



The
POWER
of
Story
Telling

STORYTELLING & SOCIAL GOOD
HOW TO CAPTIVATE MILLENNIALS & ENROL
THEM TO YOUR CSR ADVENTURE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



SIMON OATS
STORYTELLER

—
Great stories change the world

This booklet is part of a much bigger story. It's just one of 16 chapters that make up the ultimate guidebook for Australian Corporate & CSR Communicators - Talking the Walk@2 – How to tell your Social Good story to Resonate with Millennials. <https://www.cavill.com.au/talking-the-walk/>



"OF ALL OF OUR
INVENTIONS FOR MASS
COMMUNICATION,
PICTURES STILL SPEAK
THE MOST UNIVERSALLY
UNDERSTOOD LANGUAGE"
- WALT DISNEY

1. WHY STORYTELLING IS MAKING A COMEBACK

You may have noticed there's quite a buzz around storytelling. This ancient art of passing down information through the generations has become relevant again in the digit-oral era.

In the 1940s a chap named Joseph Campbell presented a compelling idea: that all myths and stories from the beginning of time follow a single storyline template, or what he called a monomyth. Joseph named it **The Hero's Journey**.

When I began researching storytelling, I found over 100 websites and at least the same number of visuals relating to this template. I couldn't believe that in all my years in communication I'd never encountered this before!

The central story structure has been used for decades by writers and film-makers. Hollywood owes its success to it; Bollywood is built upon it. It crosses all cultures and it's there in the stories of Buddha, age-old nursery rhymes, Dickens and Shakespeare.

The Hero's Journey is a structure that you can use to plot your own storyline and easily identify why a story is floundering. Joseph Campbell didn't invent this structure, but he did identify and describe its universal pattern. In his study of myths and legends he noticed that they are all the same story – the journey of the Hero – retold endlessly in infinite variations.

All these stories provide a journey that we can relate to, a familiar pattern that tugs at our emotions and taps into our most basic desires as social animals.

You might be wondering how all this relates to you as a business. Believe it or not, you and your company have all the ingredients to be the Hero of your own journey, especially your CSR & Social Good journey, which fits the monomyth template beautifully.

“THERE ARE ONLY TWO OR THREE HUMAN STORIES, AND THEY GO ON REPEATING THEMSELVES AS FIERCELY AS IF THEY HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE” - WILL CATHER

Joseph Campbell's theory parallels that of psychologist Carl Jung who wrote about archetypes – constantly repeating characters that occur in people's dreams. Jung suggested that these characters reflect the human mind and we adopt them to play out the drama of our lives, to answer universal questions about who we are and our place in the world. They resonate with us and we are compelled to listen or watch.

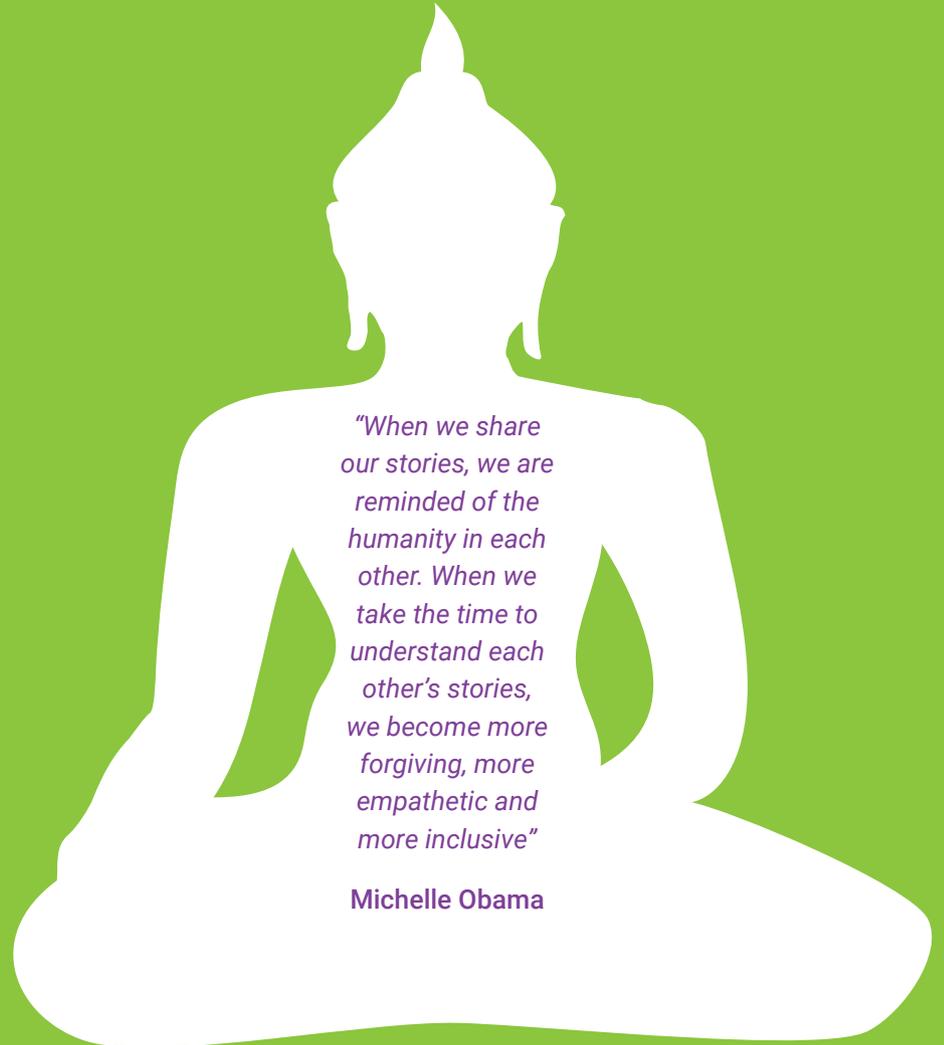
DEEP, DEEP STUFF.

