types you need to nail an interview.

Literal stories

Literal stories are exactly that: literal. They show you have specific capabilities and experience in the exact situation that the interviewer is looking for. When applying for a similar role in a similar industry, you will likely have a lot of literal stories you can draw on to demonstrate you have the right skills and experience for the role.

Tell us about a time when you had to lead a global change. You tell them about a time you led a global change in a similar job role and/or similar industry. *Tell us how you dealt with a particularly challenging customer.* You tell them about a time you dealt with an angry customer during your time as a sales assistant at a record store, a role that's similar to the one you're interviewing for now, just at a different sales-based company.

If you've ever been for a job interview before then it's likely you've already had some experience sharing literal stories – perhaps you just didn't know you were doing it. If you don't have literal stories because the role you are applying for is different from anything you've done in the past, it is important that you have ready-made like stories that you can provide instead.

Put into practice

Read the example below of a literal story for someone going for a similar role in a similar industry.

- What does this example say about the individual?
- How is this story more engaging than if the individual were to simply state the facts?
- Does this remind you of any potential stories of your own you could use?



Transforming HR

The largest project I ever managed involved designing and delivering training across our entire organisation for a major change initiative. The transformation involved establishing a call centre and specialised teams, as well as converting our HR policy into diagrams that were all made available via a new HR online portal.

I was responsible for designing and delivering training to all the people in the call centre and specialised teams, as well as dealing with all the business units that were heavily impacted by this change. While this was very exciting, it was also daunting as our deadline had been set and moving that date was not an option. This required a tremendous amount of organisational and project management, not to mention teamwork, to ensure all deliverables were implemented on time.

The result? After 18 months it was one of the very few projects in the company that were delivered on time and under budget. One of the most pleasing aspects of that project, and perhaps the one I am most proud of, is that all the members of my team were rightly acknowledged for doing a brilliant job and all of them were successfully deployed into new roles, many with a promotion.



Learn stories

Learn stories are usually professional or work-related, though they sometimes can be personal. They demonstrate a lesson that you have learned, either by something going right or going wrong. Their power comes from showing your interviewer that you are reflective, self-aware and that you learn by your mistakes. These are very attractive qualities for a potential employer, especially because you're willing to be vulnerable and to admit that you've made mistakes (which we all do as humans). Being able to voice what you learned from that mistake shows maturity, no matter what your age is!

Brené Brown is a professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. Her book, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, is a New York Times number 1 bestseller. Her 2010 TEDx Houston talk, 'The Power of Vulnerability', is one of the most-viewed TED talks in the world. If you haven't seen the talk, I suggest you have a look at it at some stage.

Brown's research busts the myth that vulnerability is a weakness. Instead, she reveals that it is courageous, daring and the ultimate sign of strength and confidence. They are some very powerful personality traits to demonstrate in a job interview. Job interviews are not about letting it all hang out and potentially over-sharing, but rather using appropriate stories and examples that humanise you and build rapport with your interviewer.

Don't feel you have to exclude stories if you didn't act in line with what you value: for example, honesty. (We'll talk more about your

'values' in Step 1: Define.) Sharing stories about times when you were not congruent with your values and have regrets is a great way of demonstrating, ironically, how much those values are important to you. Your authentic self knows when you're 'going against your gut' and it's often these stories we relate to; they help build resonance with whoever is interviewing you. It shows a great level of self-awareness and confidence.

Put into practice

Read the example below of a learn story that shows something the individual regrets and what they learned from the experience.

- What does this example say about the individual?
- What lesson did they learn?
- Does this remind you of any potential stories of your own you could use?



Don't be a bully

As an undergraduate musician, it was mandatory to participate in the university orchestra, which was directed by an eccentric Dutch man called Marco. Marco was renowned for his dedication, passion and enthusiasm

while conducting. Unfortunately, he also had a tendency to become irrational and negative if he felt the ensemble was not performing at its best.

At a particular rehearsal Marco started picking on my friend Nick. In front of the entire orchestra, he yelled, 'Nick, what is this? You look like an old man; you're doing a terrible job! It sounds awful!' I remember feeling incredibly upset that my friend was being spoken to in such a belittling and unprofessional manner. What I was even more upset about is that I didn't make a stand and call Marco out on his bullying behaviour. It's a regret I have to this day but as a result of that experience, I have made a choice to avoid being a bystander when I think something is not right. Although this is sometimes hard, I stay true to it.

Most recently, I witnessed ongoing bullying of one of my colleagues by our manager, and although it was hard and I feared the repercussions, I called him out on his behaviour. Our manager was a bit taken aback, but the bullying, though it didn't stop completely, was heavily reduced to the point that my colleague was able to deal with it.



Lateral stories

Lateral stories are personal stories that demonstrate a particular individual value you have. Told correctly, lateral stories pack a whole lot of punch and can be your most powerful story because they have the potential to connect with the interviewer on a deep and personal level.

Consequently, these types of stories are often the hardest to identify because it's difficult to see what relevance they have to a job interview or to work. Their power comes from their ability to show aspects of your unique personality, which no one else on this planet has. What you've done in your past; what experiences you've had; what you love to do on a daily basis; these all shape who you are as an individual and instantly distinguish you from anyone else.

As this is the story type that people usually struggle most with, I've included more examples than the other types. The three examples below will help you grasp what a lateral story is and how it can be used to relate back to your unique personality.

Put into practice

Read the following examples of lateral stories, which all demonstrate how to link a personal value you have back to a work-related situation.

- What does this example say about the individual?
- How has the individual linked their personal life to their professional life?
- Does this remind you of any potential stories of your own you could use?



Pursuing dreams

My daughter Millie loved to sing from the minute she was born. From her very first scream, from the minute she could talk, she always expressed a desire to perform and sing. As early as primary school, she would tell anyone who would listen that she was going to be a singer when she grew up. I found myself strongly pushing her in other directions, telling her how hard it is to make a career in the arts. I lectured a primary school child about career choices! I heard that cliché 'You will need something else to fall back on' come out of my mouth more times than I

care to remember. Whilst I paid for singing and piano lessons, I don't think I ever fully appreciated the fire that burned within my young daughter to pursue her dreams.

When looking for a secondary school for Millie, we went to a school with a strong reputation in the performing arts, thinking she would be happiest there, but still secretly wishing that she would find something 'normal' to do for her career. As we sat in the office answering questions, the principal asked, 'What do you want to do when you finish school, Millie?'. She looked him straight in the eye and without hesitation said, 'I want to be a singer'. 'Brilliant,' he replied.

I had a long overdue aha! parenting moment right then. I was the only person that didn't utterly believe singing was my daughter's strength and her calling. That very moment taught me not just to change my parenting style, but also my leadership style and the view I have of the teams I lead. I stopped trying to have the child I wanted and embraced the child I had. I now pay particular attention to the strengths of the team members I have, to embrace their differences and be mindful of any so-called 'singers'. I'm more patient and adaptive, and I've been able to build higher performing teams as a result.



Milk crates

When I was a kid, my dad took me to the football every week. It was standing room only, and because I was smaller than everyone else I could barely see the action.

One week, I decided to bring along an old milk crate to stand on. It was great! I was finally above everyone else and could watch the whole game. The next week I brought along the milk crate again, but this time I noticed that a few other people had brought along their own milk crates. We'd started a trend! But within a few months nearly everyone had a milk crate and I was back to square one, unable to see above the crowd. This experience instilled in me at a very young age the need to be constantly on the lookout for how we can improve to keep a competitive advantage.





Search for the summit

A few years ago, I went skiing with a friend on Mount Hutt in New Zealand. One night it snowed heavily and we awoke to a perfect day of skiing - but only on half the mountain. The other half of the mountain was closed for avalanche tests. So every day we would catch the chairlift up to the summit and to our right we could see the powder-perfect inaccessible side of the mountain, as if it were taunting us.

Then one day on the chairlift, two instructors were in front of us and when they got to the summit, instead of going down the side of the mountain that everyone was going down they skied over to the other side and turned the 'Closed' sign to 'Open'. We immediately skied over to follow them, unbelievably excited, but also anxious at the thought of being the first to ski this new route.

After a slight hesitation we followed the path the ski instructors made as they went, flying down, screaming with delight. We used their tracks as our guide, avoiding any danger but reaping all the benefits that come with being first. I'm sharing this with you because I feel like right now is a bit like being on top of a summit with a side

of the mountain you want to explore, but are unsure of. From my own experience, I know I can help you avoid all the risks and potential avalanches, just like the guides did for me on Mount Hutt a few years ago.



Riptide

Ten years ago, I was scuba diving off the coast of Mexico. It was perfect weather and brilliant conditions. However, five minutes after descending, I got caught in a rip. It dragged me for kilometres and split me up from my dive group. I was getting banged against rocks and thrown around. My heart was pumping, and I was running out of air.

I emerged from the rip after what seemed like hours and eventually found one of my dive group underwater. With limited air, we surfaced relatively quickly but safely. I remember feeling my head break the surface of the water and looking around to find the boat, but the boat wasn't there and there was no sign of land. We were alone.

I had to take control of the situation before we started panicking, so I dropped my weight belt and took off my tank to make myself lighter and conserve energy. I filled my buoyancy vest to the max to get my head high above the water and the waves that were crashing down on us, and then I tied myself to my dive buddy.

Two hours later, the boat eventually found us and we were rescued.

I am sharing this with you because I think it captures the essence of how I approach being a leader. I am able to make tough and quick decisions in a crisis, and I have resilience. Even though my experience in Mexico was unbelievably scary at the time, a part of it was exhilarating. I know in this role we will encounter rips and rough seas, and I know I am up for it.



Like stories

Like stories are mostly personal stories that show your interviewer how capable you are at something. They may also be work-related stories from a different job or industry to the one you are interviewing for. These types of stories are particularly useful for anyone who is entering the workforce for the first time or re-entering after an extended period of time, or anyone changing their career.

