

A scenic view of a river flowing through a dense forest. In the foreground, the front of a bamboo raft is visible, with several logs tied together. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding greenery. The background shows a steep, rocky mountain peak rising above the trees.

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# How To Find A Story That W.O.R.K.S.

A strategic guide to finding a story that solves problems

“Humans think in stories, and we try to make sense of the world by telling stories.”

Yuval Noah Harari

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind



# Why Stories Connect So Deeply



When our pre-historic ancestors needed to exchange knowledge and ideas, they gathered around flickering fires and told stories. Expressing feelings, forming bonds, and sharing tips on not getting eaten.

Today, our brains are still hardwired to love and remember stories, which is why:

- \* we swap stories with friends about our lives
- \* we get lost in books, films, and podcasts
- \* we follow gripping news – and retell it to others
- \* we play games that immerse us in narratives
- \* we binge-watch shows that keep us hooked



# Why Stories Work For Business



Great stories don't just entertain.

They make people act differently - hire faster, convert better, stick around longer.



When you push facts and figures at someone, they instinctively resist.

But they don't push back against a good story.

Because good stories attract.

They pull us in.

And we willingly go along for the ride.

“Stories are everywhere.  
It’s just a matter  
of seeing them.”

Lisa Cron  
Wired for Story



Consider these two ways of conveying information:

**Factual**

*“20% of Eurotunnel train drivers are women.”*

**Story-driven**

*“Eurotunnel train driver Tash Speed is about to face one of the toughest challenges of her career...”*



# Four Steps To Finding A Story That W.O.R.K.S.

“Stories are up to 22 times more memorable than facts alone.”

Jennifer Aaker

Professor of Marketing

Stanford University's Graduate School of Business

# Step 1 - Mapping Your Story World

Exploring the space where your stories takes place.



We are

This is a business diagnosis.

We're tuning into what's *really going on* – the friction, the beliefs, the misalignments.

Mapping Your Story World covers...

- \* the people: your team, customers, and partners (each with their own stories to tell)
- \* the bigger picture: your industry and how you fit into it
- \* the obvious stuff: your day-to-day work, your products and services
- \* the hidden gems: unique approaches and unexpected connections

Mapping Your Story World is all about listening.

The key is asking thoughtful questions while remaining open-minded and curious throughout.

What we're doing here is tuning into story signals:

people, patterns, problems, connections, recurring themes, surprises, counter-intuitive stuff, and intriguing juxtapositions.



# Step 2 - Character Snapshots



Assembling a shortlist of people who can drive your story.

“People are  
infinitely more  
interesting  
than plot.”

David Mamet  
Writing in Restaurants





When we look for people to feature in or tell a story, we're not looking for people who can simply repeat a message.

The most compelling people are those striving towards a meaningful goal.

People with tension, drive, and something worth saying.

We find these people through Character Calls, where we listen for:

- \* what excites a person - their passions and dreams
- \* what keeps them up at night
- \* how they see things - their perceptions
- \* what drives them forward
- \* little details that make them memorable
- \* aspects of their personality that others might relate to

Character Calls generate Character Snapshots with a score for each of the following six qualities:

Strong Desire

The person wants  
something meaningful

Clear Motivation

They understand why  
they want it

Natural Uniqueness

Something about them  
sets them apart

Personal Impact

They're likely to experience  
meaningful change

Audience Connection

Their experiences are  
relatable

Story Alignment

Their goal serves the  
overall objective

The highest scores indicate where the strongest stories will be found.

# Step 3 - Choosing Your Story Archetype

Finding the deeper truth that gives your story power.

“An archetype is like an old watercourse along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself.”

Carl Jung

Psychological Aspects of the Archetypal Symbolism



A Damn Good Story gives us a window into a world we've never seen – and a mirror that reveals something true about ourselves.

Timeless story archetypes are a proven way to achieve both.

We've reworked those archetypes into tools organisations can use to find a story that feels specific yet resonates far and wide – and taps into something we can all relate to.