It's definitely worth a dive into this world, it's fascinating and rich.

But let's get back to the Hero.

The Hero is the central character in the story structure, and there is always a wise person, as well as a shadowy antagonist or villain.

But you won't read much about the villains, because people don't identify with them, and in the universal story structure villains never win!



"When we share our stories, we are reminded of the humanity in each other. When we take the time to understand each other's stories, we become more forgiving, more empathetic and more inclusive"

Michelle Obama



In 2019, many corporates are viewed as villains. There is now overwhelming evidence, as detailed in Talking the Walk[®]2. And the one thing that transforms a villain into a hero is the Good Stuff – doing what is right for the planet and humanity. So if capitalism is The Force, it's about using The Force for good, not evil. We all wanted Darth Vader to become good again, didn't we?

Business CAN be a force for good. The Good Stuff is right there in your CSR strategy, the actions you're taking to minimise your impact on society and the environment, the causes that you support and volunteer for and so on. In the Hero's Journey the Hero struggles, is imperfect, often afraid and vulnerable. We as humans identify with this, and to be relatable corporates MUST be willing to share the struggles as you embrace this challenging journey, and bring people along the ride with you.

Audiences and consumers love the Hero's promise of change. They can't wait to see what happens. They know the Hero will face challenges and it will be difficult. This is what they love about it.

So your company's struggle to balance commercial imperatives with your obligations to society & the environment - your CSR strategy - has all the elements of the Hero's Journey. Your difficult CSR journey is the very thing that will encourage consumers to care about what you are doing. They will respect you not in spite of your struggles and imperfections but **BECAUSE OF them**, and they will want to take the ride with you, rather than criticise you.

Storytelling is so much a part of the human psyche that it's the one thing that ANY company can do that will resonate with EVERYONE, no matter their age, life experience, qualification or gender.

AND MILLENNIALS, ESPECIALLY, LOVE IT!

And yet many companies are still hiding behind the fear of imperfection and criticism. Hiding behind well crafted, perfect and boring CSR reports and holding back the really juicy stuff.

Playing the 'risk averse' card is only going to put your company at greater risk - of being left behind, irrelevant, a has-been company that will be talked about in a case study about those companies that refused to change and died.