The purpose of the job interview is for your potential employer to try and determine if you have the right skills and experience in your past to do the job. If you are changing roles or are just entering the job market, then you may still be capable of doing the job, but have not necessarily gained that experience from working in a job role, industry or work situation similar to the one you are applying for.

For example, imagine you're applying for a role for which you need project management experience. You may not have worked as a project manager, but for the last three years you may have coordinated your child's school fete, which involved managing resources, delegating work and ensuring activities were done by their due date. You may have used Microsoft Excel (or something similar) to track your progress because you didn't have access to professional project management software. Guess what? This shows you have project management skills! This type of like story can be used to demonstrate that you are capable of managing projects. It also demonstrates skills in stakeholder management and your commitment to community. Surprise bonuses!

Put into practice

Read the example below of a like story from someone who is changing careers.

- What does this example say about the individual?
- What capabilities or values does it show that could be used in any job role?
- Does this remind you of any potential stories of your own you could use?



Who's crying now?

After I returned from New York, I took on a position as a chef at the Old England Hotel. Of 18 chefs, only two were female. It was an extremely challenging environment that tested my strength as a woman and as a capable chef. I felt like the other woman and I were always getting a rough time from our colleagues. After a few months, I found out there was a bet going on among the males as to who could make one of the women cry first.

I was devastated, disappointed and angry when I found that out. It really did make me want to cry, but more than

anything I wanted to prove them wrong. So I worked harder than them, I stayed later to finish the clean-up, and I came in earlier to do the prep for the day ahead.

While they were laughing and joking behind my back, I put my head down and showed them and my superiors what I was made of. I remember one night I cut my hand. It hurt so much it made me want to cry, but I just wrapped it up and waited until I was in my car on the way home to cry out the pain.

After three months of working hard with persistence and resilience I never thought I had, I was promoted above all of my colleagues to sous chef, which meant I was now their boss. Everyone was stunned. They didn't realise that while they had been busy joking, I had been busy working. Although I could have paid them back for their antics, I didn't, because I knew that with persistence and resilience and the courage to keep going you can rise above trivial and inappropriate behaviour. I have no doubt that this will serve me well as a prison guard.



CHAPTER 3

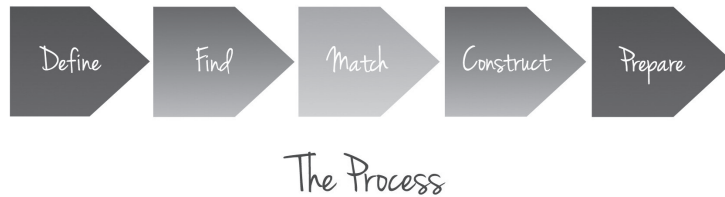
Five steps to **STORY SUCCESS**

Now that you know the four story types you need to nail a job interview, it's time to learn how to identify and construct stories for each type – literal, learn, lateral and like.

There is a five-step sequential process (Figure 3) you must follow to develop a story:

1. *define* – identify the capabilities and values required for the job
2. *find* – find a variety of stories you could potentially use
3. *match* – match the stories you found in Step 2 to the capabilities and values you defined in Step 1
4. *construct* – write the stories from Step 3
5. *prepare* – practise the stories from Step 4.

Figure 3: Five steps to story success process



This chapter has been designed like a workbook so that you can stop, reflect and construct your own stories. To understand the five-step process fully, it's recommended you first read through the steps to get an overall picture of what you're trying to achieve and then come back and work through each step at your own pace. Space has been provided in the book for you to record your stories and retain a record of them that you can keep coming back to as your career progresses and you go for other job interviews. Alternatively, you may like to copy the worksheets and record them elsewhere.

Step 1: Define

The first step involves looking at the actual job description. You must identify what the employer is looking for. What qualities do they seek in their ideal candidate? Who would be the right 'fit' for their organisation?

If you skip this step, you won't know what experience you have that matches the job and you won't be able to identify the best story to use to demonstrate that.

Most job advertisements are broken into two categories:

1. technical skills, experience and qualifications
2. values and capabilities.

The first category really speaks for itself. If the job requires you to be a qualified pilot with ten years' experience, then you need to be a qualified pilot with ten years' experience. If the job requires you to have your drivers' licence, then you need to have your drivers' licence. To be granted an interview for a job you have applied for, you must meet the organisation's minimum criteria of skills, experience and qualifications. If you think back to Aristotle's model of influence (*logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*), this very much demonstrates the *logos*, or sound logic, aspect.

Of course, there may be exceptions in some circumstances, but the premise of this book is not to focus on your technical skills and qualifications. Rather, it's to find relevant stories from your past that demonstrate the required capabilities and values your potential employer is seeking in order to build personality, credibility and emotional connection.

If you have been successful in gaining an interview, your initial written application obviously ticked a few boxes (probably all the logical, qualifications stuff). To help you prepare for the interview and identify the required capabilities and values, you need to revisit the initial job advertisement and analyse it more thoroughly.

So what do we mean by capabilities and values?

Capabilities versus values

Values are often described as the right ‘cultural fit’ for an organisation. Your future employer might specify in their job ad that they’re looking for someone who is ‘comfortable being challenged’, or is a ‘respectful team player who values diversity’. Think about what you personally value at work and in life. Is it honesty? Trust? Adventure? Family? Creativity? Ambition? Drive? Challenge?

Capabilities, on the other hand, describe what you’re capable of – your actual abilities. Are you a ‘strategic leader’ or ‘innovative thinker’, perhaps? Do you ‘solve complex problems’ or ‘manage large projects’?

Be warned: some job ads use so much jargon it is a job in itself just determining what capabilities or values the employer is looking for. You may need to speak to someone in the industry who has a better understanding of the terms they’re using, or perhaps contact the nominated person in the company itself for more clarification – or better yet, why not reconsider the company you’re applying for? Do you really want to work for someone who is searching for a ‘Customer Experience Anthropologist who revolutionises customer experience, leverages value for customer design-led thinking, is experienced in attitudinal and behavioural segmentation and is adept at carving paths through ambiguity’? ...

Put into practice

1. Look at a job ad that you have applied for, or are interested in applying for.
2. Identify and list all the desired capabilities that your potential employer is looking for on the *Capability worksheet*.
3. Identify and list all the desired values that your potential employer is looking for on the *Values worksheet*. Don’t worry if you’re struggling to differentiate between a capability and a value, just write it down. ‘Being a team player’ could be either a capability or a value, depending on how you view it.
4. Now tick all the capabilities and values that you think you have.

Capability worksheet

Examples:

project management
highly organised
time management
written and verbal communication
financial acumen

Values worksheet

Examples:

integrity
creativity
innovation
honesty
teamwork

Hidden Gems

Think about additional qualities you can offer that are not specified in the job description. Consider them a surprise or added bonus for your potential employer.

A great way to approach this task is to ask at least three people that know you well, ideally professionally, to describe you. Ask your peers, current colleagues, managers, or anyone who has worked with you in the past. If this is your first job then you could ask your teachers, coaches or any mentors.

Once you have all your words, identify themes between them. For example, was 'integrity' used a lot, or 'organised', or 'creative'? Sometimes similar words can essentially mean the same thing: 'kind', 'thoughtful' and 'giving' might all demonstrate that you are compassionate.

Which of these words would you say are your values (e.g. integrity), and which are your capabilities (e.g. organised)?

Put into practice

1. Ask three people who know you well to describe you in five words.
2. Look at the job description again that you are interviewing for or would like to interview for. List any additional capabilities or values that you've come up with on the *Hidden Gems Worksheet*.
3. Try to separate these words into your 'capabilities' and your 'values'.

Hidden Gems worksheet

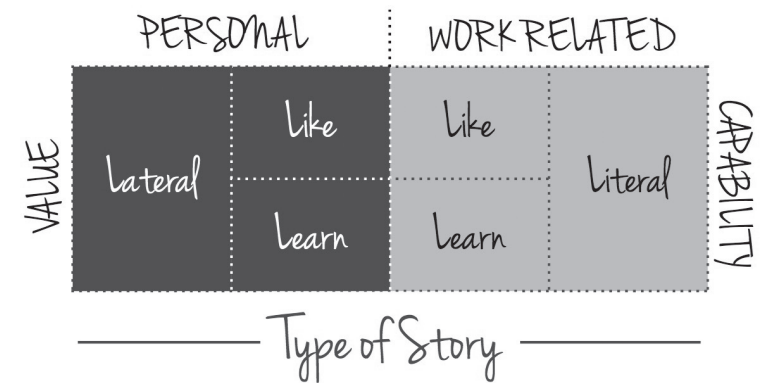
Capabilities	Values

Step 2: Find

Once you have defined the capabilities and values that a potential employer is looking for, as well as those that you feel you can offer, including any bonuses, then it's story-finding time! This step will help you identify examples of the four types of stories that you need to demonstrate your experience in a job interview – literal, learn, lateral and like.

To start, let's refer back to Figure 2 and the four story types you need for a job interview (shown again below).

Figure 2: Four story types you need to nail an interview



The key thing to remember is that learn and literal stories are usually professional or work-related stories that demonstrate your capabilities. Conversely, lateral and like stories are usually personal stories that demonstrate your values. (Remember, there are sometimes exceptions: like stories may be personal and learn stories may be work-related.)

Next, pretend you're a bit like a metal detector, only you are a story detector. You're going to wave an imaginary wand around in your brain to find hidden stories from your past that will demonstrate your capabilities and values. Some may be very obvious, while others may be so well hidden that you are not even aware of them.

There are three methods you can use to find and detect your stories:

1. *professional* – to find learn and literal stories that show your capabilities
2. *personal* – to find lateral and like stories that show your values
3. *Q&A* – to find all four story types that show your capabilities or values.

Method 1 – professional

The purpose of Method 1 is to uncover the abilities you have acquired over the course of your career that can be used for learn and literal stories. If you are new to the workforce, then you might think this is not going to be relevant. However, don't think of job roles as purely paid employment. You can also use this approach for any volunteer work or even jobs you had to undertake when you were younger.

