



How to Find Stories for Work

The most common concern I hear when working with clients on storytelling is, 'I don't have any stories because I'm just normal'. This is often followed by, 'Where do you find your stories?'

Everyone has stories, regardless of what you do, who you are or how 'normal' you think you are. In fact, the 'normal' stories can often be the most effective. Once you learn how to uncover your stories, you will also discover that you have lots of them — way more than you ever thought possible.

Have you ever been at the beach and seen someone with a metal detector? They walk along, waving the detector over the sand to uncover what is hidden just below the surface. Finding stories you can share is very similar. Most of your stories may not be visible at first but they are waiting just below the surface of your memory.

One way to find your stories is to literally do a brain dump of all the significant things that have happened in your life. When I say 'significant', I don't mean they have to be major, life-changing events or sliding-door moments. You certainly want to capture these major stories but don't

ignore the simple or ordinary life experiences that you have collected across your lifetime. These can be significant too.

The key to good stories is having a variety of them, which includes a combination of work- and non-work-related memories and events.

Over my years of working in this industry, I have found you can use two effective approaches to finding your stories.

Finding work-related stories

The first step in finding work related stories is to list every job you have ever had. Start with your very first job and move through to your current role. Don't leave out any job, no matter how small or insignificant it feels now, and include any volunteer work or casual jobs you had for a short time when you were young.

For each role, now think carefully about specific events that stand out for you. The key to this approach is to sit with one job experience for a while. Don't dismiss it too quickly by thinking something like, That was boring, nothing happened there or I was only in that job for three months.

Remember, you are a metal story detector and the stories will be just below the surface so you need to be patient and thorough when investigating.

Also think about how you came to take on the role and then leave the role.

- > Was there anything significant in that process? For example, moving locations.
- > Why did you leave?
- > What success did you have in that role?
- > Do you have any regrets from that job that could be good stories? This could include a valuable lesson from a mistake you made.

Finding non-work-related stories

Now it's time to find some personal stories by listing events in your life. Start from your earliest memories to your most recent. Try not to analyse the experiences that emerge; just write them down. Just because you have listed them doesn't mean you will necessarily share them.

As above try to ask yourself questions about the event.

- > What did you learn from it?
- > Why do you still remember it?
- > Has it had an impact (even ever so slightly) on the way you live and lead today?
- > Are any of these experiences similar to what you are going through at work, such as change, teamwork, striving to complete a project?

Remember personal stories used to communicate a business message can be very powerful! At the end of this process, you will have a valuable collection of story 'gems' that you can potentially share in business — but don't just stop here. I encourage you to keep adding to this collection as time goes on. Other significant events will happen and you'll have even more great stories to choose from.

Gabrielle Dolan has offered Cropley subscribers 50% off her storytelling workshop. To access the discount use the coupon code: CROPLEY COMMUNICATION. [here](#).



Gabrielle Dolan

Gabrielle Dolan is a global thought leader on authentic leadership and business storytelling. She has worked with thousands of high-profile leaders around the world, helping them to become better leaders and communicators using the art of business storytelling.

Gabrielle co-founded One Thousand & One, one of Australia's leading storytelling companies before launching her practice in 2013. She is the best selling author of Ignite: Real Leadership, Real Talk, Real Results, and other publications. Her newest book Gabrielle Dolan in an international speaker and trainer on business storytelling. Her latest book, Stories for Work: The Essential Guide to Business Storytelling is available online or in book stores. Find her at gabrielledolan.com.