

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *STORIES FOR WORK*

GABRIELLE DOLAN

magnetic
STORIES

CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS AND

ENGAGE EMPLOYEES WITH

BRAND STORYTELLING

WILEY

In true form, this book is littered with magnetic stories that make you feel like running back to your work and completely re-thinking how you tell your company's story, if not your own. You will come away from reading this wanting to connect the head with the heart, and with the certainty that storytelling is the key to bridging the two. It's a compelling and easy read with powerful case stories, and a swag of footnotes that will give you a chuckle along the way.

— **Jenelle McMaster, Managing Partner, Oceania Markets, EY**

There's a lot of gold in this book. *Magnetic Stories* reads like a compelling story of its own, with clear explanations, relevant examples and practical outtakes peppered throughout that take you on your own journey to becoming a better storyteller.

— **Tim Duggan, Author of *Cult Status: How to build a business people adore* & Co-Founder Junkee Media**

A brand, personal or company, really needs to have human connection. There is no better way for us to connect than through the power of inspiring and emotive storytelling. Whether communicating your company strategy, vision, values or just relationship building, an authentic story will resonate better, be remembered and re-told. *Magnetic Stories* is packed with great examples of 'case stories' and will give any reader the confidence on how to create and tell your messages through storytelling.

— **Michael Ebeid, former CEO, SBS, and Group Executive, Telstra**

Thank goodness Gabrielle Dolan doesn't ever run out of things to say, because every time she writes another book and tells us more stories, her expertise teaches us further how we can use the power of storytelling for greater connection and engagement in business.

Written in four parts, sharing the five types of stories businesses need, and using real life examples from companies around the world, this excellent 'brand storytelling bible' is a magnetic source of inspiration for those who want to attract commercial success. And check out page 81 if you want to know where she gets her rockstar shoes from!

— **Jac Phillips, Senior Director and Head of Marketing, Visa**

As 2020 has so acutely demonstrated, we live in an unpredictable and demanding world, where an organisation's brand and their leadership must connect and build trust in a real and meaningful way with their customers and employees. *Magnetic Stories* provides an easily digestible and relevant way to do exactly this across any sized organisation through the use of storytelling.

— **Carrie Hurihanganui, Chief Operating Officer,
Air New Zealand**

Gabrielle captivates readers with her use of stories to demonstrate their power. She shows how stories create an emotional connection that helps us remember them and influences decisions. For those who may not yet be convinced of the power of storytelling in building a culture and brand, Gabrielle brings these realities into focus and shares practical tips for implementing storytelling in your organisation.

— **Heather Brilliant, President and Chief Executive Officer,
Diamond Hill Capital Management**

The importance of storytelling and being able to paint a memorable and visual mental picture is so important for leaders to connect staff emotionally to the what and the why. *Magnetic Stories* is a useful reminder not to fall into the trap of 'don't let the audience get in the way of my message'. The story should have relevance and meaning. The case studies, examples and questions make for a practical book to use rather than gather dust.

— **Gavin Slater, Managing Director and
Chief Executive Officer, Nimble**

Every time I read Gabrielle's wisdom, I am reminded of the need to be more thoughtful in the stories I tell. *Magnetic Stories* reinforces the emotional power of storytelling. It reminds us that stories build deep connections with our stakeholders for the betterment of ourselves as individuals, of teams and of organisations. Gabrielle has hit yet another home run!

— **Gretchen Gagel, Managing Director, Asia Pacific, Conversant**

In my thirty years in business, I have seen many companies struggle with authentically communicating their brand story ... who they are and why we should choose them. Worse still, storytelling is often treated with some suspicion, that somehow being good at storytelling suggests a lack of substance.

And yet the most compelling leaders (and businesses) are those who can really connect with people, inspire them and enrol them in their mission.

In her new book, *Magnetic Stories*, Gabrielle Dolan presents the case for storytelling as an essential skill for connecting with customers and employees, to bring your brand to life. The book is a no-nonsense, accessible 'how-to' guide that uses well-researched case studies to show how successful businesses have built their brand and reputation through stories and actions.

I have seen Gabrielle in action, inspiring and teaching people about the power of storytelling, and she brings that skill and passion to life in this book with an effortless style that is easy to relate to.

Great stories, simple rules and powerful insights – this book is an essential guide for anyone who wants to have a positive impact on their employees and customers and for any business looking to more effectively build their brand through storytelling.

— **Anthony Healy, CEO and Managing Director,
Australian Business Growth Fund**

In *Magnetic Stories* Gabrielle delivers again. Who would have thought that a story about a goldfish could deliver a powerful message about what ownership means or that the story about the creation of a toilet paper manufacturer could be so inspiring (and funny). *Magnetic Stories* is engaging, thought-provoking, easy to digest, littered with humorous asides and, most importantly, practical.

