Telling a Good Story: The Basics of Story Telling and Using Them for Assessment

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What stories are your favorites?
Yawn-inspiring

Data can be boring.
Assessment Data Sharing

Why?

Storytelling

§ Research, statistical, scientific

§ Sharing pieces of data

§ Art – painting a picture

§ Engaging the audience in the whole story
What is a Story?

- “An account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment”
- “Something told or recounted in the form of a causally-linked set of events”
Power of Stories

- Engage listeners
- Connect to existing knowledge
- Holistic
- Shared experience
Power of Stories

- Emotions
- Larger truths
- Shows us rather than tells us
Foundational Elements

- Quest (mission or desire)
- Hook (inciting incident)
- Major dramatic question
Design Elements

- Conflict
- Progressive complications
- Pivotal event
- Twists
SET-UP AND PAY-OFF
Leads

- Question
- Action
- Talking
- Snapshot
- Sound Effect
Endings

- Up-ending
- Down-ending
- False-ending
- Open-ending
Student Success

A concrete example
First-year students have high grade expectations.

Few students expect a GPA less than 2.50
Progressive Complications

- Students’ class attendance patterns may create complications...

36% of students have already missed one class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q: How many of your scheduled classes have you attended this term?</th>
<th>% of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have attended all my classes.</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have missed one class.</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have missed a few classes.</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I miss class frequently or all the time.</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progressive Complications

- Students’ academic behaviors may create more complications...

These are not high-level study skills. Why would they expect high grades without doing some of these?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what degree are you the kind of person who:</th>
<th>% 6 or 7 (High)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turns in required homework</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes good notes in class</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spends sufficient time studying to earn good grades</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies in a place where you can avoid distractions</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works on large projects well in advance of the due date</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates with instructors outside of class</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students don’t perform as expected...

Although 88% of students expected a GPA of at least 3.0, only 52% did.

- 40% Expected Grades
- 48% Actual Grades

- 11% Less than 2.00
- 18% 2.00-2.49
- 12% 2.50-2.99
- 18% 3.00-3.49
- 27% 3.50-4.00

About 30% of students earned a GPA below a 2.50.
Spring expectations matched fall expectations, despite the underperformance in fall GPAs.

Did Fall GPA Grades Affect Spring Expectations?

- 40% of students expected to achieve a GPA of 3.50-4.00 in the fall.
- 48% of students expected to achieve a GPA of 3.00-3.49 in the fall.
- 11% of students expected to achieve a GPA of 2.50-2.99 in the fall.
- 4% of students expected to achieve a GPA of less than 2.50 in the fall.

- 41% of students expected to achieve a GPA of 3.50-4.00 in the spring.
- 44% of students expected to achieve a GPA of 3.00-3.49 in the spring.
- 13% of students expected to achieve a GPA of 2.50-2.99 in the spring.
- 3% of students expected to achieve a GPA of less than 2.50 in the spring.
Open-Ending

- What issue do we focus on?
  - High expectations?
  - Study behaviors?
  - Self-efficacy?
  - Under-performance?
CONCERNS
But it’s research...
Cherry Picking
Credibility
So Why Storytelling?
Goal is action
AUDIENCE
Discussion: Application

- What storytelling tools are you already using?
- What tools do you want to use?
- Other insights?
“At the end of the day… it’s about the story.”

Zach Staenberg
A STORYTELLING TOOLKIT:

What different disciplines teach us about storytelling
Retained Data: For a Story?

- **Outcomes**
  - 87% returned for spring semester, 13% did not
  - Average term GPA: 2.77 (s.d. 1.01)
  - Average term credits earned: 12.4 (s.d. 4.5)
### Retention Data: Intentions

#### Committed to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all (1)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Extremely (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completing a degree</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing degree at</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming back for</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming back next year</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Students plan to stay.**
Correlations between persistence and:

- Degree commitment: .049
- Institutional degree commitment: .102
- Year to year intention: .154
- Spring intention: .174
Fall to Spring Persistence

Intent to Return: Spring Semester

- Low Intent: 52%
- Medium Intent: 77%
- High Intent: 90%
FOUR STORYTELLERS
Journalist as Storyteller

- **Purpose**
  - Provide the facts
  - Enable decision making

“News is that part of communication that keeps us informed of the changing events, issues, and characters in the world outside.”

-American Press Institute
Journalist: Structure

- Inverted pyramid

Think about who uses this approach and when on your campus.
College Drop Out Problem Continues This Year

One in ten new college students drops out after their first semester.

Although 95% of fall 2013 students were committed to completing a degree when they started college, 13% did not return for their spring semester.

