



StorySelling **4** Success

Your story matters.

Storyselling Playbook

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A companion guide to Storyselling Immersion

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Storyselling for Success

Welcome to the Storyselling Playbook

Several years ago, I worked for an accounting firm that helped a client recover a \$948,000 tax refund. By applying one tax statute and amending two returns, they changed the trajectory of a business.

And no one heard about it.

That story mostly died inside an email chain. Nearly a million dollars was reduced to a single line on a proposal: *"Provided strategic tax planning resulting in significant savings."*

That's when I realized something. The problem wasn't the work. *The problem was the story.* Or more accurately, the lack of one.

Since then, I've noticed the same thing everywhere.

Brilliant people do meaningful work every day. They solve problems, create transformation, and make a real difference.

Yet many struggle to explain the value they bring.

Not because they're bad communicators or marketers. But because nobody ever taught them how to recognize the stories hiding inside their work.

That's why this playbook exists.

Not to teach you how to sound clever or become someone you're not. It exists to help you uncover the value that already exists and make it visible and unmistakable.

Chances are, you already have stories that build trust, establish credibility, and help people understand why you care. Most businesses simply aren't using those stories strategically.

This playbook will help you find them, organize them, and use them with intention.

As you move through these pages (or experience Storyselling Immersion) you'll uncover stories already living inside your business, your client base, your experiences, and your work. Some have been hiding in plain sight for years.

I've come to believe some simple truths:

Meaningful work deserves to be understood. When the right story is finally told, invisible value becomes visible.

Your story matters. It's your #1 greatest business advantage.

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How To Use the Storyselling Playbook

Underneath everything you do for your clients are six essential stories: one Core Story and five Key Stories. Each one answers a question your prospects are already asking as they decide whether to work with you.

When you learn how to use these stories strategically, you'll be able to clearly communicate what you do, why it matters, and why you're the right choice.

Within these pages, you will develop a complete Storyselling framework, including:

- Your *Core* Story
- Your *Origin* Story
- Your *Client Success* Story
- Your *Against-the-Odds* Story
- Your *Values-in-Action* Story
- Your *Future Vision* Story

Together, these stories create a narrative foundation that helps others clearly understand:

Why your work matters.

What makes your approach unique.

How you create meaningful results.

Where you are leading people.

What to Expect

Each lesson of the Storyselling Playbook builds on the previous one. With each type of story, there are frameworks, worksheets, and builders that help you:

- Capture important moments from your experience
- Identify the insights behind your work
- Shape those insights into clear, compelling stories
- Organize your stories into a practical strategy

You don't need perfect stories at the beginning.

You just need to begin.

What IS Storyselling?

Stories are already happening in your work.

They occur in your client conversations, the challenges you solve, the decisions you make, and the results you help create.

Storyselling is the process of recognizing those moments and articulating them intentionally so others can clearly understand the value you bring.

One of the biggest misconceptions about storyselling is that “stories are only for marketing.”

That’s simply not true.

Your stories shape how people understand you long *before* they become clients (and long after they do).

Why Storyselling Works

Human beings are wired for stories.

Long before we had websites, presentations, social media, or sales pages, we learned through stories. Stories helped us make sense of the world, remember important lessons, and decide who and what to trust.

That's still true today.

When people are presented with facts alone, they may learn the information, but they will have no connection to it. And so, they’re unlikely to retain it. A Stanford study proved that people are *22 times more likely* to remember a story than they are a fact.

Remember:

Facts inform.
Stories *connect*.

But when information is wrapped inside a story, they can *picture it, relate to it, and remember it*. People experience stories in a very visceral way.

Stories help people move beyond knowing and into understanding.

People can’t connect with what they don’t understand.

And people rarely understand work that’s communicated only through numbers and facts (i.e. services, features, statistics, and credentials).

People want to see themselves in the stories they hear.

Storyselling works because it creates connection.

A well-told story helps people understand your expertise, trust your intentions, and imagine what's possible. That's important because buying decisions are rarely based on information alone. People want to know *what happened, why it mattered, and what it could mean* for them.

Your stories hold a lot of influence...

Stories influence whether:

- Someone remembers you
- Trusts you.
- Refers you.
- Understands your value

Most businesses think they have a marketing problem **when they actually have an “invisible value” problem.**

Stories influence whether prospects believe your work is different from everyone else doing something “similar.”

Stories are what make the meaning behind your work visible.

That means your storytelling framework should not live in one place. It should quietly support every major touchpoint in your business.

The Best Places to Use Your Stories

Your stories belong in:

- Your website
- Your About page
- Webinars and presentations
- Keynote speeches
- Sales calls
- Networking conversations
- LinkedIn posts and social media
- Podcasts and interviews
- Proposals and onboarding
- Recruiting and company culture
- Staff meetings
- Leadership communication
- Client retention conversations
- Email nurturing sequences
- Client newsletters
- Pricing conversations

Anywhere trust, clarity, leadership, or decision-making matter...story matters.

How Storyselling Can Change a Business

BEFORE Storyselling

Generic messaging that sounds interchangeable

Weak positioning that blends into the market

Unclear differentiation

Fact-heavy communication that people forget

Explaining services over and over

Prospects struggling to “get it”

Trust that takes a long time to build

Referrals that rely on luck or relationships

Expertise that feels abstract or intangible

Businesses competing primarily on price

Marketing that feels transactional

Customer relationships built only on deliverables

A business that feels difficult to explain

AFTER Storyselling

Messaging with emotional clarity and recognizable identity

Memorable positioning people can immediately understand and repeat

Clear understanding of what makes the business unique

Story-driven communication people remember

Stories that naturally illustrate value

Prospects quickly understanding the meaning behind the work

Faster trust through clarity and human connection

Stronger referrals because referrers can clearly explain your value

Expertise made visible through stories and examples

Businesses competing on meaning, trust, and perspective

Communication that creates emotional connection and alignment

Deeper loyalty built on shared values and trust

A business people can understand, remember, and talk about

The Storyselling Philosophy

Storyselling begins with a simple belief:

Meaningful work *already* contains meaningful stories.