— **Stephen Purcell, Non-executive Chairman, Nexia Australia**

Love this book! Brand storytelling from the inside out is one of the hallmarks of a strong brand. Arm your people with information and inspire them to pass it on.

— **Adam Ferrier, Author of *Stop Listening to the Customer* &
Founder of Thinkerbell**

An enthralling and informative read from cover to cover. The inclusion of so many different company's and people's stories really cemented my understanding of the power of storytelling and how to build a bank of brand stories in my teams.

— **Anne Bennett, Senior Executive**

As someone who has responsibility for nurturing culture within an organisation, Gabrielle's book – *Magnetic Stories* – gave me an inspiring platform from which to creatively engage my staff and ensure a long-lasting culture of storytelling about performance, resilience, and leading by example was left within our firm. Highly recommended for anyone trying to engage their employees on a deeper level.

— **James Bell, Managing Director, Australia and New Zealand, Bloomberg**

In *Magnetic Stories* Gabrielle Dolan again showcases the power of storytelling, especially for 'about us' brand purposes.

This book had me reflecting on how working from home during COVID has provided a window into 'about me' conversations with so many of our team. Their magnetic personal stories have revealed more about our culture and why they want to work for us than any recruitment materials ever could.

Magnetic Stories is a timely reminder of the power of brand stories and a practical guide in how to implement brand storytelling.

— **Lee Scales, Chief Customer Officer, UniSuper Management**

Gabrielle has developed proven and thoughtful communication methodologies that are designed to help leaders succeed in an increasingly cluttered world of long worded mission statements and elaborate values descriptions. Gabrielle convinces the reader that the practice of good storytelling engages us emotionally, connecting the organisation to our personal values.

In *Magnetic Stories*, Gabrielle demystifies the art of storytelling. As a primer on the art of storytelling, chapters are well organised with useful check and reflect prompts, and self-assessment questions. In a world of virtual meetings in the place of face-to-face conversations, Gabrielle's latest book is a fantastic resource in the quest to connect with others in a tangible way.

— **Sarah Williamson, Chief Executive, Antarctica New Zealand**

At a time when connection has never been so important, Gabrielle gives us the gift of sharing and showing us how to craft magnetic stories – ones that stick for our customers and our people. A must-read for all those who want to connect at the heart, not just through facts and logic. Can't wait to take out my highlighter and dog-ear some pages (book sacrilege I know!) and the check and reflect points are a master stroke.

— **Christine Corbett, Chief Customer Officer, AGL**

In *Magnetic Stories*, Gabrielle provides a full picture of how an organisation can not only communicate its brand, but also connect deeply with all kinds of stakeholders through the power of storytelling. Rather than theoretical, Gabrielle uses lots of real stories to demonstrate what it looks like when organisations are doing this. Spanning origin stories, core values stories, customer experience stories, employees' personal breakthrough stories, and stories for the broader community, Gabrielle invites the reader to see the critical role of storytelling in connecting to each of those groups in an engaging, authentic, emotional and relatable way. I especially appreciate her focus on people's personal stories, and how those connect them to an organisation's vision and purpose.

Although my organisation already has a comprehensive story writing program in place, I got a lot of new actionable insights from Gabrielle's book. I saw lots of areas where storytelling was possible, but I hadn't seen it before.

— **Chris Freund, Founder and Partner, Mekong Capital**

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GABRIELLE DOLAN

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*For Dad, whose actions created magnetic stories that will be
shared for generations to come.*

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About the author

Gabrielle can tell you a story or two. In fact, it was while working in a senior leadership role at National Australia Bank that she realised the power of storytelling in effective business communication. Since that epiphany, Gabrielle has found her calling as a global thought leader on real communication and business storytelling.

A highly sought-after international keynote speaker, educator and author, she has worked with thousands of leaders from around the world. Her clients include EY, Accenture, Visa, Amazon, Australia Post, National Australia Bank, Vodafone, Telstra, BlueScope Steel and the Obama Foundation, to name drop a few.

She holds a master's degree in Management and Leadership from Swinburne University, and an associate diploma in Education and Training from the University of Melbourne. She is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education in both the Art and Practice of Adaptive Leadership and Women and Power: Leadership in a New World.

Gabrielle is also the best-selling author of *Real Communication: How To Be You and Lead True*, a finalist in the Australian Business Leadership Book Awards for 2019. Her other published books include the chart-topping *Stories for Work: The Essential Guide to Business Storytelling* (2017), which reached number one in Australia's best-selling business books, *Storytelling for Job Interviews: How to Use Stories, Nail an Interview and Land Your*

Magnetic Stories

Dream Job (2016), *Ignite: Real Leadership, Real Talk, Real Results* (2015), which reached the top five on Australia's best-selling business books, and *Hooked: How Leaders Connect, Engage and Inspire with Storytelling* (2013).