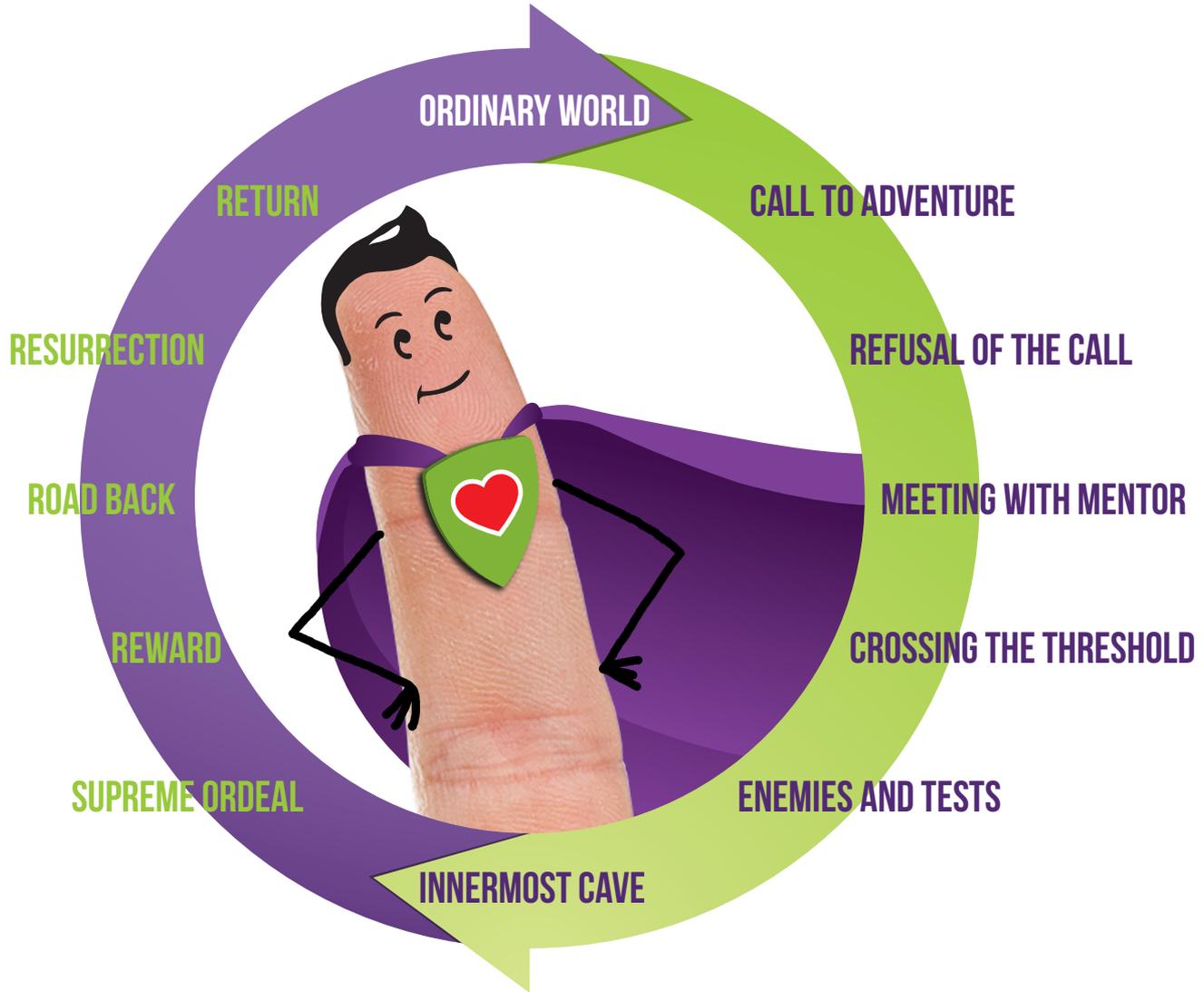


A brilliant example of how a very difficult CSR Journey was told, following the Hero's journey, is that of global modular carpet tile company, Interface. Founder Ray Anderson (above) first announced **Mission Zero 2020** in the 2003 documentary The Corporation. It's a truly inspirational example - a case study along with Ray's compelling Ted Talk comes with Talking the Walk®2.



2. THE HERO'S JOURNEY – A STANDARD, REPEATABLE STRUCTURE

Let's take a look at the Hero's Journey as outlined by Joseph Campbell. It breaks neatly into a series of standard steps to form a meaningful 'how to' for telling a story



“THAT’S WHAT STORYTELLERS
DO. WE RESTORE ORDER WITH
IMAGINATION. WE INSTILL
HOPE AGAIN AND AGAIN”

- WALT DISNEY IN
SAVING MR BANKS

STEP 1) The Hero is introduced – ORDINARY WORLD

Most stories take us to a special world that is new and alien to the Hero. So you first have to show the hero in their ordinary world. In Crocodile Dundee you see Mick in his native home and then in a strange New York. In Star Wars you see Luke Skywalker being bored as a farm boy before he tackles the universe.