The goal of storyselling is not to invent stories. The goal is to recognize, refine, and communicate *the stories that already exist*.

The Power of Stories in Business

Stories are not decoration. They are one of the most powerful and primary ways human beings make sense of experience.

When you share the stories behind your work, you help others understand who you are, what you stand for, and *why your work matters*.

Stories make expertise visible.

One of the superpowers of storyselling is the brain experiences the story while reading or listening to it. It is the fastest way to turn abstract value into something people can see, feel, and remember.

The Responsibility of Storytelling

The most powerful stories are honest, thoughtful, and grounded in real experience. The best stories feel very very human.

Remember, AI is fast, but it has no soul.

Powerful stories are focused on meaningful insight. They feel authentic. Those authentic stories build trust because they reveal the human perspective behind the work.

The Storyselling Mindset

Practicing storyselling is a mindset. Incorporating it into your business means you are making a decision to see your work through a new lens.

Using this new lens is committing yourself to:

- Recognizing the meaningful moments in your work
- Reflecting on the lessons those moments reveal
- Communicating your insights with clarity and integrity
- Using stories to help others understand what matters

The Architecture of Storyselling

How Your Stories Work Together

Storyselling is not about telling random stories.

It is about developing a structured narrative framework that helps people quickly understand:

- Who you are
- Why your work matters
- What makes your approach unique
- How you create results
- Where you are leading people

The Storyselling Pyramid

The Pyramid organizes your stories into a clear structure, with everything supporting and building toward Trust, Growth, and increased Revenue.



The Storyselling Framework

One Core Story + Five Key Stories

The Core Story

At the center of the Pyramid is your *Core Story*, which answers an important question:

Why this work matters to you.

Your Core Story reveals the insight or experience that shaped your mission and the reason you care so deeply about the problem you solve.

The Core Story becomes the bedrock for every other story you tell.

The Five Key Stories

Supporting the Core Story are the five Key Stories that help others understand and trust your work. When one of these is missing, people feel it. When someone stalls in the buying cycle, this is a great first place to look.

These five stories answer a specific question your audience is *already* asking.

Origin Story

Your Origin Story reveals the experiences that shaped your perspective and led you to this path. It answers this question:

Why did you begin this work?

Client Success Story

Your Client Success Story shows the transformation that occurs when someone engages with your work. It actively answers an important question your prospects want to know:

Does this actually work?

Against-the-Odds Story

This story reveals how you respond to challenges, uncertainty, or setbacks. This story is one of the most important, because it answers:

Can I trust you when things are difficult?

Values-in-Action Story

This story shows the principles that guide your work and leadership. It shows your values, and what's important to you. It answers:

How do you make decisions?

Future Vision Story

Your Future Vision Story invites others to imagine the larger impact your work can create. It allows them to see what sort of future they can have if they work with you. It answers:

Where are you leading me?

How These Stories Work Together

When these stories work together, they create a clear narrative structure. Instead of explaining your value repeatedly, your stories *illustrate it naturally*.

A Simple Way to Remember the Framework

<i>Core Story</i>	Why you care.
<i>Origin Story</i>	How the journey began.
<i>Client Success Story</i>	Proof of transformation.
<i>Against-the-Odds Story</i>	Trust built through challenge.
<i>Values-in-Action Story</i>	Leadership through decisions.
<i>Future Vision Story</i>	The future you are helping create.

The Outcome

When your Storyselling Architecture is clear:

1. People understand your work faster.
2. Your message becomes easier to explain.
3. Your leadership voice becomes more authentic.
4. Your stories create clarity, trust, and momentum.

Your story becomes more than an anecdote. It becomes your strategic advantage.

Discovery Exercise: Story Inventory Worksheet

Great business stories already exist in your work. This exercise helps you begin identifying them so you can refine them.

Don't worry about writing perfect stories yet. *Just capture the moments that mattered.*

1. A Moment That Shaped Your Mission

(This may become part of your Core Story.)

Think about a moment that made you realize this work mattered to you.

Prompts:

- What experience made you think, “*There has to be a better way*”?
- What problem frustrated you enough to want to solve it?
- What personal experience helps you understand the people you serve?

Jot down some notes:

2. A Client Transformation Story

(This will help us develop your Client Success Story.)

Think about a time when someone experienced a real transformation because of your work.

Prompts:

- What problem did they face before working with you?
- What struggle did they experience along the way?
- What changed as a result?

3. A Challenge or Hard Lesson

(This may become an Against-the-Odds Story.)

Stories about struggle often build the most trust.

Prompts:

- When did something go wrong and force you to rethink your approach?
 - What mistake or challenge helped you grow?
 - What obstacle taught you an important lesson?
-
-
-

4. A Moment When Your Values Mattered

(This may become a Values-in-Action Story.)

Think about a moment when you had to make a difficult decision that revealed your values.

Prompts:

- When did you choose integrity over convenience?
 - When did you make a decision that showed what matters to you?
 - When did you stand by a principle, even when it wasn't easy?
-
-
-

5. A Vision for the Future

(This may become your Future Vision Story.)

Think about the bigger impact you want your work to create.

Prompts:

- What change do you hope to see in the people you serve?
- What future are you helping create?
- What difference do you want your work to make over time?

Reminder

You don't need perfect stories yet. Right now, we're simply collecting "the raw material."

Throughout this book, you'll refine these moments into stories that clearly illustrate your value and build trust with your audience.

You've got this!

Discovering Your Core Story (Your “Why”)

What Is a Core Story?

Your Core Story explains why the work you do matters to you.

This story reveals the experience or realization that shaped how you see your field and how you approach your work today.

The Role of Your Core Story

While many professionals describe their work through services, credentials, or results, a Core Story helps others understand the **insight behind the work**.

