The Science of Storytelling
Stories have been told by humans for thousands of years...both true and imagined tales. Telling your story isn’t “marketing” it’s a natural action all humans are compelled to take.
Emotion Affects Decision Making

Taken from *Emotion and Decision Making*

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https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jenniferlerner/files/annual_review_manuscript_june_16_final.final.pdf
Emotion Affects Decision Making

Integral emotions affect decision making:
We start with emotions arising from the judgment or choice at hand (i.e., integral emotion), a type of emotion that strongly and routinely shapes decision making.

For Emotions and Decision Making...a person who feels anxious about the potential outcome of a risky choice may choose a safer option rather than a potentially more lucrative option. A person who feels grateful to a school s/he attended may decide to donate a large sum to that school even though it limits personal spending. Such effects of integral emotions operate at conscious and nonconscious levels.

https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jenniferlerner/files/annual_review_manuscript_june_16_final.final.pdf

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Impairment in the vmPFC, which provides output to the Amygdala, affect a person’s ability to make decisions:
Compelling scientific evidence for this view comes from emotionally impaired patients who have sustained injuries to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC), a key area of the brain for integrating emotion and cognition. Studies find that such neurological impairments reduce both patients’ ability to feel emotion and the optimality of their decisions in ways that cannot be explained by simple cognitive changes.

https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jenniferlerner/files/annual_review_manuscript_june_16_final.final.pdf
http://ashrinagaming.tumblr.com/post/104572422185/a-different-explanation-of-toxic-players-in
Incidental emotions influence decision making: Researchers have found that incidental emotions pervasively carry over from one situation to the next, affecting decisions that should, from a normative perspective, be unrelated to that emotion, a process called the carryover of incidental emotion. For example, incidental anger triggered in one situation automatically elicits a motive to blame individuals in other situations even though the targets of such anger have nothing to do with the source of the anger. Moreover, carryover of incidental emotions typically occurs without awareness.
Emotions help memories more deeply encode in the brain with the help of the amygdala. Research shows some regions of the brain activated in the encoding of emotionally-charged memories are also involved when a person processes the meaning of images. When someone looks at an emotionally-neutral situation, the sections of the brain that control perception are used.

Different types of emotions also contribute to the types of memories are formed. “When people experience positive emotional situations, they remember the situation with a broader viewpoint and remember more central details. Those that experience negatively-charged situation tend to narrow their attention, and thus encode a more focused memory, and remember more peripheral details.”

http://mercercognitivepsychology.pbworks.com/w/page/32235621/Emotion%20and%20Memory
"People don't just feel 'emotional.' They feel sad, scared, angry, happy. Those emotions have different functions, and they influence information processing and memory in different ways.”
- University of California, Irvine, psychology professor Linda Levine, PhD

Example: People who witness a robbery tend to recall the gun in great detail, but not the perpetrator's appearance because the detail of whether or not the gun is pointed at you is very important in the moment and creates intense negative emotions.
How Emotion Affects Memory

According to scientific studies and brain research emotions have a powerful affect on the human memory. The limbic system of the brain controls emotions and motivation. Parts of the limbic system, the hippocampus and amygdala, have been proven to be particularly involved in emotions and play very important roles in the creation of memories.
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.

Maya Angelou
Narrative requires an understanding of events and event sequences. We share this understanding with other species, it just takes new forms with humans.

Narrative requires a unique capacity for metarepresentation. We not only make representations, we understand they’re representations. This develops in children without training between 2 and 5 years old. Representations are not limited to language but are also actions, objects, and music.

In any natural data-gathering system like the human mind we might expect an appetite for the true, or a preference for stories about real situations, people, problems, experiences, challenges or activities.
...however, the fact that many people in modern society prefer novels and films shows that we also accept stories that are fiction when they resonate with us personally. Stories must be told with language or with visuals, movement, and music.
Most people want to connect with, hire, or work with people and companies that are authentic.

In order to craft a successful brand you must tell an authentic story that is relevant to people and makes them feel connected to what you do, to your mission or vision. Being authentic allows you or your company/organization to attract the best opportunities to create qualified customers, donors, clients, or volunteers.
Authenticity is not something we have or don’t have. It’s a practice -- a conscious choice of how we want to live. Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It’s about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.

Brene Brown
Your Compelling Story is the Key to Success

For a moment forget the words “marketing”, “branding”, and “advertising” and think about the stories that unite us all.

★ Successfully sharing a story that resonates with the right audiences is the number one way to grow your reputation, business, donor base, or followings.

★ Story Archetypes are universal connectors. They can be found in cultures around the world.

★ Understanding archetypes allows you to understand what people relate to and why. If you tell your story using these archetypal structures you can more deeply connect with your audience.
The **Hero’s Journey**: possibly the world’s oldest story, the narrative pattern is found around the world (Luke Skywalker and Neo in *The Matrix*) and tugs at our emotions and taps into our most basic desires as social animals.

The **Quest**: is about progression, the protagonist stumbles across several obstacles or challenges that must be overcome to progress along the journey.

**Overcoming the Monster**: is about an underdog confronted by an evil larger than him or herself, to defeat this evil/overcome fear the protagonist must have great courage and strength - the customer can be the hero and the company or organization can be the tool to overcome the monster.

**Rags to Riches**: the pauper to prince journey, this includes the classic American Dream story.
Story Archetypes

★ **Rebirth:** the protagonist is reborn through a process of: 1) being threatened, 2) the threat looms large, 3) the protagonists are imprisoned by the threat, 4) all seems lost, 5) at last, redemption, which often requires an about-face by the hero.

★ **Voyage & Return:** this is the progression from naïveté to wisdom.

★ **Comedy:** the most memorable and popular stories, characters are thrown into a state of confusion, resolution comes when constricting factors have been played to their extremes, comedies are one of the hardest to execute.

★ **Tragedy:** this story relies on a tragic flaw, moral weakness, and/or deep suffering

http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/09/ancient-archetypes-brand-storytelling-should-use/
"Yes, in all my research, the greatest leaders looked inward and were able to tell a good story with authenticity and passion." -Deepak Chopra
Consistent Stories Matter - Example: Apple

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYecfV3ubP8
https://youtu.be/SswMzUWOiJg
https://youtu.be/lcBpXYI1r3Q
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxOInebkmrqs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2ubgxn8aQ8
Discover Your Story

The key to effective storytelling is understanding that values inspire action through emotion.

Everyone has a story and that story is a combination of the head and the heart. Great storytellers explain the why (heart) and the how (head).

What kind of story are you going to tell?

http://workshops.350.org/toolkit/story/
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Discover Your Story

The “Story of Self”
What desires motivate you? What experiences inspired you to work in your field or pursue your line of work. What values do you have as a professional and why? Where did those values originate from? What lead you to this moment?

The “Story of Us”
Are you part of a community or team that shares your values? How do you work together towards a common goal? How can others work with you? What kind of experiences challenges, and resources do you all share?

The “Story of Now”
Is there an urgent challenge to face that is calling you and your team or community to action? What path will we take to achieve our goals? What can people do in the moment? What will the outcome be if people act now?

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Storytelling Exercise

Come up with 1 - 3 story angles by answering the 1 or all of the following questions:

1. What is the greatest challenge you have overcome as a business or organization?
2. Who are the most important staff members, volunteers, or clients/customers of your business? How did you help them?
3. What is “the next big thing” happening with your business or organization?
Great stories happen to those who can tell them

- Ira Glass
Thank you!

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