STEP 2) The Hero receives the challenge – CALL TO ADVENTURE

The Hero is presented with a problem, challenge or adventure. In Star Wars it's Princess Leia's holographic message to Obi Wan Kenobi who asks Luke to join the quest. In detective stories it's a new case.

STEP 3) The Hero is reluctant at first – REFUSAL OF THE CALL

Often the Hero baulks at the adventure, fearing the unknown. When Luke refuses Obi Wan's call, he returns to his farmhouse to find his uncle and aunt have been barbecued by the Emperor's storm troopers. Suddenly he is motivated.

STEP 4) The Hero is encouraged by the wise old man/woman – MEETING WITH MENTOR

This is where the Hero meets a mentor, who enables them to undertake the journey. In JAWS it's the crusty Robert Shaw who knows all about sharks. In Star Wars it is Obi Wan giving Luke his father's light sabre. But the mentor can go only so far; eventually the Hero has to go it alone.

STEP 5) The Hero commits to the adventure – CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

The Hero enters the special world, the point at which the adventure gets going. Dorothy sets out on the Yellow Brick Road. The Hero is now committed and there is no turning back.





STEP 6) The Hero encounters tests and helpers – ENEMIES & TESTS

The Hero has to pass certain tests and challenges that are part of the training. In Star Wars the cantina is the setting for the forging of an alliance with Han Solo and the start of the conflict with Jabba the Hutt.

STEP 7) The Hero reaches the dangerous cave – INNERMOST CAVE

The Hero comes to a dangerous place where the object of the quest is hidden. In Lord of the Rings this is the fight with the spider Shelob. Sometimes it's just the Hero going into their own mind to confront fears.

STEP 8) The Hero faces death – SUPREME ORDEAL

The Hero reaches rock bottom and faces death, often fighting with a masked villain or mythical beast. In Star Wars it's the harrowing moment in the bowels of the death Star where Luke, Leia and co are trapped in the giant trash-masher. In ET, it's when ET appears to die on the operating table.

This is a critical step, when the Hero appears to die and is born again. The audience identifies with the Hero and shares the brink-of-death experience as though actually living through it with the Hero.

STEP 9) The Hero seizes the sword – REWARD

Having defied death, the Hero now takes possession of the treasure, the magic sword or elixir. The Hero may settle a conflict – when Luke discovers that the dying Darth Vader is his father. Often the reconciliation is with a woman, and a love scene or marriage takes place.

STEP 10) The Hero begins the arduous return home – ROAD BACK

The Hero is not safe yet, and is often pursued by vengeful forces from whom he/she has stolen the reward. This is the moonlight bicycle flight of Elliot and ET as they escape from government authority.

STEP 11) The Hero emerges triumphant – RESURRECTION

The Hero emerges from the special world, transformed. The Star Wars movies adhere to this constantly – all the early films feature a final battle scene in which Luke emerges victorious.

STEP 12) The Hero is home with the elixir – RETURN

The Hero comes back to the ordinary world, bringing back the elixir or treasure, something to benefit mankind. Sometimes the treasure is the knowledge that there is a special world and it can be survived. But the biggest treasure is coming home with a story to tell.

3. UTILISING THE HERO'S JOURNEY FOR YOUR CSR ADVENTURE

In the context of CSR, the 'Ordinary World' (**step 1**) is the current status quo. Corporate greed, scandals, greater divide between rich and poor, boring, stale content from corporations.

The call to adventure (**step 2**) is the call from consumers to corporate Australia. Alas many companies are not hearing this call, or they see it as an irritating obligation, rather than an adventure, and an opportunity to become a Hero along with staff and customers. Ironically, refusing to hear the call is part of the Hero's journey (**step 3**), driven by fear of the unknown. So if you're brave enough to follow this formula, then make your previous inaction part of the story!

Step 4 is the meeting with the mentor. I'd like to think that this book is your mentor, or perhaps it's your communications agency, or marketing & comms team members. **Step 5** is when the Hero commits to the adventure, this would be the preparation of your strategy and action plan. You will definitely encounter tests and enemies (**Step 6**) as there will be stakeholders that will resist change, or balk at the risk or cost. Embrace it and use it!

Steps 7 and 8 is when the Hero confronts their biggest fears and faces death. For your company death represents the end of doing business unsustainably and birthing a new way of doing things, one that resonates with customers, staff and communities.