Your Core Story helps people see:

- Why you care about the work
- How your perspective was shaped
- What insight guides your decisions
- Why your work has meaning

A Core Story is not your biography or your resume.
It is the moment when your perspective changed.

The Components of your Core Story

Most strong Core Stories contain three elements:

Moment → Realization → Perspective

1. **Moment.** A real experience or situation.
This is a powerful moment that stayed with you.
2. **Realization.** What you understood differently because of that experience.
This moment made lasting transformation in your thinking.
3. **Perspective.** How that realization shapes your work today.
How did that realization / transformation change your approach in business?

Your Core Story Framework

Think about a possible Core Story moment from your Story Inventory earlier in this book.

Write down the three elements:

1. The Moment (What happened?)

2. The Realization (What did you suddenly understand?)

3. The Perspective (How does that insight shape how you approach your work today?)

Core stories often feel very personal.

Sometimes they're rooted from your early experiences. Sometimes they were formed more recently. Regardless, they are the powerful center of the Storyselling Architecture.

Your Core Story is “what keeps you going.”

Even if you don't often share your Core Story, it's vital that you know what it is, and how it shapes your work.

Finding Your Core Story Moment

Core Stories often begin in one of five places.

1. A moment of frustration
2. A client experience
3. A turning point in your career
4. A lesson learned the hard way
5. A problem you couldn't ignore

Discovery Prompts

Reflect on the following questions:

- What is something about your work that you care about more deeply than most people in your field?
- Where did that belief come from?
- What moment first made you think: ***“There has to be a better way”?***

The Core Story Builder

Once you identify the moment and insight, you can begin shaping the story. A simple way to start is with the sentence below.

Because I experienced... [fill in the blank],

I care deeply about helping people... [fill in the blank].

Exercise: Drafting Your Core Story Sentence

Because I experienced:

I care deeply about helping people:

Remember: This is not your final story. This sentence simply captures *the heart of the insight*.

Bonus Exercise: Your Core Story – Deeper Reflection

Before refining your Core Story further, reflect on the following questions.

What does this story reveal about you?

Examples: What you believe. What you care about. How you approach problems.

Why does this story matter to the people you serve?

What feels most meaningful about this story to you?

Closing Thoughts for Your Core Story

Your Core Story does not need to be perfect yet.

At this stage, the goal is simply to identify the experience and insight that shaped your perspective. Many people make multiple versions of the Core Story Builder, or answer the prompts a few different ways to see which version feels best.

In the next sections, you will continue refining this story and connecting it to the other stories in your Storyselling Playbook.

The Origin Story: “The First Story You Tell.”

What is the Purpose of your Origin Story?

The Origin Story is the first story people usually hear. It is mostly prompted with a question like: “*So, how did you get into this line of work?*”

Your Origin story helps people understand:

- How you got here
- Why this path makes sense
- Why they can trust you

Your Origin Story doesn't build trust because it proves what you know.

It builds trust because it shows people *how* you came to know it.

The Meaning Behind Your Origin Story

Most people don't trust what you do until they understand *how you came to do it*.

Your Origin Story reveals the path behind your work. It shows the decisions that shaped your path, and the movement that led you *here*.

Your Origin Story answers a simple but powerful question:

“Why this work... and why you?”

Your Origin Story's Role in Storyselling

Your Origin Story is one of your Five Key Stories. It works alongside your Core Story:

- Core Story → Why your work matters (internal)
- Origin Story → How you got here (external)

What your Origin Story IS and ISN'T

Your Origin Story is the story of how you got here, told in a way that makes your work make sense.

It isn't your full biography or your resume. It definitely isn't a timeline of everything you've done. (Long stories make today's attention-challenged audience tune out.)

Instead, your Origin Story shows a focused path and a clear direction. Most important, it shows a transformative moment that changed your life and brought you here.

Your Core Story is the insight you carry.

Your Origin Story is the story you tell.

The Origin Story Framework

This framework has three distinct parts:

Start → Shift → Direction

(Grab some paper for note-taking as you read this framework.)

1. Start

Where you began.

- What were you doing before this work?
- What did you believe your path was?
- What direction were you heading?

2. Shift

What changed.

- What didn't feel right anymore?
- What did you begin to notice?
- What pulled you in a different direction?

3. Direction

Where it led you.

- What did you move toward?
- What are you doing now?
- What path did you step into?

The Origin Story Builder

"I didn't start here.

I started _____.

But over time _____.

And that led me to _____."

Conversational Origin Story Examples

Example 1: Storyselling Coach

I didn't start here.

I started in training and marketing for all kinds of businesses.

But over time, I kept seeing really good work go unnoticed. Not because it wasn't valuable, but because it was hard to explain in a way people could really understand.

And that led me to Storyselling and helping businesses make the value of their work visible.

Example 2: Speaking Consultant

I didn't start here.

I started in corporate, where communication was constant...but often unclear or misaligned.

But over time, I realized how much that mattered to me, because I had experienced that same disconnect growing up—when words and actions didn't match.

And that led me to help women speak with clarity and alignment, so their words truly reflect what they mean.

Exercises: Craft Your Origin Story

Exercise 1: Identify Your Start

Where did you begin?

- What were you doing?
- What did you think your path was?

Exercise 2: Identify Your Shift

What changed?

- What didn't feel right anymore?
- What did you start noticing?
- What pulled you in a new direction?

Exercise 3 — Identify Your Direction

Where did that lead?

- What did you move toward?
- What are you doing now?

Exercise 4 — Build Your Origin Story

If it's helpful, use the structure:

I didn't start here.

I started _____

But over time _____

And that led me to _____

Exercise 5 — Say It Out Loud

Read your Origin Story out loud. Then ask:

- Does it feel natural?
- Would I actually say this in a conversation?

Refine anything that doesn't feel natural for you. Then repeat Exercise 4 and 5 again.

You are likely to tell your Origin Story more than almost any other Key Story, so it's important to spend some time to make it feel authentically "you."