Example student says…
Expert says…

Comparison to other data or other drop out rates
Blogger as Storyteller

- **Purpose**
  - Convey facts
  - Engage reader

“I try to stick to 3–4 sentences. If it’s more than this, the content looks too dense. Readers will give up and move on.”

-Michael Hyatt
Blogger - Structure

- Compelling title
- First paragraph is key
- Graphic content
- Personal
- Accessible main point
- Discussion question

Think about who uses this approach and when on your campus.
THE PERFECT BLOG POST

Goal = Grab Attention
Your headline gets read more than anything else on your website. That’s why your headline serves one goal: grab attention so people feel compelled to read your opening.

Key Insight:
Direct marketers have long known that if you get people to read your first 3-4 sentences, they’re more likely to read your entire article. That said, the point of your opening is to get people to read your opening... and that’s it.

http://socialtriggers.com/power-of-curiosity

Big Promise
This sub-headline has one main goal... to entice people to read your first piece of content and that’s it. How? Make a promise to your readers... give them a benefit.

http://socialtriggers.com/perfect-content-width

Connect Emotionally
Your first piece of content should aim to trigger an emotion in your reader. When people get emotional, they pay attention. They’re also more likely to take action after being put into an emotional state.
Like this? Learn more about blogging, psychology, and marketing by subscribing to:
http://socialtriggers.com/newsletter

http://socialtriggers.com/social-triggers/content

Big Promise #2

Your first piece of content should speak to people emotion based on

Buy or Subscribe?

Here's where you close out your article with another call to action. You can include a "Buy now" CTA, or a "Subscribe" form.

http://socialtriggers.com/social-triggers/content

Connect Emotionally

Here's where you promise people exactly what they'll learn... the step-by-step method... the how-to. You already connected now's the time to get people to take action.

As a social trigger, people are also more likely to take action after being put into an emotional state.

Big Promise

This sub-headline is your main goal... to entice people to read your first piece of content and hear it.

http://socialtriggers.com/social-triggers/content

The Soundbite


http://socialtriggers.com/social-triggers/content

The How To Section

Give people practical, easy to implement advice. Get people results and they'll remember you forever. And, practically written content is more real than other types of content.
5 Things to Know about Retention

We think of the entering first-year student as excited, eager, and committed to graduating. Yet many students struggle and some don’t make it at all. When I went away to college, I struggled with homesickness, …. (see post on transitioning to a new place here)

1. Not every student plans on graduating.

Data….
Artist as Storyteller

- **Purpose**
  - Convey meaning visually
  - Evoke a response

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.”

-Edgar Degas
Artist – Visual Design

- **Elements**
  - Line
  - Color
  - Shape
  - Texture
  - Space
  - Form

- **Principles**
  - Unity / Harmony
  - Balance
  - Hierarchy
  - Scale / proportion
  - Dominance / emphasis
  - Similarity / contrast
1% of students intend to leave
Another 7% are considering leaving
So when we think about retention…
Look what we lose.
How can we make a difference?
PREACHER
Preacher as Storyteller

- Purpose:
  - Explain
  - Provoke
  - Apply
Preacher

- Define the text
- Doctrine
- Reasoning
- Application
- Epilogue
Strategic Goal: Achieve and maintain a first-year retention rate of 75 percent.

- What it means in context?
  - Current retention rate
  - Needed growth
  - # more students

- Why is this important?
  - Our bottom line – the consequences of enrollment loss
  - Our students – maybe a personal story?
  - Our values – what we care about…

- How will we fix this?
  - This is what we’re going to do.
  - Let’s all get on board.
Pulling it all together

APPLICATION
Journalist

Provide facts

Enable decision making

Blogger

Convey facts

Engage reader

Artist

Convey Meaning

Evoke Response

Preacher

Explain

Provoke

Apply
Discussion: Application

- When might you use this approach?
  - Journalist
  - Blogger
  - Artist
  - Preacher
Campbell, Donna M. "Sermon Structure: A Brief Outline Guide." *Literary Movements*. Dept. of English, Washington State University. Date of publication or most recent update (listed above as the "last modified" date; you don't need to indicate the time). Web. 15 May 2014.

Tested and proven formula on how to structure blog posts for maximum readership
http://www.michaelleander.me/blog/tested-and-proven-formula-on-how-to-structure-blog-posts-for-maximum-readership/

Anatomy of an Effective Blog Post

The Evolution of Visual Art In the Modern Era http://char.txa.cornell.edu/art/introart.htm

http://www.imprint.co.uk/rama/art.pdf

“Design elements and principles,” from Wikipedia.
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Thank you!

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