Step 9 is the reward, this is when you will start to see reputation benefits, trust rankings increasing, other companies asking how you did it. In **steps 10, 11 & 12** is when the Hero returns triumphant, with the new knowledge to share with others. This is when you'll be asked to meet with government ministers, speak at conferences, share your story with other companies about to embark on a similar journey. Just as Ray Anderson from Interface has. He passed away in 2011, but his legacy, his story, lives on today.

"THE WORLD AS WE HAVE
CREATED IT IS A PROCESS OF OUR
THINKING. IT CANNOT BE
CHANGED WITHOUT CHANGING
OUR THINKING."

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

Your company has the potential to be a true leader in CSR & Social Good. A modern-day Hero in every sense of the word. This is the way to win back customer respect, trust and loyalty.

"YOU CAN'T BUILD A REPUTATION ON WHAT
YOU ARE GOING TO DO." - HENRY FORD

4. MODERN DAY STORYTELLING

When we think of storytelling we might think back to our childhood and remember one particular story that we liked to read over and over. Most likely this favourite story followed the Hero's Journey. The structure resonates with us so deeply that we flock to movies, books, video games and TV series to see the story play out over and over again.

Humans are obsessed with communication. In the good old days before television and radio, we passed information to our families and communities by word of mouth. **We were creators and sharers of ideas.** Lessons were learned and ideas passed from person to person through the stories we told. Only the best ideas survived. **It was Survival of the fittest.**

Then came the Broadcast era when we were recipients of ideas and advertisers' messages. **We became consumers of ideas** and products rather than participants in spreading them. Any company or brand with money could be heard. **It was Survival of the richest.**

With the advent of social media we are in charge again of what we seek, skip and share. **We are again creators and sharers of ideas,** and technology enables us to create our own content. We are now in the digitally empowered version of the oral tradition. **Survival of the fittest again.**

Humans are also emotional beings. Emotions such as fear, desire, anger and happiness drive us. Whatever emotion we feel most intensely will dictate our actions towards a company or brand, when we choose a product on the shelf or 'like' (or actively slam) a communication from a brand. We seek a human connection and intimacy from the exchange of information and shared experience – and this is where your organisation can become the Hero.

When consumers align to your values, when they can identify themselves with your journey and have an emotional attachment to you, they will want to do business with you, work for you, promote you. Especially if you can find ways to actively engage them, shine the spotlight on them, so they can get a taste of being the Hero themselves.

GETTING IT RIGHT

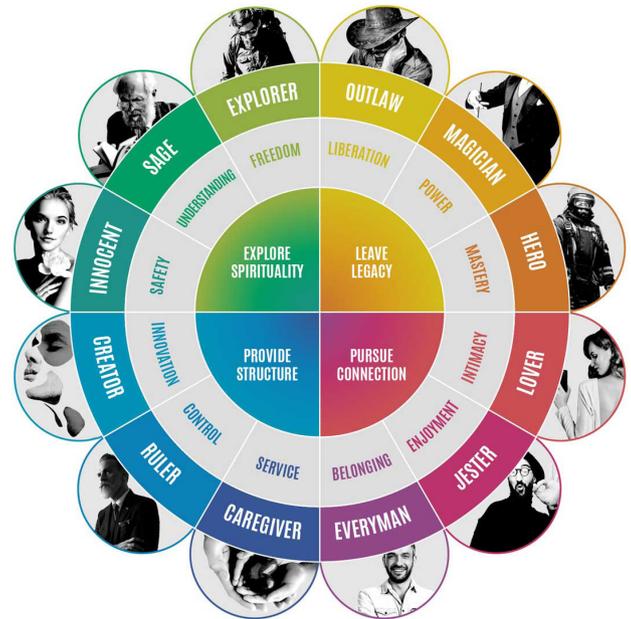
For companies willing to embrace the Hero's Journey to tell your CSR & Social Good adventure, it is very important to understand that there is a particular viewpoint to adopt. Your brand must be the protagonist⁸, the champion of the CSR program, the Hero. But it is imperative that companies and brands do not *declare* themselves as the Hero. This will smack of arrogance and will turn consumers right off. It is not for you to call yourself the Hero – that is for your customers and your staff to declare. Follow the journey of the Hero, tell the story from the Hero's viewpoint, but always be the humble, vulnerable, modest Hero. Be the mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent and let others call you Superman – and you can't go wrong.

It's a subtle distinction but a vital one.

ARCHETYPES

Before leaving the subject of Heroes, we should note the distinction between storytelling structures and the Hero we find in a structure often used by marketers to align their brand to a particular set of characteristics otherwise known as the '12 brand archetypes'.

Such archetypes include the Jester, Creator, Sage and there is also one called THE HERO. It is important not to confuse the Hero's Journey and the CSR Hero's Journey with the brand archetype of Hero.



⁸ Protagonist - leading character, an advocate or champion of a cause or idea

To adopt the Hero characteristics in your brand, and behave consistently with this archetype, is one thing; to follow the **Hero's Journey** when telling your CSR story is quite another. One is who you are being (the personality) and the other is where you are going (the journey). Don't make the mistake of confusing the two.

IT'S IN THE TELLING

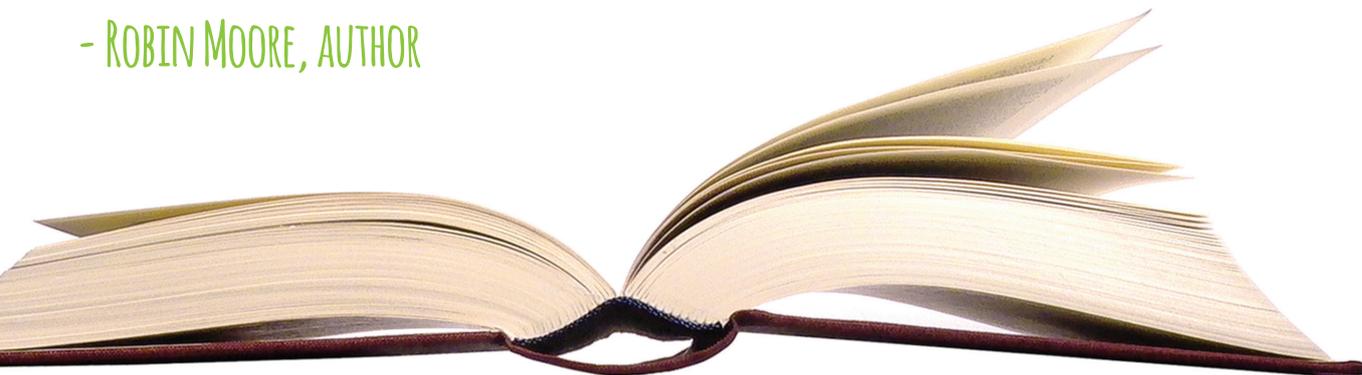
There is also a particular way of telling a story, a formula that positively affects brain chemistry. A well told story will trigger the imagination so the listener imagines what you are telling them to be real. A well told story has a level of descriptive detail that allows the listener to place themselves into the story. This evokes empathy and they start to care. Too much detail is confusing and overwhelming to the imagination and they will switch off. This is what is happening with CSR – the information being provided now is too too much, too complex, too big to grasp, too boring.

It's not about length or size – otherwise kids wouldn't queue up to buy Harry Potter books and the world would have abandoned Game of Thrones. It's about getting the right level of detail and description, the key points of the journey in the right order and the irresistible need for struggle.

Hailey Cavill-Jaspers, author of Talking the Walk(r)² and master storytelling coach Simon Oats will be leading 3 workshops in Australia in July/August 2019 where we delve more into the neuroscience, story structure and how to nail it.

More info at <https://www.cavill.com.au/events-webinars/>

'INSIDE EACH OF US IS A NATURAL - BORN STORYTELLER, WAITING TO BE RELEASED'
- ROBIN MOORE, AUTHOR



5. NEUROSCIENCE

Neuroscience⁷ now shows that our brain thinks and organises in story form. It's why we have such vivid dreams that link random thoughts to another to create a story. Think about the memory experts who create a complex story to hold the data they have to remember. While the story is far more complex than the data, the brain is wired to remember it.

Why are the successful comedians like Seinfeld so often storytellers, not joke-tellers? Why are the best Ted Talk presenters usually the storytellers? Because that's how our brain works.

So it stands to reason that if we present information to consumers in the form of a story, they are going to notice it, embrace it and retain it. And in this day and age when we are bombarded with so much information and so many advertising messages, retention is critical.



⁷ Cognitive Neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga, Paul Zak, 'The Future of Storytelling', Harvard Business Review 2014



"IN ORDER TO TELL BETTER STORIES, BRANDS
MUST ACTUALLY BE BETTER STORIES"

- JONAH SACHS, AUTHOR,
WINNING THE STORY WARS

We hope you enjoyed dipping your toe into the
fascinating world of storytelling.

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