Origin Story Checklist

Below are some tips to give your Origin Story all the power and presence it deserves.

Does your Origin Story:

- ✓ Have a clear starting point?
- ✓ Include a meaningful shift?
- ✓ Show a clear direction?
- ✓ Feel human (not polished or scripted)?
- ✓ Sound like something you would actually say?

Red Flags for an Origin Story:

Too long, too detailed, sounds like a resume, trying to impress

People you meet will tune in, and lean in, to a great Origin Story.

The phrase, “*I didn’t start here*” has already alerted their brain to expect a story. But if it doesn’t get to the point, stay interesting, and show a meaningful shift or journey, they’ll tune back out...and you’ve lost them.

Refinement Prompts

If your Origin Story feels “off,” ask yourself these refining questions:

- “What specifically changed?”
- “Where did things stop making sense?”
- “What pulled me in a new direction?”

Things to remember

- “Your Origin Story is the path that makes your work make sense.”
- “People don’t just trust what you do. They trust how you got there.”
- “Clarity builds trust faster than complexity.”
- “You don’t need a perfect story. You need a usable one.”

Your Origin Story is not something you invent. *It is something you recognize.*

Because your path was always there.
Storyselling simply helps you tell it clearly.

The Client Success Story: “The Story that Builds Belief”

Your Origin Story showed “trust through path.”

Your Client Success Story shows trust through proof.

This is the story that answers one of your prospect’s most pressing questions:

“Will this actually work for me?”

Let’s face it, people don’t fully trust your work until they see it working for someone else. That’s just human nature. Your Client Success stories—because you will have many—is where your work becomes real, tangible, and believable for your potential and existing clients.

What is the purpose of the Client Success story?

This story shows what your work looks like *in action*. It helps people see what you actually do, how your work helps make a difference, and what changes in your clients’ lives as a result.

A great Client Success story makes your work real, tangible, and *believable*. It bridges the gap between: “*This sounds good*” and “***I believe this works.***”

A Client Success Story shows transformation. It shows the journey of how your work helped someone move from where they *were* to the meaningful result that occurred after working with you.

What the Client Success story Is (and Is Not)

At its heart, this is a human story of transformation. Client Success stories provide a clear before and after, and a tangible moment of change.

This type of story is not a testimonial, or a list of results. It’s definitely not a case study full of data.

Too much data is the fastest way to distance a listener.

The Client Success Story's Role

This is definitely the story most businesses enjoy writing, and it has a distinct purpose.

Your Origin Story explains why a prospect should trust you.

Your Client Success Story shows them *why they should trust your work*.

The Client Success Story Framework

Before → Moment → After

1. Before

Where your client started

- What were they struggling with?
- What wasn't working?
- What did it feel like?

2. Moment

What changed

- What did they realize?
- What shifted?
- What did you help them see or do differently?

3. After

Where they are now

- What is different?
- What result did they experience?
- What became possible?

Another way to look at the Client Success Story...

<i>Before</i>	<i>Moment</i>	<i>After</i>
Problem	Insight	Result

The Difference Between a Weak or Strong Client Success Story

A weak story simply reports the problem or the result.

A strong Client Success story will:

- Focus on the journey (before ~ moment ~ after)
- Reveal the moment when thinking shifted
- Share the insight or result the client gained

The Real Goal of the Client Success Story

A strong Client Success Story doesn't just show results.

It helps people see *themselves* in the story.

A great Client Success story makes the person listening think, "*I want that.*" And it makes them trust that you can give it to them.

It helps potential clients see what you actually do, how you help, and what changes as a result.

If a prospect sees themselves in the "before," they are more likely to believe in your "after."

Pro Tip

It's fascinating to see how many existing clients are moved by the power of the Client Success stories you share.

Successful businesses change and grow over time.

The clients you started with might not be aware of all the things you are doing now.

Not only does research show you're *12 times more likely* to sell to a current customer, it also shows that acquiring a new client costs *5 to 25 times more* than retaining an old one.

Be sure to share your Client Success stories when you interact with prospects *and* with your current clients.

Building Your Client Success Story

Step 1:

Use the story builder below to find your own “*Before → Moment → After.*” (I’ve put three examples below.)

“They came to me because _____.

But what we realized was _____.

And as a result _____.”

A sample first draft for Storyselling for Success

They came to me because they were doing really strong work but struggling to explain it in a compelling story-driven way. (WHO)

But what we realized was that the problem wasn’t their offer...it was that the meaning behind their best work wasn’t always visible. (WHAT)

And as a result, once we uncovered the right stories, their messaging became clear and people immediately started to understand their value. (HOW)

Two more first draft examples

A draft for a Speaking Consultant:

They came to me because they felt confident in their ideas, but when they spoke, their message didn’t land the way they wanted it to.

But what we realized was that their words and delivery weren’t fully aligned, which was creating confusion for their audience.

And as a result, once we focused on clarity and alignment, their communication became much more powerful and people started responding with greater trust.

A sample draft for a Financial Advisor:

They came to me because they felt uncertain about their financial decisions and didn't feel confident in their long-term plan.

But what we realized was that they didn't just need a plan. They needed clarity and understanding around how their money was (*or could be*) working for them.

And as a result, once we simplified their approach, they felt more confident and in control of their financial future.

Step 2: Once you've made the draft for your business as a whole, take a second pass to revise it with an actual client's story.

- WHO came to you?
- WHAT did they realize?
- HOW did your work with them transform their life?

5 Prompts for Client Success Story Power

1. The "Before" Prompt

Think of a client who got great results. What was keeping them awake at night before they started working with you?

2. The Email Prompt

Have you ever received an email, text message, thank-you note, or voicemail from a client that made you stop and smile? What did they say?

3. The Unexpected Outcome Prompt

What's a client result that surprised even you?

4. The Turning Point Prompt

Was there a specific moment when things shifted for the client? A realization, breakthrough, decision, or conversation?

5. The Story Worth Repeating Prompt

If someone asked, "What's one client story you'll never forget?" which story immediately comes to mind (and why)?

What's a client success you've been reducing to a bullet point *that deserves to be told as a story*?

Client Success Story Pro Tip

A weak story reports the result.

A strong story reveals the shift.

If you get stuck on your Client Success story, rewrite a few versions of the middle line.

The power of this story is in the shift prompted by “*but what we realized.*”

Against-the-Odds Story: “The Story That Builds Confidence”

This is the story that builds confidence: for your clients, your team, *and* your prospects.

How does it accomplish such a big job? Because your Against-the-Odds Story demonstrates how you respond when things aren't ideal.

Against-the-Odds answers a common objection: “*But what if my situation is different?*”

This story has three purposes.

This is the kind of story that you won't use as often, but it does some major heavy lifting. When there's a pandemic, a product recall, a bad employee, a major misstep, or a customer complaint, this is the story that can turn the tide.

Against-the-Odds stories are meant to:

1. Build trust under pressure
2. Handle objections without “handling objections”
3. Show that your work *works*, even when things aren't ideal

To put this into perspective:

- Your Client Success Story shows your work works.
- Your Against-the-Odds Story shows *it works even when it's hard*.

Stories of struggle build trust because they show honesty, resilience, and real-world experience. These stories reveal how you think and act under pressure, and your clients like to know that.

A strong Against-the-Odds story should:

- Describe a *real challenge or obstacle*
- Show how you responded or adapted
- Reveal character, leadership, or expertise
- Demonstrate learning or growth
- End with a clear takeaway

This is a unique kind of story that showcases vulnerability—either for you or your client—even as it demonstrates your strength and leadership.

The Against-the-Odds Story Framework

The Against-the-Odds Story, when it's written well, flows through five (5) stages:

Reality → Resistance → Response → Result → Reassurance

1. Reality

What was actually happening?

- Who was the client?
- What situation were they in?

Note: This type of story must be grounded in something real.

2. Resistance (this is the magic ingredient)

What made this difficult?

There will always be an emotional or stress component to this type of story. Emotions like *doubt, hesitation, skepticism*. Situational stressors like *constraints* or *past failures*.

Resistance is what your audience relates to the most.

3. Response

What did YOU do?

- What did you see that others didn't?
- What did you guide them through?
- What stayed consistent in your approach?

This section is where your expertise shows up. Answering the questions above will show how your expertise showed up in this situation.

4. Result

What happened anyway?

- What worked despite the challenge?
- What changed as a result of your actions?

Keep this simple. Don't zero in too hard and over-focus here.

5. Reassurance (your differentiator)

What do those results prove?

- Why does this matter?
- What fear does this remove?

This reassurance is what turns the story into a client decision-making tool.

If no emotion was alleviated as a result of your actions, then this story isn't finished yet. Emotions are the part you can't leave out!

The Against-the-Odds story shows that even when things aren't ideal, your work still works.

Building Your Against-the-Odds Story

This story's goal is to alleviate a client's fear and build their confidence that your work is effective in all situations, including those that are less than ideal.

The prompts to build your Against-the-Odds Story

The "reality" part of the framework is usually a statement of the situation.

Examples:

- "Even though Product X was just recalled..."
- "Even though the stock market fell 500 points on Monday..."
- "Even though our offices will be closed until the lockdown is over..."

Even though _____ (resistance),

we focused on _____ (response),

and as a result _____ (result).

This showed me/us that _____ (reassurance).

Note: That last line is the upgrade most people leave off. It's important to show what emotion or concern was alleviated by the results in this story.

Most people go through several drafts for an Against-the-Odds story. Be sure to include all five stages.

Read on for exercises and examples!

Practice Exercises: Your Against-the-Odds Story

Exercise 1: “WHAT is your client WORRIED ABOUT?”

Purpose: Connect story to a real concern or buyer objection.

Before we build the story, let’s identify the fear.

Ask:

- What do your clients worry about in this situation (or even before working with you)?
- What might make them hesitate?
- How might they think: “*But what if...?*”

Pay attention to phrases like:

- “*What if this doesn’t work for me?*”
- “*What if I’ve tried everything already?*”
- “*What if I’m different?*”

(Your Against-the-Odds Story should remove *at least one* of these fears.)

Exercise 2: Find The Right Story

Prompt: Think of a client situation that wasn’t straightforward.

Ask:

- Where was there resistance?
- What made this situation complex?
- Where were things uncertain?
- Where could it have NOT worked?

Note: You do not want to end up with “easy win” stories. If it wasn’t truly challenging, it’s not a good Against-the-Odds story.

Exercise 3: Build The Tension (Resistance)

This is where most people struggle. Spend extra focus on this.

Prompts:

- What made this situation difficult?
 - What doubt or hesitation was present?
 - What had the client or prospect tried before?
 - What could have gone wrong?
-
-
-

Remember: If there’s no tension, there’s no story.

Exercise 4 — Your Response

Prompts:

- What did you do differently?
 - What did you see that others didn’t?
 - What did you guide the client to understand?
-
-
-

Your response reveals your thinking, and that’s what builds trust.

The important place the Against-the-Odds Story holds:

This story is not about showing “perfect moments.” You’re showing how your work is effective, even in the “not-perfect” moments.

The *challenge* in this story creates tension. The *response* creates trust.

Important Note:

Sometimes it’s confusing to know how to choose between this type of story and your Client Success story.

- **Client Success** stories build *belief*.
- **Against-the-Odds** stories *remove hesitation* and *build confidence*.

Remember: If your Against-the-Odds story doesn’t remove a concern or fear, it won’t move a decision.

Story Example: Against-The-Odds

(Financial Advisor)

Not-So-Good Story

“I had a client who was worried during a market downturn, but I reassured them and everything worked out in the end.”

Weaknesses

So. Many. Weaknesses.