Put into practice

Fill out the *Professional worksheet* provided – copy it as many times as you need. (Extra blank pages have been provided at the end of this book.)

1. List all the jobs you've ever had. Start with your most recent role and work backwards. Roles you undertook 20 or 30 years ago may not be relevant, but it is worth listing them and then deciding later whether you will use them.
2. Identify the high-level objectives for each role and what you were responsible for delivering.
3. List the experience you gained and the capabilities you developed. These will often be very similar.

Professional worksheet

Example:

Role: Head of Learning

Company: NAB

High-level objectives and deliverables	Experience gained and capabilities developed
<i>Examples</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source appropriate suppliers for training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with department heads to ensure their overall training outcomes were achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage a team of four 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage central training budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget management

Professional worksheet

Role:

Company:

High-level objectives and deliverables	Experience gained and capabilities developed

Professional worksheet

Role:

Company:

<i>High-level objectives and deliverables</i>	<i>Experience gained and capabilities developed</i>

Professional worksheet

Role:

Company:

<i>High-level objectives and deliverables</i>	<i>Experience gained and capabilities developed</i>

Method 2 – personal

The second method moves away from your professional roles and gets a bit more personal so that you can find your lateral and like stories. Some people find this step easier and even fun, while others find it extremely difficult because they are just not used to disclosing information about their personal lives and they struggle to see how it is relevant. Remember, as Brené Brown says, this is about getting comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Either way, this is probably best done over a cup of coffee or tea “or a glass of wine” somewhere you can work uninterrupted for at least 30 minutes. You may also need to revisit some of the examples of lateral stories to help you identify how personal stories can be linked to a professional context.

Put into practice

1. Reflect on your life from your earliest memory to the present day: whatever comes to mind. Record those memories on the *Personal worksheet*. Jot down whatever memories come to you. Don't overanalyse them or wonder if they are relevant, just write them down. Sure, you'll come up with memories that may not be appropriate for job interviews but don't worry about that now. Just because you note them doesn't mean you'll share them at the job interview. This is just brainstorming. See if you can come up with 20 memories.

2. Struggling for inspiration? Flick through the photos currently on your phone. You will be amazed at the number of ideas you can add to your list – and that's just things that have happened over the last few months, let alone years!
3. Go back and add one word to each memory that describes what it represents for you.

Personal worksheet

Experience	Word
<i>Examples</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I ran 32km across King Island • I survived two months without a kitchen during a house renovation • I started playing the flute at the age of 40 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge • Resilience • Learning

Personal worksheet

Experience	Word

*Personal worksheet**Experience**Word**Personal worksheet**Experience**Word*



Method 3 - Q&A

There are five questions to answer for Method 3. The questions are designed to get you to dig a little deeper and come up with more literal, learn, lateral and like 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. It's like looking for buried treasure. Don't worry; this is not a therapy session! This is about recalling experiences from your past that you just haven't thought of for years.

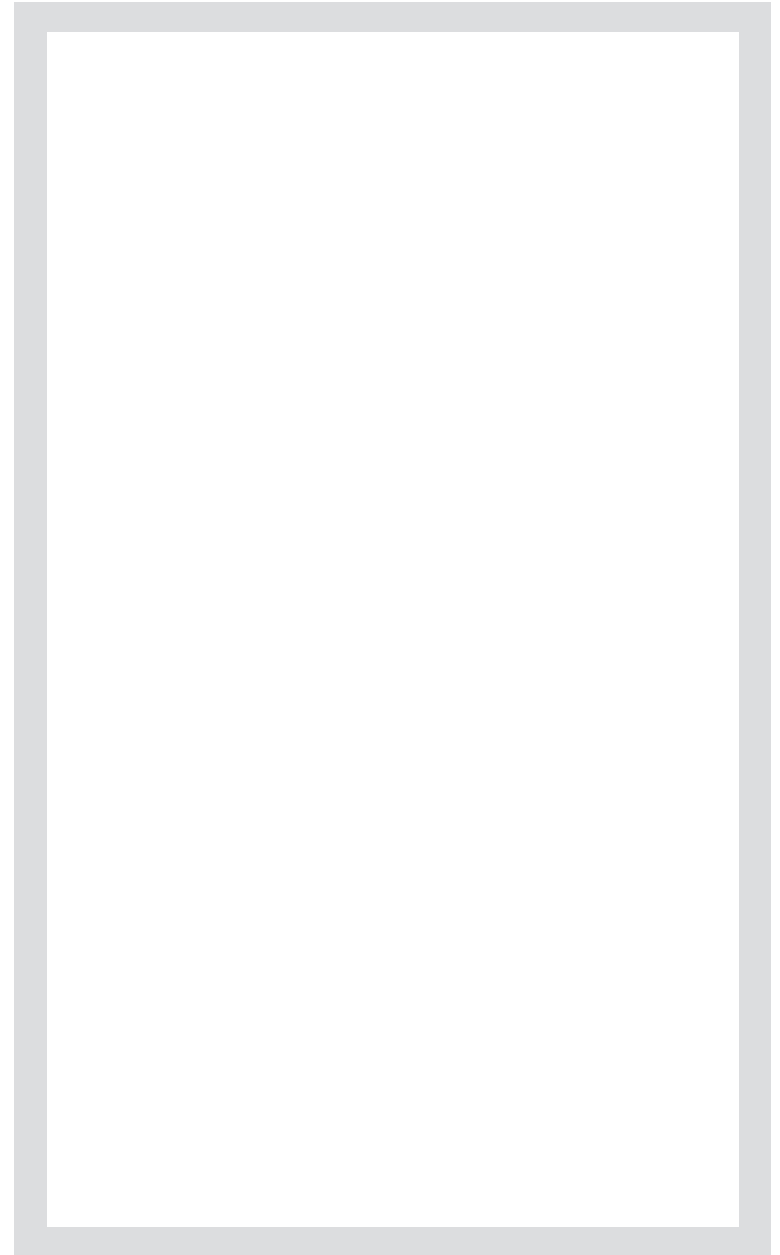
Put into practice

Answer the following five questions. Each question may make you think of several stories, so record them all. Just write one or two sentences that summarise each memory you think of.

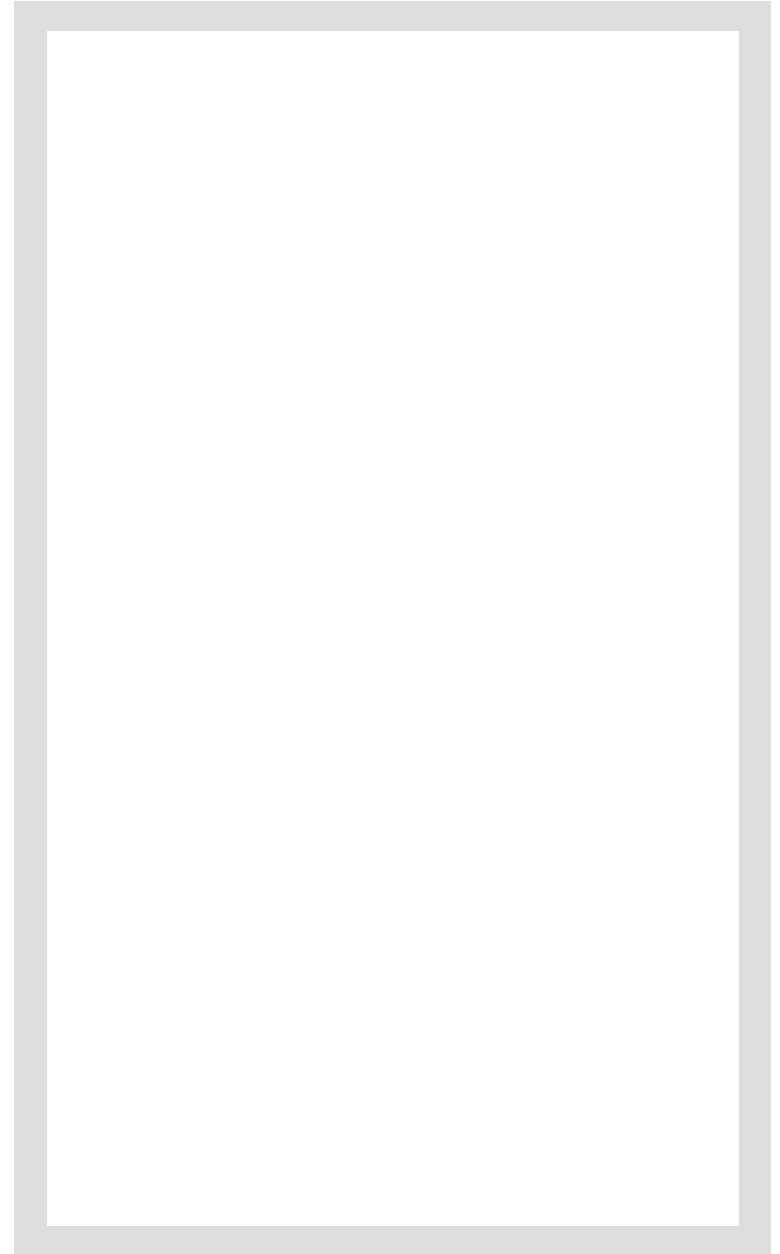
1. Think about a recent experience that made you feel proud. It could be something that happened at work: perhaps something that happened to you or to a particular family member or a friend. What was it and why did it make you proud? What did you learn from the experience?



