

# Doug Stevenson's Story Theater International

## Storytelling and Brain Science by Doug Stevenson, CSP, Story Theater International

What is Story Theater?

Story Theater is the science of the art of storytelling and humor for business presentations.

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### 1. "Storytelling and Brain Science: This is Your Brain on Story" by Doug Stevenson

Why do you think Malcolm Gladwell is so successful? All three of his books, *The Tipping Point*, *Blink* and most recently *Outliers – The Story of Success*, are best sellers. The answer lies in the subtitle of his most recent book, *The Story of Success*.

Malcolm is a synthesizer, a pattern recognizer. After he's done his research and compiled lots of examples to illustrate the points he wants to make, he writes his books by telling stories. He's a good storyteller.

Daniel Pink, the author of *A Whole New Mind*, states, "Story represents a pathway to understanding that doesn't run through the left side of the brain." It is his belief that people who can recognize patterns and make meaning from seemingly non-related events and information will succeed while the purely logical left brain thinker will struggle. In his view, the future belongs to the big picture thinkers – the storytellers.

From my experience of speaking in front of hundreds of audiences, I have learned that stories are memorable because of the images and emotions contained in the story. The lesson of the story sticks because it's embedded in an image. The image isn't a still picture; it's a motion picture, a movie. While you're listening to a story, you're simultaneously watching the story on the movie screen in your mind, in your imagination. Furthermore, a motion picture – a movie – works better than a still picture image.

Let's test my theory. Take a moment now to think about a movie that you first saw over ten years ago. Have you identified your movie? Now, what do you remember when you think about this movie?

I bet that the first thing that came to your mind was an image or a scene. If I asked you to describe the scene, you could do it in great detail. You remember the actors, their clothes, the location, the

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situation, and the emotions. You can see these images as easily now as you did when you were watching the movie.

What you remember next is dialogue. But compared to how vividly you remember the images, you probably don't remember much of the dialogue. Maybe you remember a line that has become famous by repetition, like "make my day" or "life is like a box of chocolates." Your brain remembers pictures first. It then remembers the emotional context, and finally, it remembers language.

In his new book, *Brain Rules*, molecular biologist John Medina explains this phenomenon. "When the brain detects an emotionally charged event, the Amygdala releases dopamine into the system. Because dopamine greatly aids memory and information processing, you could say it creates a 'Post It' note that reads, 'Remember this.'"

That explains why audience members who saw me tell a story in a keynote over ten years ago approach me like I'm a long lost friend and say, "I still remember your airport story." But it's what they say next that proves the effectiveness of my Story Theater Method as an essential leadership skill. With a smile on their face, they say, "I'm still looking for the limo."

"Look for the Limo" is the branded point of the story. I call it a Phrase That Pays – mental Velcro that makes the point of your story stick. Because they remember the story, they remember the point. When they remember the point, it becomes actionable. What's the point of developing a presentation filled with great content if no one remembers anything, takes action, or changes his or her behavior?

My Story Theater Method is a synthesis of storytelling form and structure, subtle acting and comedy skills, and message branding. The structure makes the story easy to follow; the acting moments draw the audience into the experience and stimulate emotional responses; and the branded message gives them a call to action they can apply in their lives.

Most people who have ever given a speech, run a business meeting or tried to sell a product or service will tell you that stories are more memorable than facts and data. Yet I still run into business professionals who remain skeptical. "Stories are a waste of time," they tell me. "I have too much content to cover to waste time telling a story." In my experience, the story is essential if you want them to remember any of the content. It's more likely that content without imagery and emotion is a waste of time.

Marco Iacoboni is a neuroscientist, someone who studies the workings of the brain. In his book, *Mirroring People*, he asks, "Why do we give ourselves over to emotion during the carefully crafted, heartrending scenes in certain movies? Because mirror neurons in our brains re-create for us the distress we see on the screen. We have empathy for the fictional characters – we know how they're feeling – because we literally experience the same feelings ourselves."

Aha! Eureka! At last I've found a scientific explanation to explain what I've been teaching my students for the last 15 years – mirror neurons. We don't just listen to stories; we see images and feel emotions. We actually experience the story as if it's happening to us.

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"One important area of research," says John Medina, "is the effect of emotion on learning. Emotionally arousing events tend to be better remembered than neutral events. They persist much longer in our memories and are recalled with greater accuracy than neutral events."