This story uses vague language (worried, reassured) without ever clarifying the specifics. That makes the story sound generic and interchangeable. There’s no real tension or strategy. This is not a story that inspires confidence.

But the real reason why this story is weak? It *tells*... but doesn’t prove *anything*

Good Story (Storyselling Version)

*“**Even though** the market had dropped and my client was feeling anxious about losing more money, **we focused on** staying grounded in their long-term plan and helping them understand what was actually happening. **As a result**, they stayed invested and were able to recover when things stabilized. **This showed me** that having a clear plan matters most in moments of uncertainty, not when things are going well.”*

Why This Works

- Clear resistance (fear during downturn)
- Thoughtful response (education + strategy)
- Believable result (stayed invested, recovered)
- Strong reassurance (plan matters most under pressure)

Why this story works (really): It shows how the advisor thinks, not just what happened

The difference between the stories above isn't the result. It's showing both the moment of uncertainty AND how it was handled.

A weak Against-the-Odds story skips the fear.

A strong story shows what worked anyway.

These stories show the difference between “reporting a result” and “building confidence.”

Check In: Our Storyselling Map

If we map what you've built, and where we're going, it looks like this:

Story Type

Core

Origin

Client Success

Against-the-Odds

Values-in-Action

Future Vision

Client Emotional Result

Understanding

Trust

Belief

Confidence

Alignment

Momentum

Values-in-Action Story: “The Story That Builds Alignment”

Your Values-in-Action is a story that shows *what you believe*.

This is a pivotal story in your Storyselling system. It’s one that people often underestimate, even though it’s a strong driver of client decision-making.

The Values-In-Action and Future Vision stories are different from the others we’ve explored so far.

- They’re less about proof
- And more about identity, alignment, and leadership

The Purpose of the Values-in-Action Story

This story plays an important psychological role for your business. Most people think this story is about sharing beliefs and stating values.

It’s not.

A Values-in-Action Story helps someone decide if they trust how you think.

At a conscious (and often subconscious) level, your audience is asking things like:

- *If I work with you...how will you make decisions?*
- *Will you guide me in a way I believe in?*
- *Will you tell me the truth...or just what I want to hear?*
- *Will you protect my best interests, even when it’s uncomfortable?*

The Deeper Purpose of the Values-in-Action Story

This story serves three purposes for your clients:

1. Safety: *“I can trust how this person decides.”*
2. Alignment: *“This is how I think too.”*
3. Filtering: *“This is (or isn’t) for me.”*

The real outcomes to telling this story are trust AND alignment. People don’t just choose you because you’re good. They choose you because they trust your judgment.

Your Values-in-Action Story doesn’t necessarily make you more likable.

It makes you more *choosable*.

This type of story shows a prospect whether or not your values are in alignment with THEM. That's a powerful motivator. Your Values-in-Action stories *will show what you believe*.

Because your clients know:
Your values aren't what you say. *They're what you choose.*

Building Your Values-In-Action Story

The Framework/Structure

Situation → Decision → Value → Outcome → Signal

1. Situation

What was happening?

Think of a moment that required you to make a hard choice or decision in your work. What client emotion, tension, or conflict needed to be resolved?

2. Decision

What did you choose?

Be clear about what you said yes to or no to. What action did you take?

3. Value

Why did you choose that?

What was the belief that prompted the decision above? What mattered most when you made the decision?

(THIS is the heart of the story. Remember, you are showing your values, and vulnerability.)

4. Outcome

What happened because of that decision?

Keep this simple and to the point. What was the result of your decision? What changed (for you and the client)?

5. Signal (Your Differentiator)

What does this reveal?

What did your decision and the results reveal about:

- how you work
- what clients can expect
- and who this is (and isn't) for

Your Values Story shows what you *choose*...and why it matters.

Story Builders: Values-in-Action

Full Version:

*When _____ (situation),
I chose to _____ (decision),
because I believe _____ (value).
And as a result _____ (outcome).
This is important because _____ (signal).*

Short Version (for speaking):

“When _____ happened, I chose _____ because I believe _____.”

Story Prompts: Values-in-Action

Values-in-Action stories are often the hardest for people to find because they expect them to feel dramatic, but they're typically more simple.

These stories show the moments when you made a decision.

A hard decision. An expensive decision. Maybe an inconvenient decision. Regardless, you made a decision that revealed what you truly stand for.

Values-in-Action stories are powerful because they answer the question:

"Can I trust you when things get complicated?"

Here are some prompts designed to surface those stories. Grab some paper!

1. The Expensive Decision

Think about a time you did what was right for a client, even though it cost you money, time, or opportunity.

2. The Walk-Away

Have you ever turned down a client, project, or opportunity because you weren't the right fit for them? What happened?

3. The Difficult Conversation

Think about a conversation you didn't want to have, but knew you needed to have because it was in the client's best interest.

4. The "No One Would Have Known"

What's something you did for a client that they probably never would have discovered if you hadn't told them?

5. The Recommendation

Have you ever referred a prospect to a competitor because you genuinely believed it was the best solution for them?

6. The Protect-the-Client Prompt

Think about a time you helped a client avoid a mistake, risk, or bad decision (even when it wasn't the outcome you would have preferred).

Bonus Prompt: The Storyselling Gold

*Think about a time when doing the right thing
was harder than doing the profitable thing.*

What did you choose? And WHY?

This last one is often where the strongest Values in Action stories live.

Because values aren't proven when the path is easy. They're revealed when the path is bumpy and annoying, and your actions cost something.

That's why this type of stories build trust faster than almost anything else.

Story Examples: Values-in-Action

Not-so-Good

“I always believe in putting my clients first and doing the right thing, which is really important to me.”

Why it's Weak:

First of all, it's lazy. Plus, it's not a story. There's no situation, no decision, no proof. This feels generic, like anyone could say this, about *any* business.