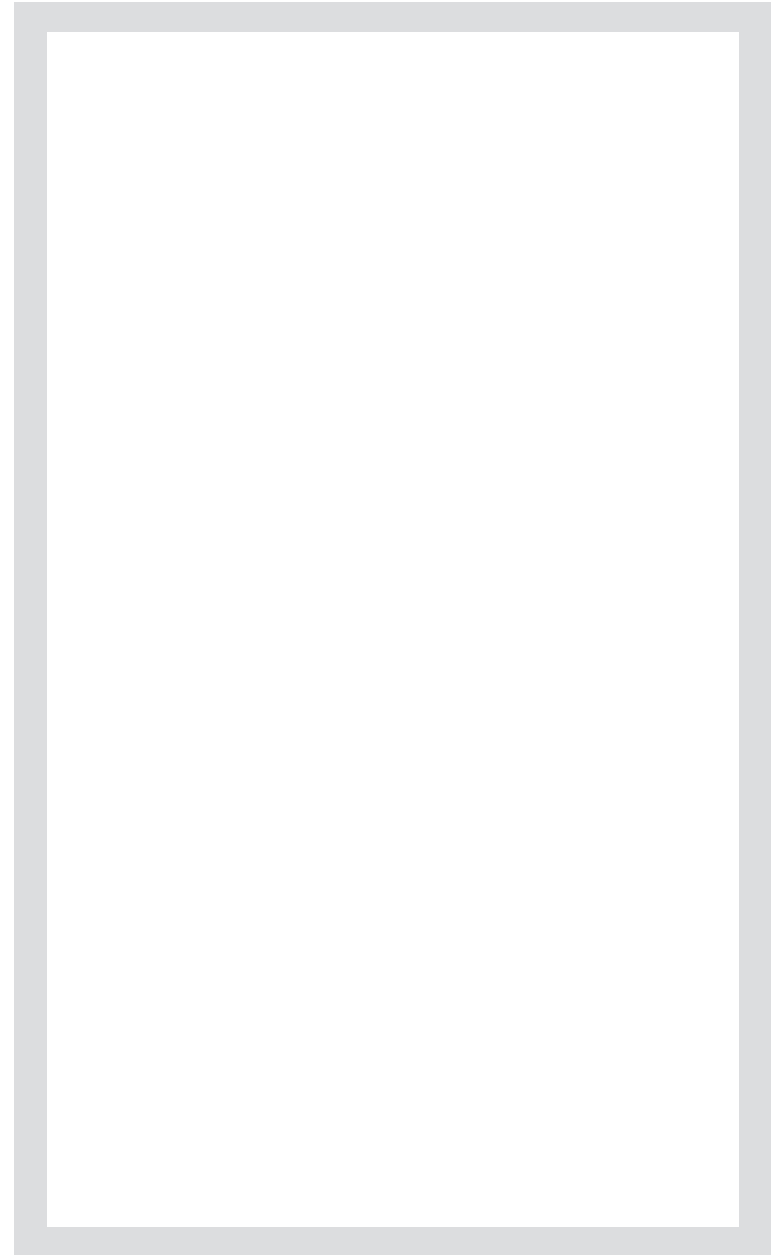
2. Think about a time you felt truly fulfilled. What made you so content and happy? What were you doing? How did you feel? Why do you value this so much?



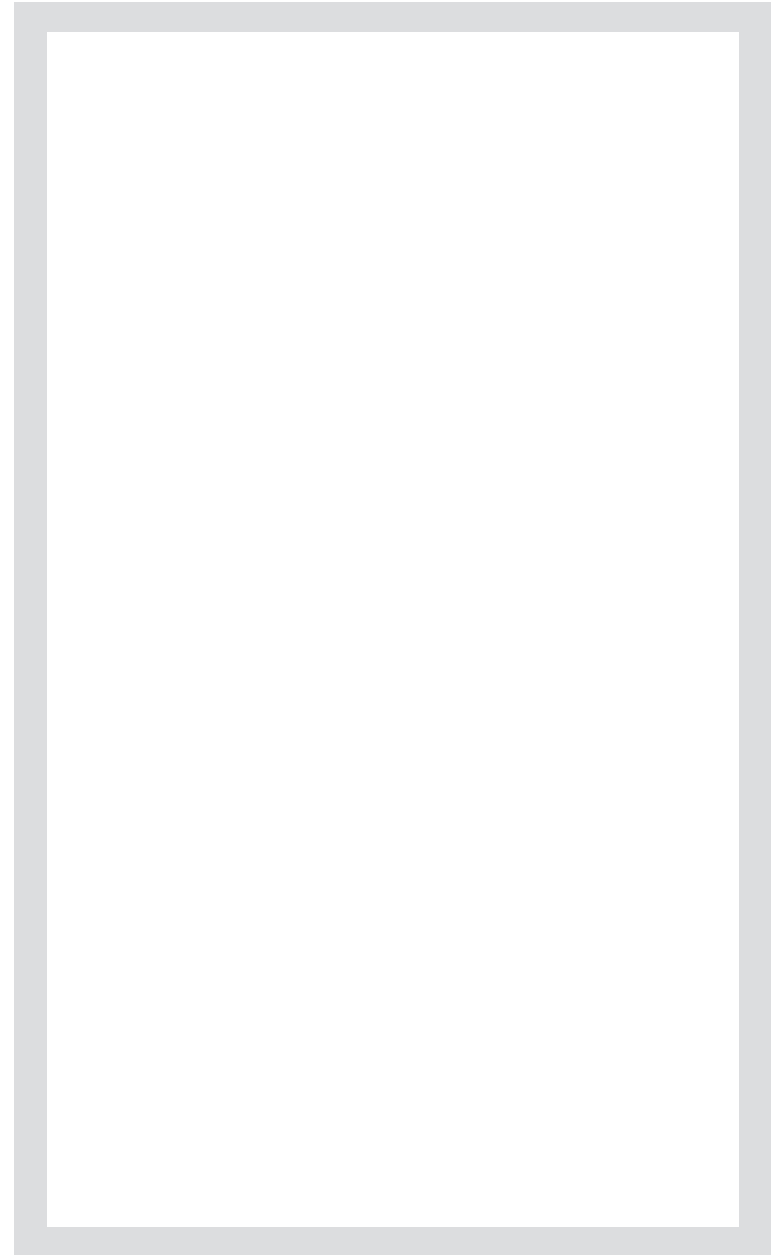
3. Do you have some regret in your life? If so, what is it and why do you regret it? How has it changed the choices you've made? What would you do differently if given the chance?



4. Think about a time when you had conflicting values. Perhaps you wanted to do one thing, but you knew it would potentially have a negative impact on someone you loved. What did you do, and why?



5. Think about a time you were really scared or apprehensive about doing something, but you did it anyway. What was it and why did you do? How did you come to the decision to go ahead with it? What was the end result?



Step 3: Match

Now you've identified a lot of different stories that you can use in a job interview. Next, you're going to match those stories to the capabilities and values that you identified in Step 1: Define. This will help you align stories from your past with the particular capabilities and values that your interviewer is seeking.

It's important to note, you won't be writing out any stories in full just yet. (That will happen in Step 4: Construct.) Rather, you'll need to come up with a short name that summarises each story so that you can remember it. For example: 'Breaking my leg while skiing' or 'Project managing the payroll implementation'. Keep it succinct, but memorable. Make sure the name is descriptive enough that when you look back on this list in a few months' time (or even years later when you are going for another job), you can recall the story well.

You may feel that one story demonstrates more than one capability or value, that's OK. List the story for both. You will also need to tick whether each story is an example of a literal, learn, lateral or like story. This is just about taking your best educated guess. You can always change it later.

After you have completed this step, you will be able to see where your story 'gaps' are. Which capabilities or values that the interviewer is seeking do you have stories for, and which ones are you lacking? If there are gaps, perhaps you do not have the capabilities or values the potential employer is looking for. Or maybe you need to dig a little deeper. Try repeating Step 2: Find. Not all stories have to be major life-changing moments. You'll be surprised how powerful

day-to-day, 'normal' stories can be, from washing the dishes to driving the car. These are stories everyone can relate to because nearly everyone does them. You do not need to have an equal number of stories for each story type, just a variety.

Put into practice

1. Write each capability you came up with in Step 1: Define on the *Capability stories worksheet*. (You may need to use the blank pages at the end of this book.)
2. Write each value you came up with in Step 1: Define on the *Values stories worksheet*.
3. Name each story on your *Professional worksheet* (Method 1 from Step 2: Find) Write this name under the capability it matches on the *Capability stories worksheet*. Tick what type of story it is.
4. Name each story on your *Personal worksheet* (Method 2 from Step 2: Find). Write this name under the value it matches on the *Values stories worksheet*. Tick what type of story it is.
5. Name each story on the *Q&A worksheet* (Method 3 from Step 2: Find). Write this name under the capability or value it matches on the *Capability stories worksheet* or the *Values stories worksheet*. Tick what type of story it is.
6. Identify any story gaps on the *Capability stories worksheet* and *Values stories worksheet*. Repeat Step 2: Find to address those gaps.

Capability stories worksheet

Capability:	Strategic leadership		
Examples	Literal	Learn	Like
• Driving cultural change program in 2012	✓		
• Conducting controlled burn-offs in the bush		✓	✓

Capability:			

Capability stories worksheet

Capability::			
	Literal	Learn	Like

Values stories worksheet

Value:	Integrity		
Examples	Lateral	Learn	Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stealing a chocolate bar when I was a kid and regretting it • Not accepting leadership role due to my inner conflict 	✓	✓	

Value:			

Values stories worksheet

Value:			
	Lateral	Learn	Like

Step 4: Construct

Now that you've identified the memories and experiences that will make good stories, and you've matched them to your capabilities and values, it's time to start constructing your stories.

Remember our friend Aristotle? In addition to devising three stages of influence, he also gave us the perfect three-step story structure:

1. beginning
2. middle
3. end.

It's a general rule that has withstood the test of time and is still used in everything today from TV soaps to presentations (well, ideally anyway).

The beginning

In a job interview, you will be asked to 'Share a time when ...' This is your cue to start your story, and the best way to do this is to use time and place to set context quickly and draw the listener into your story immediately.

For example:

- 'I was once asked to lead a team of 80 people on a major change project ...'
- 'I have seven brothers and sisters, so in our family ...'
- 'Ten years ago I took up karate ...'

This sort of start to your story is very efficient and can be used to build a sense of intrigue. The start of your story must be strong and confident. Don't correct yourself mid-sentence: for example, 'Three years ago – oh actually, I think it might have been four or five years ago ...' Be very clear on the details of your story, especially at the start.