By its very nature, story is an emotionally arousing event that engages listeners and holds their attention. With the advent of Blackberry's and I-phones, competing for your audience members' mindshare is the first challenge a speaker or leader faces. Good storytelling solves that problem. Then, using storytelling craft, we can attach meaning to the story with a well-chosen point.

In his book, *Things That Make Us Smart*, Don Norman says, "Stories are important cognitive events, for they encapsulate, into one compact package, information, knowledge, context, and emotion." Stories capture the big picture.

Now is the time for leaders to become wisdom sharers – synthesizers – storytellers. Simply "getting through the content" is not only ineffective; it wastes everyone's time. However, simply telling a story will not make you a better leader. It has to be the right story, crafted strategically to make the right point, delivered at the right time, and in a compelling way.

I'll let author Daniel Pink make my closing argument on the need for leaders to become storytellers. "Stories are easier to remember because stories are how we remember. When facts become so widely available and instantly accessible, each one becomes less valuable. What begins to matter more is the ability to place these facts in context and to deliver them with emotional impact."

The Story of Success! Increase your success by choosing, crafting and delivering your stories with the Story Theater Method. Contact me about my inspiring and entertaining keynotes, interactive trainings and Story Theater Retreats designed to help you become a more successful and inspiring presenter and leader.

Until next time, your storytelling-in-business coach, Doug Stevenson

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### **2. Client List: Book Doug for *The Power to Persuade - The Magic of Story* or for *Aikido Selling - Sell It with a Story* keynotes or training**

Partial list of Doug's Corporate and Association Bookings:

- Amgen Biotech – storytelling training for marketing
- Microsoft – general session keynote on storytelling
- US Bank – branch manager leadership training
- Allergan Facial Aesthetics – Aikido Selling – Sell it with a Story
- YPO–Manhattan – luncheon keynote for young executives
- Caterpillar – opening keynote – global human resources conference
- Con Agra Foods – storytelling for managers and directors
- USAA Insurance – storytelling for leaders
- Deloitte– Storytelling for Impactful Results workshops
- Coca-Cola Latin America – storytelling for managers and leaders

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- Genentech Pharmaceuticals – future leader workshop
- HCA-NY, Home Health Care Association – annual conference keynote
- Wells Fargo Bank – storytelling training for media managers

Other clients include Oracle, Bayer, Lockheed Martin, Cisco, Verizon, Time Warner, Abbott Labs, Mortgage Bankers Association, TD Industries, National Education Association, Institute of Real Estate Management, American Medical Association and many more...

Book Doug for a keynote or training for your organization. Contact Deborah Merriman at 719-310-8586, or email her at [deborah@DougStevenson.com](mailto:deborah@DougStevenson.com)

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*"I've had emails, calls, hugs and hallway howdys from just about everybody who attended your storytelling program, and to a soul they are all feeling energized and excited. You breathed new life into us and validated our skills and deep experience as storytellers; exactly what we needed to go forth, listen and tell. We thank you - Your friends at Wells Fargo."*

Patty Perkins, Team Leader, Internal Communications Solutions Team

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### 3. Watch Doug's GoogleTalk Video

Watch Doug's GoogleTalk Video on *The Power to Persuade – The Magic of Story: How to Monetize Your Stories*. <http://youtu.be/sKUiE9DBkKc>. Please pass the video link on to your friends and colleagues, and post it on your social network pages.

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*"Doug is truly a master in teaching the art and science of public speaking and storytelling. I took Doug's Story Theater Retreat in February 2009, and saw tremendous results immediately. Over 15 months later, I found myself teaching Doug's method to the CEO of Qwiki, a San Francisco-based technology startup, the night before a major startup contest. Doug's system transformed the CEO's speech dramatically and we WON the contest. Winning increased Qwiki's profile (NY Times, etc.) significantly and, as a result, we accelerated our fundraising process and raised \$8 million in Series A financing. Doug's Story Theater Method had a direct, measureable, and substantial impact on our company."*

Navin Thukkaram, Managing Director, NT Capital Partners, COO, Qwiki Inc.

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### 4. Story Theater Retreat and Private Coaching Options

The Story Theater Retreat is a 2.5 day intensive workshop, limited to 4 people. In North America, the Retreat takes place in Tucson, Arizona. In the Story Theater Retreat, your presentation capacity is

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stretched in all 4 types of language (verbal, vocal, physical and emotional) and you'll learn dynamics of energy, engagement, eye contact, drama, comedy and more. Each participant brings one prepared story to the Retreat, and you get in-depth coaching on that story, plus you learn a process that can be applied to all of your stories. We help you prepare for the Retreat with materials, and a pre-retreat coaching call with Doug.