Better Example (Financial Consultant)

“I had a client who wanted to move forward quickly with a financial venture (**situation**), but something didn't feel right. So I recommended we slow down instead of moving ahead (**decision**), because I believe clarity matters more than speed. (**value**) And as a result, we were able to make a much stronger decision later. (**outcome**) This is important because I don't rush decisions just to move things forward (**signal**).”

Note: This is the kind of story you can use when you're unable to give super specific details. It covers the bases, without giving away any client confidentiality.

WHY this is a better example:

The specifics help elevate the story, which shows a real moment. It includes a decision, when the consultant disagreed with the client, and was honest about it.

The consultant made a decision, and revealed their values through action.

Stories like this build client trust through demonstrating integrity. This story will help the right client feel aligned, seen, and protected.

Good Values-in-Action Story Example (using the long and short Builders)

This is a financial advisor example, because most people can relate to it. This story fleshes out the previous example with even more specifics (while still not violating confidentiality).

The Long Version:

***When** a client came to me, excited about a high-risk investment they wanted to move forward with, **I chose to** recommend against it, even though it would have been easier to say yes. **Because I believe** my job is to give honest guidance, not just agree with what's easiest, **And as a result** we chose a strategy that aligned more fully with their long-term goals. **This is important because** clients trust me to help them make better decisions...not just execute the ones they bring in.*

Short Version:

***"When** a client wanted to move forward with a high-risk investment, **I chose** to advise against it **because I believe** my role is to guide...not just agree."*

Do you feel the difference?

This Values-in-Action story is more specific than the earlier ones. It shows clearly that the speaker believes: *"A great advisor isn't defined by what they recommend when things are easy, but by how they guide people when it's hard."*

This story hits all the bases.

- There is a clear situation that's real and relatable.
- A real decision was made, and it wasn't easy.
- Strong values like strategy and integrity were demonstrated, and the outcome is believable.

The signal/differentiator builds trust immediately by stating that this is a person who believes in living their values. Even when it's hard or unpopular.

A weak Values-in-Action story tells people what you believe.

A strong one shows them how you decide.

People don't want to just trust your expertise, they want to trust your judgment.

Your values aren't what you say, they're what you *choose*.

Future Vision Story: “The Story That Invites Them In”

This is the final Key story in your Storyselling Playbook, and it’s an important one.

A Future Vision Story shows what’s possible and invites people in to experience the transformation. The purpose of your Future Vision Story is not about predicting the future. It’s about creating a direction people want to move toward.

This story is meant to create movement in the form of inviting people to say “YES.”

This story helps your audience answer:

“Where is this going, and do I want to be part of it?”

What is the psychology of the Future Vision story?

The psychology of this story is simple: people rarely buy a product or service. Instead, they buy a better future version of themselves.

A Future Vision Story helps your prospects emotionally experience what life, work, or business could look like after their problem is solved (by you). This story reduces uncertainty by giving people a clear picture of what's possible.

The shift happening inside this story is movement:

From evaluating your solution → to imagining themselves enjoying the outcome.

This story positions you as someone who can lead them there. Most of all, it moves people to take action and accept the invitation you’re offering.

Putting this story into perspective.

Sometimes people question the difference between the Client Success story and the Future Vision story.

All the Key Stories work together in a structure.

- Client Success Stories prove that transformation is possible.
- Future Vision Stories help people believe that transformation is possible **for them**.

When someone sees a future they want AND *they see themselves in it*, movement becomes natural.

The Purpose of Your Future Vision Story

This story has three purposes:

1. Momentum

“This is something I want to move toward.”

2. Possibility

“Something better is actually possible.”

3. Invitation

“This is for me.”

Your Vision Story doesn’t just explain what you do. It gives people a reason to say yes to moving forward with you as a client.

The Future Vision Story Framework

Current Reality → Friction → Possibility → Vision → Invitation

1. Current Reality

What’s happening now?

Succinctly describe what your prospects are currently experiencing. What feels “normal but incomplete.”

2. Friction

What’s not working?

There’s frustration inside that prospects “normal.” Name what feels disconnected or limiting.

This step is what creates the emotional tension in this story.

3. Possibility

What could be different?

What shift do you believe is possible for this prospect? Show them the outcome you believe is possible for them after working for you.

Note: For most of us, this possibility is why we do what we do.

4. Vision

What are you building toward?

Describe the future state you imagine for this prospect, and the outcome you want to create

5. Invitation (MOST IMPORTANT)

Who is this for?

Your offer and your skills are not for everyone. Who is ready for this transformation. Who should step into this future with you?

Building Your Future Vision Story

Full Version

Below are all the parts of your Future Vision story. For your first draft, grab a piece of paper and jot down some quick notes about each line.

*Right now _____ (current reality),
and that's a problem because _____ (friction).
But I believe _____ (possibility).
I'm working toward _____ (vision),
and this is for people who _____ (invitation).*

Short Version (Spoken)

Do the same type of first draft for the shorter spoken version you'll use more often.

"Right now _____, but I believe _____, and I'm building toward _____."

You're doing great. Now we're going to get more specific.

Prompts for Your Future Vision Story

Below are some prompts to help you zero in on each emotion-focused section of this story.

Finding the Friction

- *What frustrates you about how things are done right now?*
- *What feels broken or incomplete about how people approach the problem you solve?*
- *What do people struggle with that shouldn't be this hard?*

Finding the Possibility

- *What do you believe instead?*
- *What do you see that others don't yet see?*

Finding the Vision

- *What vision are you trying to create?*
- *What would change in your prospects life if this worked for them?*

Finding the Invitation

- *Who is your offer really for?*
- *Who is ready for this shift?*

A Core prompt for this kind of story:

"What future do you care enough about to build toward?"

Story Examples: Future Vision

Let's start with a weak story, and work our way up to some strong examples.

A very weak Future Vision story: *"I want to help people be more successful and improve their lives."*

This example is vague and unspecific. It could be describing *any* business. There is no tension, no clear future, and no audience identified.