To overcome this problem, make sure you write or type your stories out before you practise presenting them. This process will help you ensure the stories are succinct and relevant. It also means that you'll have something to refer back to time and time again – crucial in the first 90 days of your new job! (More on that later.)

The middle

This is where the action happens! Follow these tips to make your story effective, efficient and emotive.

Name your character

If you are talking about someone else, you should always name that person. Naming your character humanises the story and creates resonance in the other party. Telling a story about your kids? Say 'my son Steven'. Recalling an event about your partner? Say 'my partner Eve'. Keep referring to them as Steven or Eve. Don't continue to say, 'my daughter' or 'my wife'. Using 'Mum' or 'Dad' is also OK.

We can often be reluctant to use real names when sharing stories because we feel it's not appropriate or too informal and personal.

Sometimes this is justified, especially in a work or business context. Referring to 'my manager' or 'my colleague' is one way to work it, especially if you're going for an interview with a new company and don't want anyone to be identifiable. You could also tell your interviewer that you'd be more comfortable not mentioning the name of the individual if they ask. This shows professionalism and respect for others.

Determine the detail

Your stories need to be short, snappy and on point. Don't be a politician – someone who never really answers the question. You never want your interviewer to be sitting there thinking, 'I wish they'd just get to the point'.

Be ruthless. Determine what detail you leave in and what detail you omit. This is why preparation is important. How much detail is the right amount? Always err on the side of less. Your interviewer will always prompt you for more, asking follow-up questions when they're interested. This is the art of good storytelling!

When it comes to the actual job interview, you may have to be flexible. You might need to tailor your story slightly and shorten some details, depending on the questions asked and the time you have. Being flexible is OK but try to ensure that you don't go off track so much that the point of your story is lost. That's why it helps to write it down and practise it again and again before the day of the interview. (Remember how cricketer Don Bradman practised hitting a golf ball against a wall over and over again?)

Use emotion

Maya Angelou, the American poet, once said, 'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.' This is the essence of good storytelling

Your aim is to walk out of an interview and feel like you have connected with your interviewers and made an impression on them. It's all about building rapport. When faced with a difficult choice between two highly qualified, 'brilliant' candidates, would you choose the one who looks good on paper or the one who fits the organisation's culture and was engaging and memorable like a Bradman?

Sensory data also helps set up scenes and visualise what you're talking about. You could do a mime or interpretive dance to paint the picture, but that would probably not be the best way to impress a potential employer in a job interview – unless of course you were applying for a job as a mime or interpretive dancer. Instead, you'll need to focus on choosing the right words.

If you're sharing stories to demonstrate your values, especially lateral stories of a personal nature, avoid any corporate jargon. If you're sharing a lateral or like story about a valuable lesson you learned as a child, the words you use to describe your feelings or thoughts or what you said as a child should reflect that. For example, saying that your 'objectives were not met' when you were eight and you didn't get the bike you'd asked Santa for does nothing to engage your interviewer.

To help you overcome this, when you follow the next steps and write out some stories, try to write them the way you would actually say them out loud.

Is it ever OK to use corporate jargon? If you're trying to build rapport with someone who uses a lot of jargon, you might feel it's appropriate to mirror that language. Look out for cues from your interviewers and the way they talk. If they use a lot of corporate jargon, you can match that. This can indicate that you know exactly what they are talking about and demonstrate that you have experience in that industry (sad but true).

The end

A good ending is crucial for leaving the interviewer with the best impression of the real you. Make the story you have just told relevant. Your final sentence must always connect to the question the interviewer has asked you and the point you are trying to make. Otherwise, you've just told a story, but it has absolutely no relevance to why this person should hire you!

Some suggested ways to finish your story include:

- 'What I learned from this is the importance of ...'
- 'I often draw on that experience when faced with ...'
- 'I believe this demonstrates my ability to ...'
- 'I'm sharing this with you because ...'
- 'I often reflect on this time when faced with a similar situation at work ...'

Always try to end on a positive, even if your story is about something you once did that you regret. Explain why you regret it and what lesson you learned from it. How has this event impacted you in a positive way?

Put into practice

1. Write all of your stories out that you identified in Step 3: Match using a clear beginning, middle and end.
2. Write them on the *Your stories worksheet*. You will practise reading them out in the next step. (Remember there are more blank pages at the end of this book. You could also choose to type your stories out so you have an online record.)

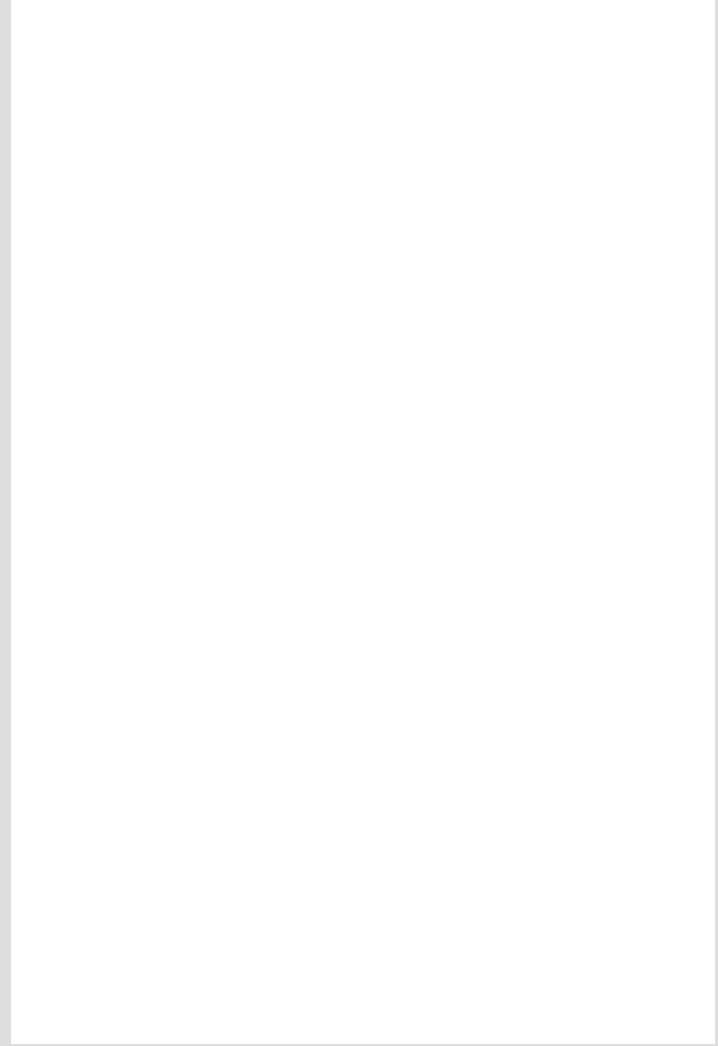
Your stories worksheet

Story name :



Your stories worksheet

Story name :



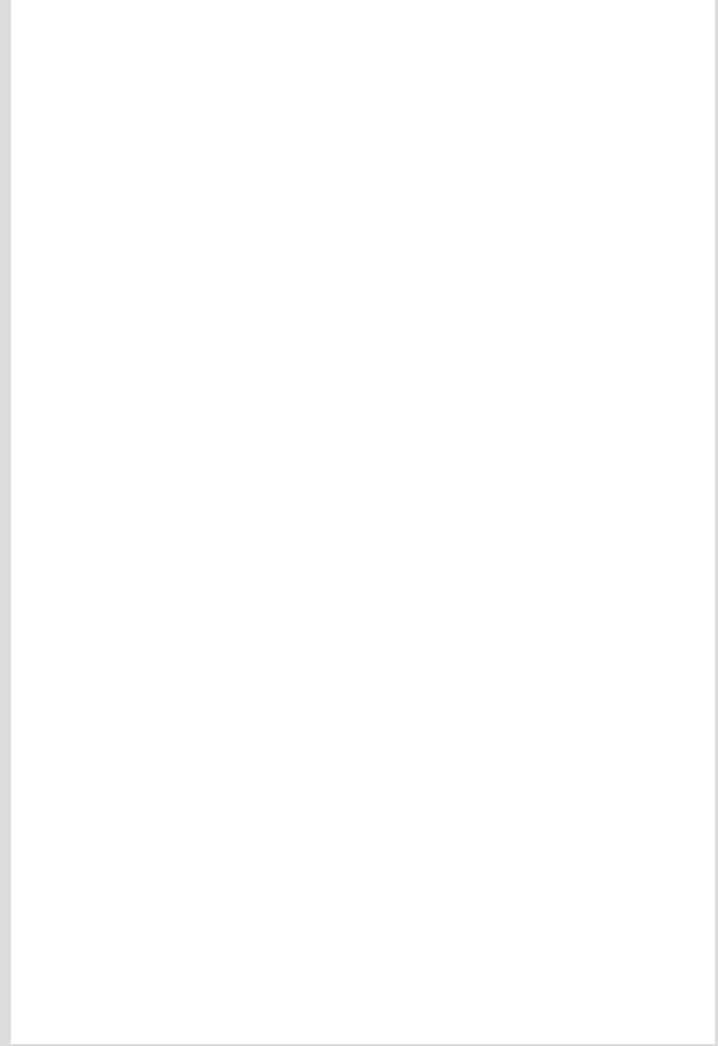
Your stories worksheet

Story name :



Your stories worksheet

Story name :



Step 5: Prepare

Congratulations! You've made it to the final storytelling step. Now that you've got a bunch of literal, learn, lateral and like stories identified and written down, it's time to practise and prepare for the interview itself.

There is no better preparation than practising your stories out loud. If you want to take it to the next level, record yourself and play it back to see what you sound like. Better yet, practise with someone you trust who will give you constructive feedback and support.

Show them the job description and talk them through the capabilities and values you would like to demonstrate at the interview. Share your stories and ask for feedback on your delivery, presentation and how well you demonstrated a particular capability or value.

Top 3 storytelling tips

1. Pause for effect

Get into the habit of pausing after your story. This provides an opportunity for the interviewer to reflect on what you have said and ask any follow-up questions if required.

Many people are very uncomfortable with silence so they fill it with waffle and irrelevant detail. They reiterate their point or keep talking into another point and don't know when to stop. When you do this in a job interview, the interviewer may think you are unable to express yourself succinctly or you are not sure of what you are

saying. Don't make that mistake. Get comfortable with the sound of silence.

2. Check your facts

Your stories must be factually correct. Details matter. If interviewers pick up on incorrect facts it could raise doubt in their minds as to the accuracy of other information you have provided. You want to avoid this at all costs.

Spend time proofreading and picking up errors. Have you got the name of your previous manager correct? Where you worked? How long ago it was?

3. Ask for help

Practise pausing at the end to get comfortable with the space for your interviewer to ask you a follow-up question. Read them to friends, colleagues or mentors (who obviously know you are going for a job interview). It will help to give them a copy of the job description or ad to look at as you're doing this. Ask them to suggest improvements and tell you when things are not clear or if you are rambling. How well does your story demonstrate a particular capability or value? How well does it match what your future employer is looking for?

Put into practice

1. Practise reading your stories out loud to the mirror and then to other people whom you trust to give you constructive feedback for improvement.
2. Ask specifically about what capabilities or values they infer from hearing your stories.
3. Practise pausing at the end to get comfortable with the space for your interviewer to ask you a follow-up question.
4. Practise, practise and practise some more!

CHAPTER 4

What's your **GREATEST WEAKNESS?**

This is one of the hardest – and also most predictable – questions in an interview. That's why I feel it's important we look at how to answer it in some detail.

The question is usually slipped in at the end of the interview when you are relaxed and think it's over. If you're not well prepared (but you will be because you're aiming to be a Bradman, remember), this question has the power to undo all of your good work. It's the moment you go from 'nailed it' to 'failed it' in one swift move.

It's not the time to answer with something lame like 'chocolate', 'shoes' or 'alcohol'. Your future is riding on this interview! It's also always best to give a response rather than saying 'I don't have any weaknesses'. That's just not true. As humans, we all have weaknesses. If you say you don't

have one then all you're doing is demonstrating that you lack self-awareness – there's your weakness!

The aim of this question is not so much to throw you off balance and see how you respond, but more about finding out whether your weakness will make it hard for you to fit in with the organisation and its culture and do a good job. Your future employer wants to know how you handle tough questions – something that you need to be skilled in if you're going for, say, a sales role.

Transform disadvantage into advantage

The key to this question is to answer it honestly, authentically and in such a way that your weakness is also seen as your strength.

A good example of this is when you're new to the workforce or have taken a career break and you feel after completing Step 1: Define that you are lacking some specific capabilities the job is looking for. Instead of trying to hide this or cover up the fact that you haven't worked as a project manager (for example), be honest and say so. The key is to then explain how this can actually be a benefit to your potential employer.

Are you quick to learn and adept at multi-tasking? Is there a story you could use that demonstrates this? Maybe you have fresh ideas and are keen to make your mark on this role. Great! Tell a story that shows your passion and eagerness to learn. Check what capabilities and values you have on your *Hidden gems worksheet*, which can be an added bonus for the employer, and show how your weakness is

actually your strength. This is what will make you stand out from the other candidates.

Dedicate some time to revisiting all the stories you have constructed. Did you identify a time when you were really apprehensive about doing something, but you did it anyway? How has this changed the way you lead teams? Turn being risk-averse into being courageous. What about a time you made a mistake? What did you learn from the experience, and how has it changed you as a person and what you value? Turn your downfall into your achievement.

Below is a great example of how a weakness can be used to your advantage in a job interview. It's also a great example of a learn or lateral story.



Quick decisions

When I was growing up, I was always told my biggest weakness was that I would make decisions without thinking, often too quickly and on a whim. I would also buy things on impulse, even though I had no real need for them. However, being responsible for my own business, as well as being a mother of three, has helped me to mature. I have learned that there are always consequences to any decision you make.

When I needed to buy equipment for my business, the younger version of me would simply just buy what I wanted or what looked good. Now I undertake a thorough cost-benefit analysis and determine if the piece of equipment is worth the investment. I believe my greatest weakness has evolved over time into one of my biggest strengths.



CHAPTER 5

The critical first 90 days **IN YOUR NEW ROLE**

Congratulations! You've followed the process in this book, you've gone for your interview and got your dream job – you have nailed it! You're a Bradman! You might think the hard work stops here, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Now you've been selected for the job, you have to make sure your employers stay confident that they hired the right candidate.

The first 90 days in your new role is an important time for you to establish yourself, build rapport with your peers and credibility with your managers and team. This is crucial in any role, but critical if you've just landed yourself in a position of leadership, management or influence where others are going to be looking to you for guidance.

Using stories in the first 90 days of your new role will help:

- break the ice with your new team and colleagues
- demonstrate why you were hired and why you can be trusted to do the job
- create a solid foundation for great professional relationships to grow
- connect, engage and inspire with your customers and clients
- show off your personality.

Not only that, but you've spent all this time defining, finding, matching, constructing and preparing your stories, so it would make no sense to lock them in a closet and never call on them again. Remember how we talked about the importance of storytelling in business at the start of this book? Storytelling is the number one skill used in business today. That means you're off to a great start! Let's continue developing, mastering and implementing this skill in your new role and beyond.

First impressions count

When you start a new job, your peers, colleagues and managers will start forming opinions of you. It is in your best interest that these first impressions are favourable and reflect your authentic self.

Many of you will be familiar with a kaleidoscope as a very cool toy you had as a child. A kaleidoscope is a cylinder with mirrors containing loose coloured objects such as bits of glass or beads. When you look in one end, light enters the other end and patterns

are created from the coloured objects reflecting on the internal mirror surface. Each time you turn the kaleidoscope, a different pattern is created.

The word 'kaleidoscope' is derived from three ancient Greek words:

1. *kalos*, meaning 'beautiful' or 'beauty'
2. *eidōs*, meaning 'what is seen', as in a form or shape
3. *skopeō*, meaning to 'look' or 'examine'.

Think of what you say and do in your new role as the beads and coloured glass in the kaleidoscope, and the situations as the mirrors. Like a kaleidoscope, you have control of what image people will see based on the way it turns. Instead of beads and coloured glass, your kaleidoscope is made up of your words and actions – more specifically, your stories and actions. What you say and do in specific situations at work will influence those crucial first impressions your colleagues will make about you.

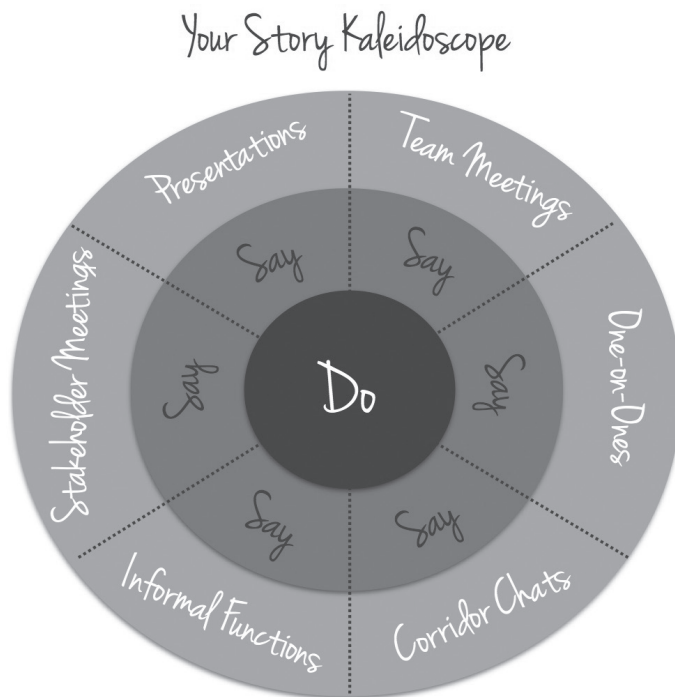
Before we explore this in more detail, take some time to reflect on what you would like your first impressions to be. What would you like your new managers and team members to say about you? Feel about you? Think about you?

Remember, we're talking about being authentic here. There is no point creating an image just to fit in. Otherwise you'll spend the rest of your time at work living up to a perception or an image that is not you – how exhausting! As Oscar Wilde once put it: 'Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.'

Your story kaleidoscope

To demonstrate how, when and where you can use stories to build a great first impression, let's look at the story kaleidoscope in Figure 4. Your story kaleidoscope is made up of six situations at work in which you will find yourself on a regular basis and can use as an opportunity to share some of the stories you have created for your job interview. Using your stories in these situations will set you up for success in the first 90 days of your new role and wherever your career takes you.

Figure 4: Your story kaleidoscope



Team meetings

Using stories at team meetings is a wonderful way of sharing something about yourself, which in turn makes it more likely that others in the team will share some of their own personality and stories. It can also provide you with an opportunity to keep reinforcing what is important to you. Imagine if you started a movement whereby every meeting was kicked off with a story-sharing session in which everyone in the team contributed a story about customer service, teamwork or innovation. What a great way of capturing feedback and motivating the team!

Tip

Sharing stories in team meetings encourages others to share stories, which can contribute to team building and knowledge sharing.

One-on-ones

If you are stepping into a leadership or management role, one of the first things you'll likely to do is catch up with each team member, one-on-one. With time, your one-on-one meetings will become mentoring or coaching sessions. If you're not in a leadership role, you're still going to be faced with similar situations. Your manager will likely call a one-on-one meeting to get to know you and brief you about the next steps in your new role, or you may want to catch up with your peers. In either case, this is a very safe environment for you to practise sharing your stories and gauging others' reactions.

Tip

Use personal lateral, learn and like stories in one-on-ones to demonstrate your values, leadership style and aspects of your personality.