We set Retreats by the collaborative scheduling method, whereby Deborah works with the people interested to find dates that 3 or 4 people can agree on. The Story Theater Retreat takes place over 3 consecutive days. The first session begins at 3 pm on the first day, so most people fly in on that first day.

Doug also offers private coaching via phone, Zoom Video (like Skype), review of scripts and videos, and in person. He does individual hours, or coaching packages.

Contact Deborah at 719-310-8586; [deborah@DougStevenson.com](mailto:deborah@DougStevenson.com), for:

- Dates for upcoming Retreats
- Retreat fee and payment plan options
- Nearby hotel list
- To reserve your spot in a Retreat
- To put your name on the Retreat Interest List
- To get an info sheet on private coaching
- For any other questions about the Story Theater Retreat or private coaching

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*"Right off from the start, we knew that this was not going to be a conventional seminar with someone reading information off a power point demonstration! Doug is a terrific and very supportive teacher. I like the fact that Doug gets right down to it; he doesn't beat around the bush. He tells it like it is. He will push and get in your face if that's what he feels you need, but there is no ego or condescending attitude. To me, that's a great coach. The Story Theater Retreat was a terrific experience that I would recommend to anyone, whether you are an experienced speaker or someone thinking about it. At my retreat, there were 4 people, from different walks of life and experience, and I think that everyone left feeling that Doug had touched each individual's most specific needs."*

Jim Mills, Illinois

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*"Doug is truly a transformational coach. You will not only learn, you will grow. Time spent with Doug is time spent with a master who will empower you with tools that can enrich your life, as well as bring out the dynamic speaker within."*

Joel B. Klein, MD, [www.kleinholisticcenter.com](http://www.kleinholisticcenter.com)

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[Click here for more details about the Story Theater Retreat.](#)

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## 5. Product Specials are Announced in the Newsletters

Be sure to watch for great deals like this one: Use the coupon code: DISCOUNT, and get 30% off of the Next Level Storytelling Video eLearning Series!

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*"Your **How to Write and Deliver a Dynamite Speech System** is fantastic! I have learned more from your program than I have in all the previous years of public speaking, including my five years as a Toastmaster. By working through your step-by-step system, I was able to put together a speech that proved to be the best speech of my life. Thank you."*

Edward Wallace, [www.ultimatehealthylifestyle.com](http://www.ultimatehealthylifestyle.com)

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\*\* Join Doug's Facebook group: Storytelling Mastery, follow him on twitter @DougStoryCoach, and check out his YouTube channel.

If you are receiving this issue as a forward, and would like to get more great articles from Doug, subscribe online at: <http://www.storytelling-in-business.com/newsletter/>.

Contact Doug at [doug@dougstevenson.com](mailto:doug@dougstevenson.com); Or contact Deborah Merriman, the VP of Everything, at [deborah@dougstevenson.com](mailto:deborah@dougstevenson.com); 719-310-8586.

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Doug Stevenson, CSP, has been teaching people how to tell their stories more effectively for over 20 years. His clients include Microsoft, Google, Oracle, SAP, Caterpillar, Genentech, Mead Johnson, Sanofi-Aventis, Wells Fargo, US Bank, State Farm, USAA, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Verizon, Coca Cola, Nurses At Home, Lockheed Martin, and many more. Whether Doug is presenting an entertaining and informative keynote or conducting a one-day storytelling seminar, his presentations are high-energy, highly-interactive, and fun-filled experiences.

Follow Doug on Twitter @DougStoryCoach

Facebook: Storytelling Mastery Fanpage

You Tube: Doug Stevenson

To learn more about Doug's keynotes, corporate training, webinars and executive coaching, email: [deborah@dougstevenson.com](mailto:deborah@dougstevenson.com) or visit our website at: [www.storytelling-in-business.com](http://www.storytelling-in-business.com)

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## **Doug Stevenson's Story Theater International**

To study this method with Doug, call 719-310-8586 and consider booking private coaching with Doug or attending The Story Theater Retreat in Tucson, AZ, USA. The Retreat is limited to four students and lasts 2 1/2 days. Go to [www.storytelling-in-business.com/coaching-retreats/](http://www.storytelling-in-business.com/coaching-retreats/) for more information.

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