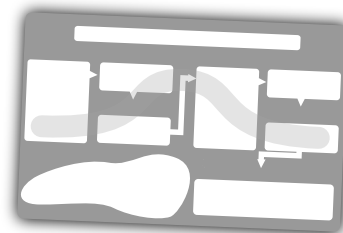


# HOW TO USE the STORY canvas

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## SETTING UP

### 1 Identify a story that you want to tell with impact.

You can use the Leadership Story Deck, or the book "Story Dash!" to identify a story you wish to build on the Story Canvas.

If you don't have those resources, that's okay. Just think of a story you want to tell: "I want to tell about the time when..."



### 2 Print the Canvas and grab some sticky notes.

Print a copy of the Story Canvas, either on 11 x 17 "tabloid" paper (in the US) or on two sheets of 8.5 x 11 "letter" paper.

Get some "Post-it" style sticky notes. The classic square size will fit best on the Canvas. The notes will allow you to experiment with your story as you move the elements around.

### 3 Set aside 30 minutes.

Most people need around 30 minutes to complete the Canvas. Grab a cup of coffee and find a place where you can relax while you do the work!

## BUILDING YOUR STORY

### 4 "I Will Tell About the Time..."

Write the title of your story at the top. This is just for you; you won't say the title when you tell your story. Giving your story a title will ensure it lives in your mind's "story bank" of archived memories.

### 5 "So There I Was..."

Begin your story with a time and place marker. *"Last week I was at the airport, going through security, when ..."*

Also, provide a single protagonist. Your story will create a strong empathy connection with your audience if it is about a person. Tell us the person's name, if you can.

### 6 "We Wanted... But..."

Conflict is the engine that moves stories forward. Your first challenge will be to find the conflict in your story. This might be a "traditional" conflict, like a disagreement between people. But it may also be that somebody *wanted* something, *but* there was an obstacle that prevented them from having it.

Resist the temptation to have multiple conflicts; there should only be one conflict that drives your story.

## 7 "So we... And then..."

So what happened next? If you've set up your protagonist and conflict correctly, this part will be easy to complete. Maybe *too* easy. A lot of people put in way too much detail here! Keep it brief. What is the minimum amount of information that will move your story forward? You'll be surprised how much you *don't* need here.

Pro tip: Is there an action or behavior you would like for your audience to learn from this story and repeat? Make sure we see that behavior in this part of the story!

## 8 "Until Finally..."

Your audience is now leaning forward, waiting for a satisfying conclusion. What was different at the end of the story?

A lot of people have questions about how to balance data and storytelling. If you have data, this can be a great place to bring it in: "...and we saved \$20,000."

## 9 "And Now We Know... And That's Why..."

The focus of the Story Canvas is storytelling for *influence*. We are telling our story because we want something to happen. This box is an essential part of your influence story! What do you want people to *know*, *believe*, or *do* as a result of this story? Don't trust your audience to come to this conclusion on their own. They won't. You have to say it with your words.

Many people struggle with this. What is your story about? Whatever you say it's about! Your choices here are infinite. Choose one outcome. Again, the model of *know*, *believe*, or *do* will serve you well. (You'll find many examples in the book "Story Dash!" or in the Leadership Story Deck.)

Consider filling in this part of the Canvas first, and then going back and constructing the story. Once you have clarity on why you are telling your story, it will help you make decisions on how you construct all of the other elements.

## 10 "I / We Felt..."

In the lower left, you'll see a pool full of emotion words. There are arrows pointing to all of the other boxes on the Canvas. Neuroscience shows that people *need* these emotion words so they know what the story feels like. Without these words, people won't be able to interpret your story. So drop simple emotion words all throughout your story. "We were mad." "I was surprised." "My client was confused."

## BRING IT to LIFE by TELLING IT!

Your work isn't done until you've activated your story by telling it to someone. Tell someone that you trust that you want to test your story. Then simply tell it! Reflect: What worked? What were some parts that didn't go over like you expected? Revise, and then tell it again.



Tip: Don't read your story from the Story Canvas! That will create an awkward telling. The purpose of the Canvas is to get clarity on structure. Now that you have that, simply *tell* the story in your own words. It should not sound like a performance. It should just sound like you talking.