Corridor chats

How many impromptu discussions do you have with team members and other people throughout your organisation in the corridors, walking to meetings, at the water cooler, or in the lifts, kitchen or cafeteria? When you're new to an organisation, this is an opportunity to introduce yourself to someone new. You might find yourself being asked why you joined the company, for example. So why not share a story that demonstrates what you're passionate about. What about a question about where you worked before and why you left? Rather than just stating the facts, think of a story that sums this up and leaves your new colleague with a positive impression of you and your experience.

Tip

Personal lateral, learn and like stories are best for when you bump into someone in an informal setting, as they help build rapport.

Informal functions

When you're new to an organisation, often one of the first things your team will do is organise and invite everyone out for lunch or a coffee. Don't make the mistake of thinking that just because this is

an informal event it is a place to share stories about your drunken nights out or to talk negatively about your previous employer. This is an opportunity for your team to assess you and determine if you're up for the job. Can they trust you? Will they respect you? Do they even like you?

Tip

To help connect with others at an informal event, share stories that demonstrate your personal values instead of stories that demonstrate your professional capabilities.

Stakeholder meetings

Stakeholders are those people who will be affected by your organisation's actions, objectives and policies. This includes internal and external parties like clients, suppliers, team members, the Board, or community groups. A stakeholder meeting can be formal or informal depending on which stakeholders you're meeting with. If your stakeholder meeting is going to be with the Board or anyone external to the organisation (such as a supplier), then you need to demonstrate a level of professionalism, but you'll also need to show you're trustworthy and credible. This is the time to start building a solid foundation for your professional relationship.

Tip

Share work-related lateral, learn and like stories at stakeholder meetings to demonstrate your capabilities and build credibility.

Presentations

When you're faced with your first presentation, you'll need to capture your new team's attention and also build your credibility. It's a fact that in a one-hour presentation, people are most likely to remember a story you told. It's also a fact that PowerPoint presentations are overused and often boring. Do you really want your team and colleagues sitting in their chairs, rolling their eyes, looking at the clock every five minutes, hoping you're going to stop soon? That's definitely not the type of first impression you want to make! So ditch the PowerPoint and think of some new ways you can bring your stories to life.

Tip

Presentations are great for bringing all four story types together: literal, learn, lateral and like.

CHAPTER 6

Where to NEXT?

First things first – good luck with your job interviews! You've worked hard to learn how to define, find, match, construct and prepare stories that you can use to land your dream job.

Not only that, but you've also identified how you can use those stories to establish yourself in the first 90 days of your new role, and build rapport and credibility with your new team members and managers.

You've made positive progress towards learning the art of storytelling in business. The skills and techniques you've learned in this book and the stories you have constructed will serve you well in your future career – but this is only the beginning. There are many other ways you can learn to use stories in business, from

communicating with customers to inspiring your team. It is a skill worth mastering.

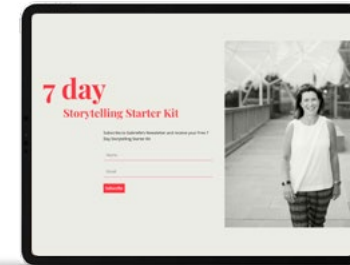
If your job involves sales, teaching, presenting, communicating, influencing or leading others, my Online Business Storytelling program will help expand your storytelling skills using real-world examples of successful leaders and professionals who use business storytelling in their organisations today. You'll get access to over 25 short videos, as well as other resources and insights that build your skills and confidence in sharing stories effectively in business. To find out more, visit my website: gabrielledolan.com

Welcome to the world of storytelling.

Let's connect

If you have found value in this book, then I would love for us to connect. It's always a pleasure as an author to hear from people about what insights and inspiration they took from the book.

*If you were successful in getting the job then you may like my other books, especially **Stories for Work** and **Real Communication** which I wrote after this book.*



You can also access my **seven-day storytelling starter kit** from my website which is, as the name suggests, a kit that will get you started with storytelling and build on the content of this book! What's more, if you want to develop your storytelling and communication skills even further, then check out my website for any upcoming public workshops at www.gabrielledolan.com/storytelling-workshops/



You may also like to listen to my Authentic Leadership Podcast where I interview business leaders on all things leadership and communication. It's available via **iTunes** and **SoundCloud**.

I undertake work globally as well as virtually, so simply drop me an email if you would like me to speak at your next conference, train your leaders in business storytelling or presenting with impact.

The best ways to get in touch and stay connected are:

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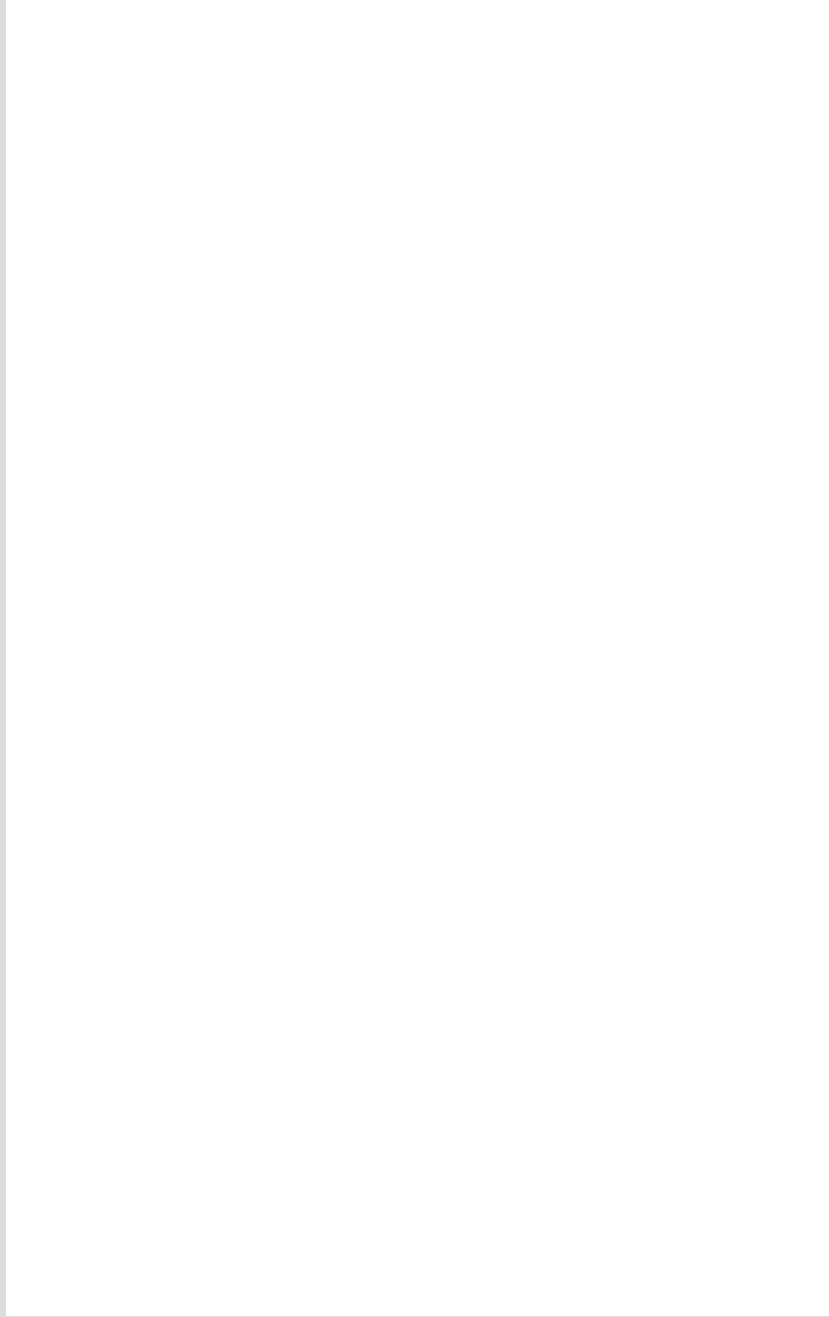
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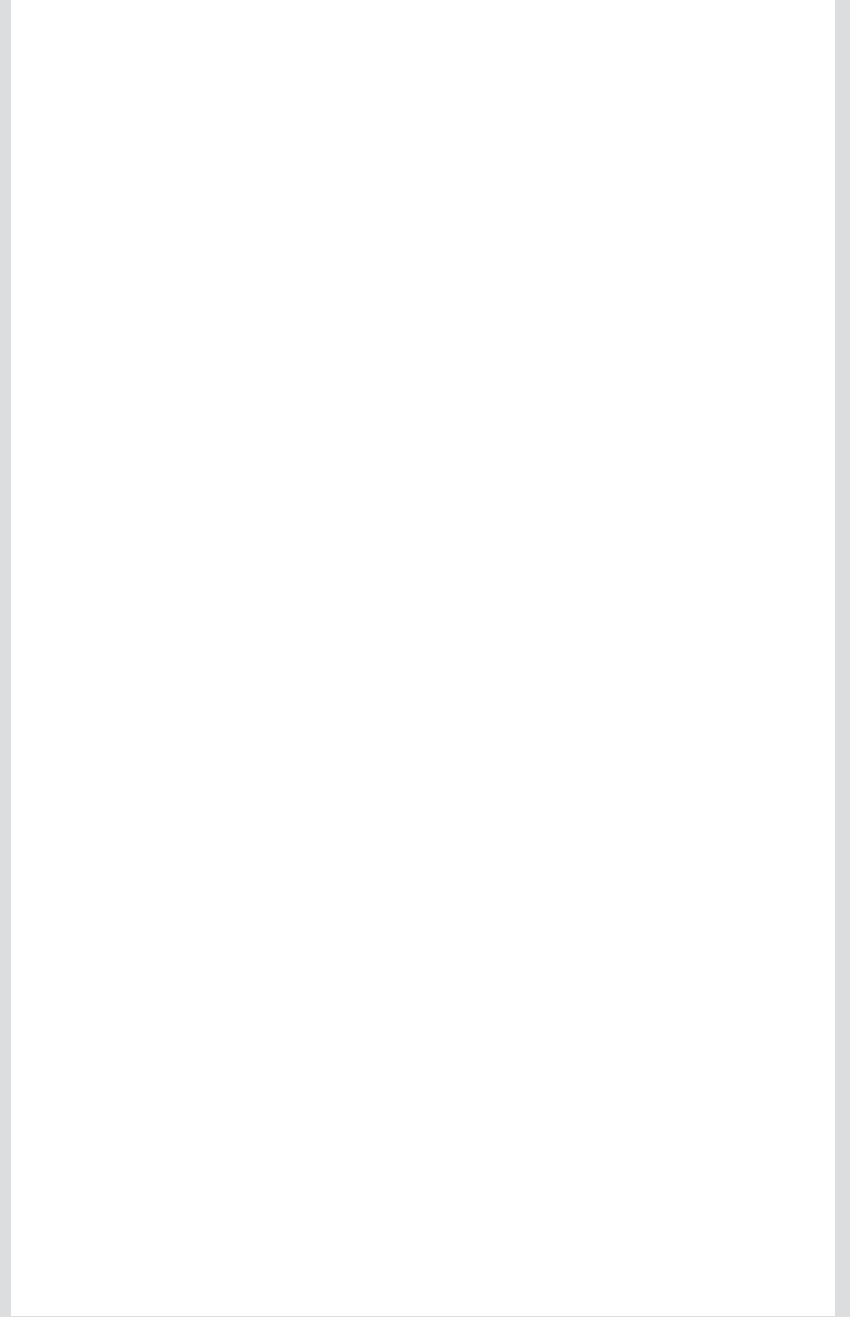
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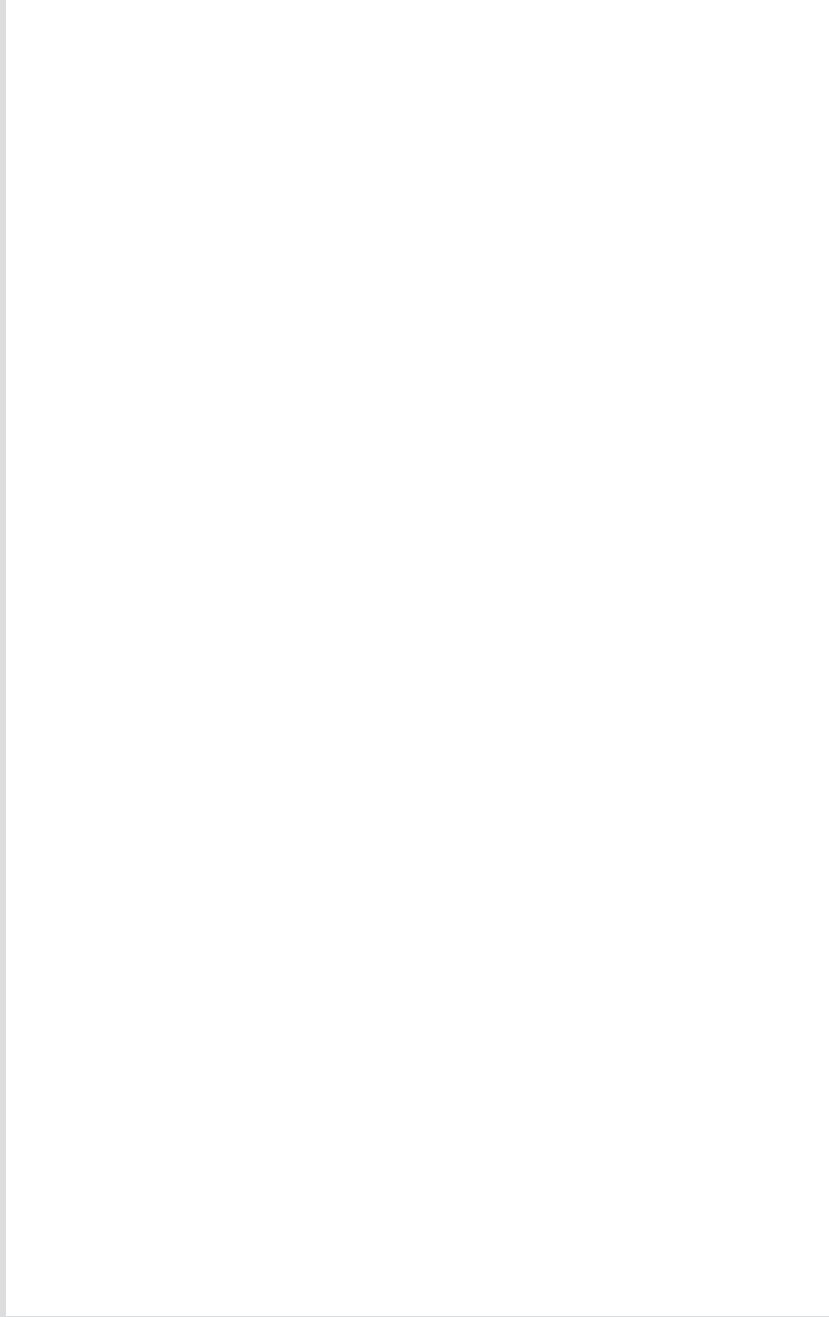
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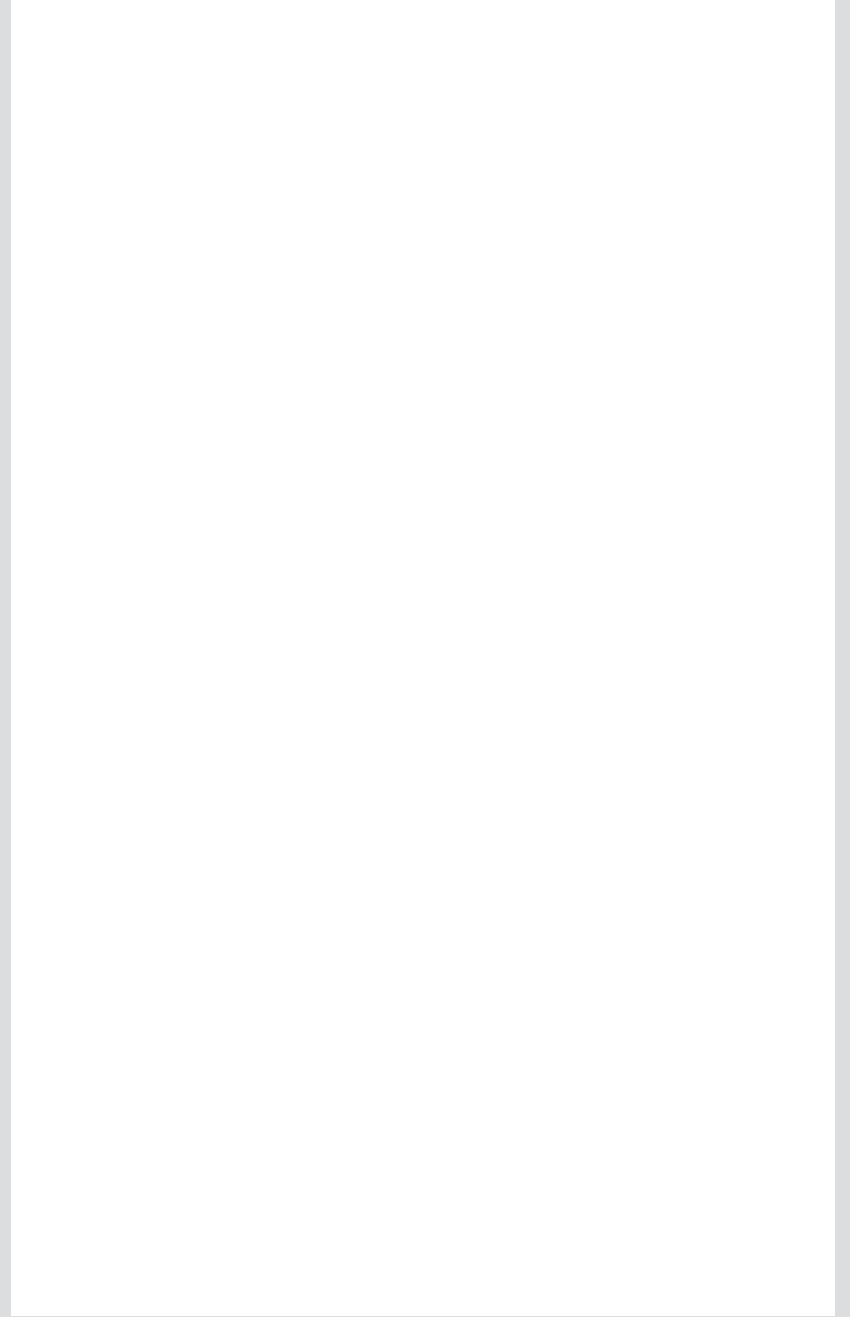
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YOU HAVE LESS THAN 60 MINUTES TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION IN A JOB INTERVIEW.

DON'T WASTE TIME STATING ALL THE BORING FACTS FROM YOUR RESUME.

Use stories to build trust, credibility and engage with your future employer - *fast* - to land your dream job.

With exercises and step-by-step instructions, this book will teach you how to tell stories about your personal and professional life to connect with your interviewer and stand out from all the other candidates.

Through the use of storytelling, you'll demonstrate your capabilities and values, and how valuable an asset you are to any team, organisation and your future employer - no matter what stage you're at in your career.



THIS WORKBOOK WILL HELP YOU TO:

- unleash the power of stories - the number one skill in business today
 - distinguish yourself from the rest of the interview pack
 - land a job in three interviews or less (not more than 50)
- define, find, match, construct and prepare your own stories
- take on tricky questions like: 'What's your biggest weakness?'
- use your stories in the first 90 days of your new role and beyond.



GABRIELLE DOLAN is an expert in communication and a global thought leader in business storytelling, as well as a highly sought-after keynote speaker and mentor. She is also the best-selling author of *Ignite: Real Leadership, Real Talk, Real Results* and *Hooked: How Leaders Connect, Engage and Inspire with Storytelling*.