

If you're an entrepreneur, storytelling matters

 By [Dov Gurnun](#)

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Every night, as part of the ritual of putting my two little sons to bed, I have to tell them a story. They either want to hear stories of when I was a little boy myself, or I have to make something up.



Dov Gurnun, CEO of Merchant Capital

They love both types of stories. But the funny thing is, the stories they remember – and want me to tell again and again - are the real ones.

Or maybe it's not so funny after all. I've always believed the ability to tell a good story is a great skill to have at many levels: whether you're a community leader, a sports coach, a parent, a mentor, a friend.

But as a business owner and entrepreneur, it's absolutely vital. Every entrepreneur should have their elevator pitch, or five-minute story about their business, that they can tell at a moment's notice.

I recently attended a leadership course at Stanford University, and one of the biggest highlights of the course was a session on storytelling by a lecturer called Dan Klein. In fact, Dan Klein's storytelling class has been the most successful module at Stanford for the past 10 years. And it's easy to see why.

He shared a video by a fellow-Stanford professor, Jennifer Aaker, about the *Future of Storytelling*. In a nutshell, we're living in a world with too much information. This makes us even more susceptible to the power of a good story. We keep cramming our presentations and blogs with statistics, facts and figures – but only 5% of people remember the statistics. Sixty-three percent remember the story.

Research shows people are more likely to buy from you if you have a story they can believe in and which resonates with them. When we share statistics, people understand but don't feel. When we share a story, says Aaker, our whole brain is activated, and real meaning is extracted. And when data and stories are used together, people are moved both intellectually and emotionally.

How do you become a great storyteller?

Klein gave a couple of pieces of advice that I try and use every day.

Firstly, when making a presentation, or telling your story, remember your first, and your last line. In between that, just let it flow. Make it as real and authentic as possible. Try to avoid learning anything off by heart. It has the potential to throw you if you forget your lines and always sounds too rehearsed.

Secondly, there are four key elements that make up a good story.

- **Something visual:** what did you see, or what do you want your audience to see? For example - he was so exhausted, you could see the redness in his eyes
- **Something auditory:** what did you hear? Don't just say you sent a mail. Say the 'whoosh' of the mails ending was one of the most satisfying experiences of your life.
- **Something kinesthetic:** what did you feel? You weren't just nervous – your hands were actually so wet you had to wipe them on your trousers.
- **Something digital:** what detail can you add? You didn't arrive a few minutes early. You arrived at 4.21pm.

Stories are memorable, impactful and make a personal connection. It's no coincidence that the most prosperous businesses are the ones that are the best at storytelling.

Those who tell the best stories, become the best leaders.

ABOUT DOV GIRNUN

Dov Girnun is the CEO at Merchant Capital.

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