Bringing humanity to the way businesspeople communicate isn't just a career, it's a calling. The ultimate expression of her passion for the cause is her Jargon Free Fridays movement that she founded in 2016 as a fun way to raise awareness of the business world's addiction to jargon and acronyms. (Don't ever say the word 'pivot' to her unless you are talking about netball or basketball.)

In 2020, her dedication to the industry was recognised when Gabrielle was awarded Communicator of the Year by the International Association of Business Communicators Asia Pacific region.

She lives in Melbourne with her husband, Steve, and two daughters, Alex and Jess.

gabrielledolan.com

Acknowledgements

As I sit down to write these acknowledgements, my youngest daughter, Jess, is sitting next to me saying, ‘Can you mention me first because I am your favourite?’ Now parents are not supposed to have favourites (even though we do but to be fair it changes on a daily, sometimes hourly basis). But in all seriousness, I should thank my family first considering they allow me to write so many stories about them. So, to my two daughters, Alex and Jess, and my husband, Steve, thank you for allowing me to openly share your stories. And for supporting me in everything that I do ... and most importantly of being proud of what I do.

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Massive thanks to Kelly Irving, my editor, whom I have been working with since my first book. I liken writing a book to running a marathon and when I get to about the 15K mark (15 000 words in) and either hit the wall or start going off course, Kelly is there by my side with words of encouragement to get me back on course. We also have an agreement that what happens in the first draft, stays in the first draft ... no-one will ever know how crap that is.

Writing a book is a massive team effort so thanks to the team at Wiley for again having faith in my ideas. To Allison Hiew for doing another round

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Thank you to the people who agreed to read the book and provide a testimonial. Your reviews meant a lot, especially when I was still in the early stages of hoping the book was good.

This book would be very light if it wasn't for the people who agreed to be interviewed for this book. You gave me your time, insights and, most importantly, your stories. I am so grateful that you allowed me to share them to bring the concepts of this book alive.

Finally, thank you to the reader. If you picked up this book you are no doubt an advocate for the power of storytelling. I trust you will find your own magnetic stories while reading this.

Introduction

In 2019 I published my fifth book, and my mother-in-law, Jan, asked me a good question. She asked in a genuinely caring way, ‘Don’t you run out of things to write about?’ I thought about this and agreed that it would be a long, long time before I even considered another book. Yet here I am again.

Here’s why.

When I first started my practice on storytelling back in 2005, no-one was talking about storytelling in business. The common reaction I received back then was often along the lines of ‘Oh, all that once-upon-a-time stuff?’ It was dismissed as not being relevant or credible, or just too emotional and ‘touchy feely’.

Fast forward to today, and I never receive this kind of reaction.

PEOPLE REALISE THE POWER OF SHARING STORIES IN BUSINESS AS A RELEVANT, CREDIBLE AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS AND ENGAGE EMPLOYEES.

So after 15 years of writing and speaking about this topic, you’d think I’d feel like my mission was accomplished. The use of stories in business has gained credibility and popularity. Great. More and more organisations are implementing storytelling. Great. No need for another book ... right?

Well, if you go to the ‘Our Story’ page on a vast majority of company websites (maybe even yours), you’ll realise that, actually, there is no story there at all. It’s usually just a bunch of facts, stats and dates, or it’s filled with so much verbiage that does nothing but demonstrate an addiction to corporate jargon. You know, ‘We incorporate leading-edge design with best-practice methodology to deliver customer-centric solutions in a sustainable manner.’

And what about your ‘brand story’—heard of that one? I have clients asking me to help them create their ‘brand story’ all the time. Yet I can recall writing an article on this over a decade ago titled ‘Yeti and the brand story’. (Spoiler alert: neither exist, no matter how hard you try looking.) There is no ONE story that communicates your brand to ALL of your employees and customers.

What is really happening is that the word ‘story’ is being hijacked ... and it’s creating even more confusion for people. I’ve lost count of the amount of times I have read something or listened to someone referring to something as a story and then found myself mumbling, ‘but that is not a story’.

A growing number of businesses are attempting to implement storytelling, but they’re not doing it very well and are missing out on valuable opportunities to connect and engage employees and customers. From entrepreneurs to small- and medium-sized businesses, to large multinational organisations, there are so many mistakes and sadly a lot of misguided efforts going on.

On the flip side, I have also heard some fabulous stories that have not been shared—even though they absolutely should have been.

THE ONE GOOD THING TO COME OUT OF THE CURRENT CLIMATE IS THE REALISATION THAT HUMAN CONNECTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER BEFORE.

COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and the Australian bushfire crisis are just three examples (from 2020 only!) that show how the world has been challenged and is changing.