A strong Future Vision story will have:

- ✓ A relatable reality
- ✓ Compelling emotional friction
- ✓ A clear belief
- ✓ A meaningful future
- ✓ (Most important) a strong invitation

A stronger example (Copywriter)

*“**Right now**, many professionals feel like they have to sound impressive to be taken seriously. **And that’s a problem because** it disconnects them from their real message. **But I believe** clarity creates connection. **I’m working toward** a world where people can communicate simply and powerfully, **and this is for people who** are ready to be understood, not just sound impressive.”*

1st Draft of Storyselling for Success using the full Future Vision Story Builder

Right now, too many small business owners and solopreneurs are carrying around stories that could build trust, create connection, and change the way people see their work. But those stories rarely get told.

And that’s a problem because invisible value often leads to missed opportunities, weaker relationships, and work that never receives the recognition it deserves.

But I believe meaningful work deserves meaningful stories.

I’m working toward a future where every business owner can harness the full power of storyselling, confidently communicate the impact they create, the values they stand for, and the difference they make.

And this is for people who are tired of being overlooked and ready to become unmistakable.

Strong Example: Financial Planner

Right now, many people are doing the “right” things financially, but still feeling unsure about where it’s all leading.

And that’s a problem because even good decisions can feel stressful without clarity.

But I believe financial planning should create confidence, not confusion.

I’m working toward a future where people feel clear, secure, and in control of their financial life.

And this is for people who want more than just “managing money.” They want confidence in the future they’re creating.

The 5 Elements of a Strong Future Vision Story

1. *Relatable Current Reality* – You want people to recognize themselves.
2. *Emotional Friction* – Prospects should feel the problem.
3. *Clear, Differentiated Belief* – Make it clear you stand for something specific.
4. *Human Vision* – This is about life and meaningful results. It’s easy to be too “sales-y.”
5. *Specific Invitation* – Know who your customer is. The right person will feel called.

Revising Your Future Vision Story

This is an important story, with five different parts. Sometimes the more complex business stories can feel overwhelming.

If your Future Vision story isn’t working, fix these two elements first:

- **Friction** – This is what makes people care
- **Invitation** – This is what makes people move

Friction is what makes this story matter, but the invitation is what makes it personal.

A vision without an invitation doesn’t move people.

Practice Exercise: Build Your Future Vision Story

Step 1: Current Reality

What's happening right now?

Step 2: Friction

Why is that a problem?

Step 3: Possibility

What do you believe instead?

Step 4: Vision

What are you building toward?

Step 5: Invitation

Who is this for?

Step 6: Build Your Story

Right now _____,

and that's a problem because _____.

But I believe _____.

I'm working toward _____,

and this is for people who _____.

Remember, it doesn't have to be polished at this point. It just has to exist.

Future Vision Story Checklist

Does your story:

- ☐ Feel real and relatable?
- ☐ Highlight a meaningful problem?
- ☐ Clearly express what you believe?
- ☐ Paint a compelling future?
- ☐ Invite the right people in?

You're not just describing the future. You're inviting people into it.

Your Storyselling Playbook (Completed)

A one-page summary worksheet for you to complete:

Core Story:

Origin Story:

Client Success Story:

Against-the-Odds Story:

Values-in-Action Story:

Future Vision Story:

Next Story I Want To Develop:

Final Reflection on Your Storyselling Journey

If you've made it this far, you've probably noticed something interesting. The stories were never the problem.

You didn't need more experience.

You didn't need more credentials.

You didn't need a more impressive résumé or a more dramatic journey.

What you needed was a new lens.

Diving into storyselling is a new way of thinking. Through this lens, you recognize the meaning, insight, transformation, and humanity that already exists inside your work.

The stories were already there.

- Inside the client who finally felt hopeful again.
- Inside the difficult decision that revealed your values.
- Inside the challenge that tested your confidence.
- Inside the moment that shaped your mission.

Storyselling simply helped you see them.

As you leave these pages, I encourage you to remember the most important thing in this book: *People don't connect with services.*

They connect with meaning.

They connect with perspective.

They connect with stories.

The stories you uncovered in this Playbook are more than communication tools. They are evidence of the difference you make. Use them generously, honestly, and often.

Meaningful work deserves to be understood. And when the right story is finally told, invisible value becomes visible.

Your. Story. Matters.

I can't wait to see the stories you uncover next.

~ Jen

The Next Level of Storyselling

If you've completed Storyselling Immersion, you've already done the hard part.

You've uncovered the stories that reveal your expertise, your values, your purpose, and the transformation you create. You now have something most businesses never develop: a strategic framework for communicating your value through story.

But Storyselling is a skill, not a one-time exercise. The more you practice it, the more powerful it becomes.

As you begin putting your stories to work, you'll likely discover that some need refining, some need simplifying, and some deserve to be developed more fully.

That's where the next level of Storyselling begins.

What is available to you “After Immersion?”

*****Story Coaching Sessions*****

Personalized coaching to strengthen your stories and help you use them with confidence.

*****Your Story That Sells Session*****

A focused working session to identify, develop, and polish the single most important story in your business.

*****Team Storyselling Training*****

Help your team communicate your value, culture, and customer impact with greater clarity and consistency.

As a Storyselling Immersion graduate, you'll receive preferred pricing on future coaching, workshops, and training opportunities.

Because the goal isn't simply to *have* stories. The goal is to make sure the right stories are working for you.

I'd be honored to continue the journey with you.

~ Jen

p.s. There's nothing more kind to give a small business than a review! Here's my testimonial link: <https://senja.io/p/storyselling4success/r/Immersion>

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About Jen Bullington

Jen is a recovering corporate trainer, a brand strategist, and a professional storyteller. Over the course of her career, she has helped hundreds of organizations and leaders communicate more clearly, build trust faster, and make their value easier to understand. She believes that learning to tell your personal and organizational stories in a compelling way is rocket fuel for every-sized business. After calling California, Missouri, and Washington State home, she now lives with her husband and daughter in Virginia.