Story Archetype 1: FOUNDER Stories – “How we came to be”

Story Archetype 2: ETHOS Stories – “What we believe in”

Story Archetype 3: PURPOSE-DRIVEN Stories – “Why we do this”

Story Archetype 4: PIONEERING Stories – “Where we're heading”

Story Archetype 5: ENLIGHTENING Stories – “How things work”

Story Archetype 6: TRANSFORMATION Stories – “What lasting differences we've made”

Story Archetype 7: COUNTERPUNCHING Stories – “We're not what you think”

FOUNDER  
STORIES



ETHOS  
STORIES



PURPOSE-DRIVEN  
STORIES



PIONEERING  
STORIES



ENLIGHTENING  
STORIES



TRANSFORMATION  
STORIES



COUNTERPUNCHING  
STORIES

A Story Archetype provides a broad story structure to work with, and enables us to:

- \* refine our research
- \* zoom in on the most relevant characters
- \* recognise the most promising story elements
- \* build momentum for the process
- \* get a sense of the story's emotional and intellectual tones



## ***Emotional Tones***

*These focus on feelings and connection.*

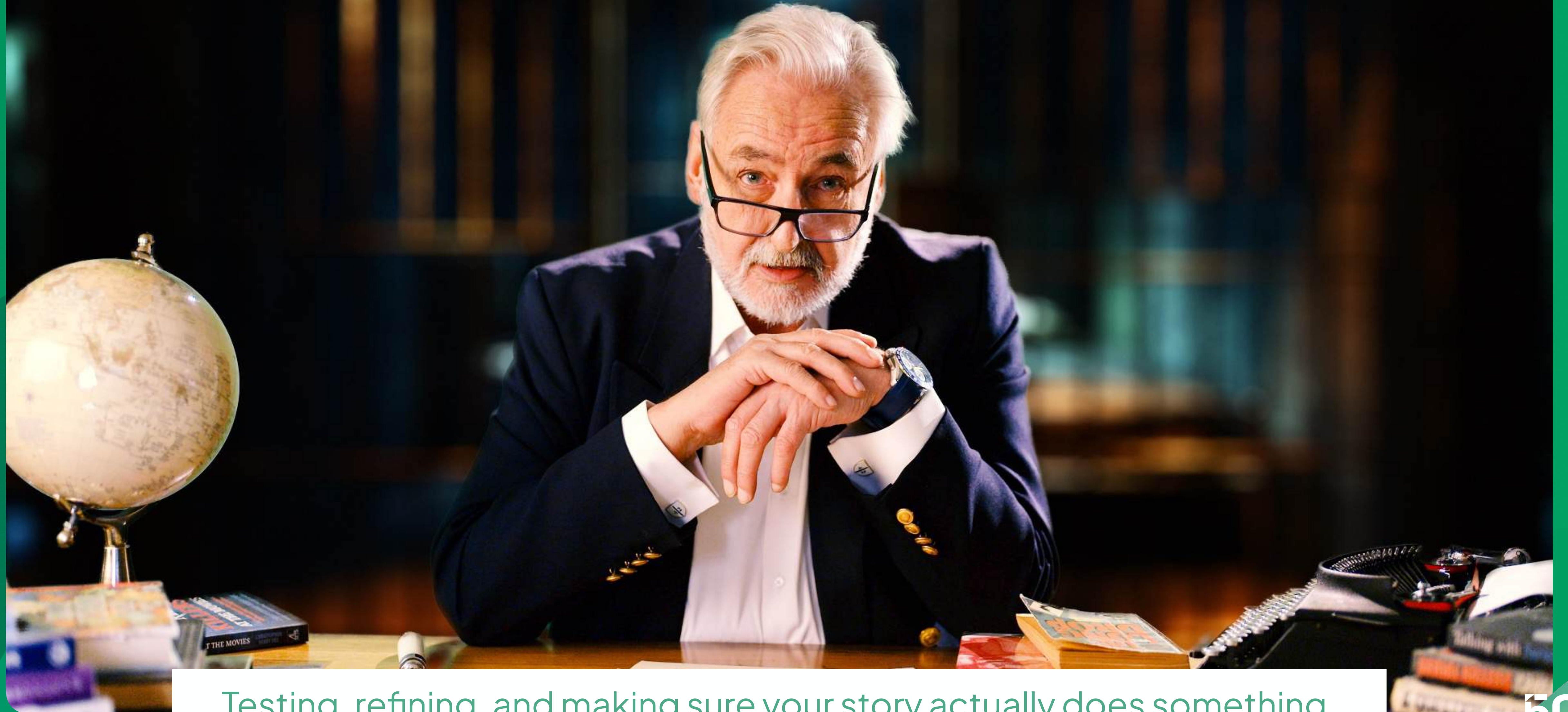
- \* **Inspirational:** uplifting and motivating
- \* **Dramatic:** serious and intense
- \* **Lighthearted:** cheerful and playful
- \* **Romantic:** evoking passion/sentimentality
- \* **Dark:** grim and unsettling

## **Intellectual Tones**

*These focus on thoughts and ideas.*

- \* **Reflective:** thoughtful and introspective
- \* **Suspenseful:** tense and unpredictable
- \* **Satirical:** witty and critical
- \* **Optimistic:** positive and hopeful
- \* **Realistic:** practical and authentic

# Step 4 - Making Sure Your Story W.O.R.K.S.

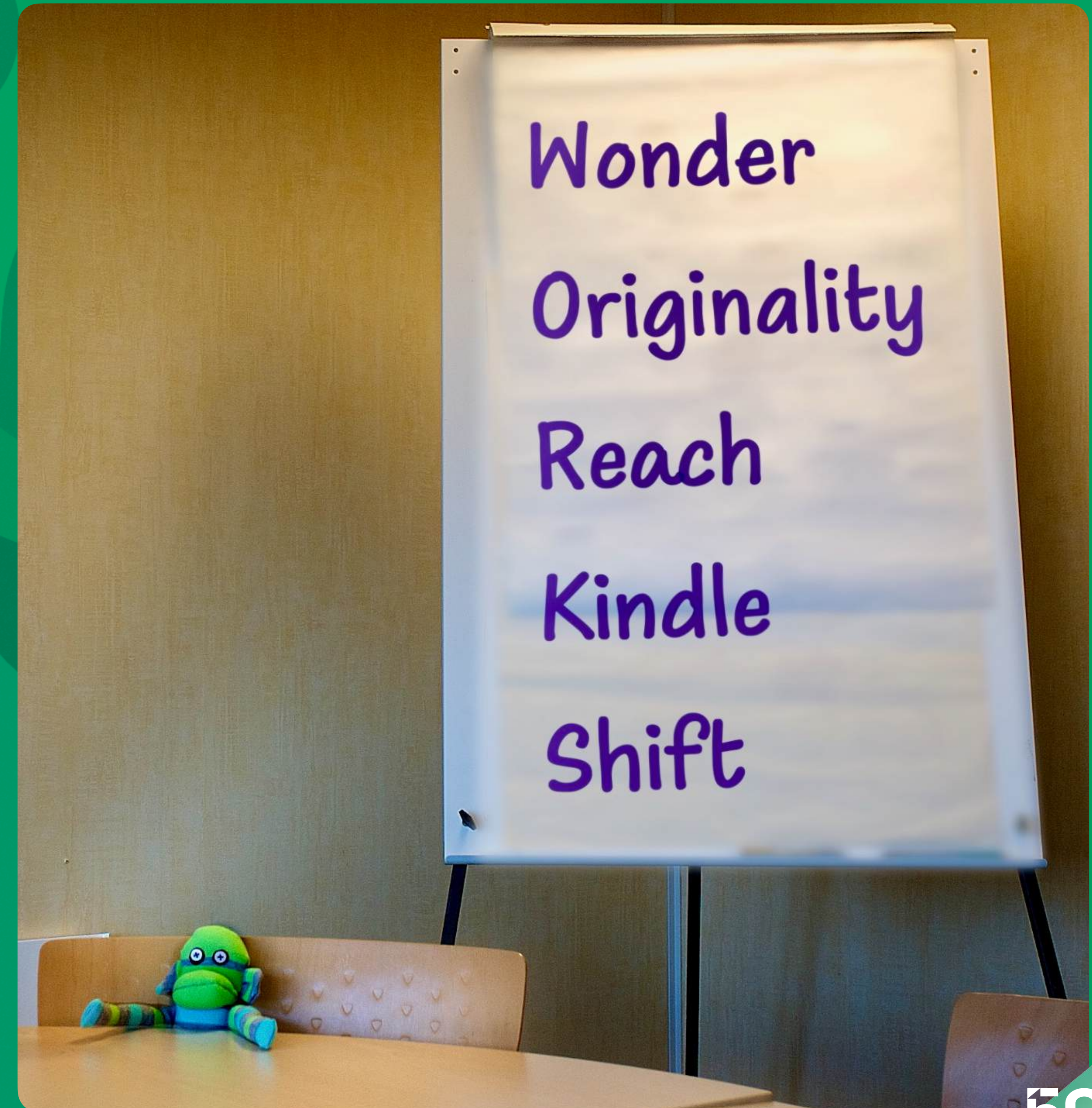


Testing, refining, and making sure your story actually does something.

“Avoid  
All  
Contrived  
Ridiculous  
Overcomplicated  
Names  
You’ll  
Mock  
Severely  
(#avoidACRONYMS).”

Matthew Wheeler

How To Find A Story That W.O.R.K.S.



## Five W.O.R.K.S. Focus Words

We hate acronyms as much as you do, but when you want to find a Damn Good Story, our W.O.R.K.S. Q&A sessions really work.

W

Wonder

What's inspiring about this story?

O

Originality

What makes this story different?

R

Reach

Who's going to care?

K

Kindle

What feeling will this idea evoke?

S

Shift

What reaction will this story prompt?

By answering each of these questions with a focus word for each story idea, we can quickly see which ideas aligns with your objectives.

Then we refine and adjust until the strongest story emerges.

Using our five focus words to then guide every creative decision in the StoryTELLING phase, we ensure your story really W.O.R.K.S.

Here's an example of a W.O.R.K.S. session from an education innovation story:

## Wonder

What's most inspiring about this story?  
It captures the sense of joy at learning something in a new way.

Focus Word  
**DISCOVERY**

## Originality

What makes this story unique?  
It demonstrates an innovative, hands-on approach.

Focus Word  
**INTERACTIVE**

## Reach

Who will be drawn to this story?  
Primary school teachers seeking fresh ideas.

Focus Word  
**TEACHERS**

## Kindle

What feeling will this story evoke?  
A sense of excitement at the possibilities.

Focus Word  
**ENERGISED**

## Shift

What reaction will this story prompt?  
To try out the app in the classroom.

Focus Word  
**DOWNLOAD**

# Our Story Begins...



We're halfway to a story that solves a problem.  
Now we just have to tell it.

“Ideas are easy.  
Execution is  
everything.”

John Doerr  
Measure What Matters



Thank you for reading ***How To Find A Story That W.O.R.K.S.***

If you've got something to say, and it's not quite landing, we'd love to help you fix that.

Book a 50-minute ***“What's Not Working?” Call***

*to explore your current challenges*

*and find out what would change for you if you could find and tell a story that works.*

Click ***here*** to book a date and time for the call - or email us for more information at:

***storystudio@50Pictures.com***

“The future isn’t a place we’re going to go.  
It’s a place you get to create.  
Through stories.”

Nancy Duarte

Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences