

The Power of Story

To grow and innovate, you not only need a big idea, you also need stake-holder buy in and action.

However, many companies fail in this regard because stakeholders are not aligned, the real problem that the innovation seeks to solve has not been identified, and the story has not been defined. Story can fuel stakeholder buy-in by painting a clear picture of what is and what could be for everyone - from employees, to investors, to customers. In other words, an excellent story means that you can delegate tactical aspects effectively because it clarifies how to execute specific functions against the story (e.g., digital marketing, advertising, design). Further, when the stakeholder becomes part of the story, they are more likely to act, which generates momentum and create a culture of optimism.

Story is equally important for leaders of companies, who often need to act as editors - shaping the stories told by employees and customers - to align with a shared vision. Therefore, a second goal of the class is to demonstrate how personal stories can be used by leaders to build high performing teams and companies. By creating powerful stories, you'll see how your company can gain momentum and how you can help your employees and customers become more connected. By the end of the class, you will have gained insight into (1) How to use stories as an asset in business; (2) What makes for a good and bad story; (3) How to pitch stories.



T/TH May 5 – June 2 (5 weeks)
Section 1: 8-9:40 AM, Section 2: 10-11:40 AM



Course website for GSBGEN 542
<http://Stanford.edu/class/gsbgen542>

Faculty
Dr. Jennifer Aaker

COURSE OVERVIEW

In the **beginning**, we start the class by looking at the importance of story (day 1) and how to use stories to build engaged teams (day 2). Next, we'll analyze how story can be used as an engine for growth. We'll focus on how you can harness story to build brands by understanding the user story (day 3) that inevitably develop in any customer-centric business, and then how to find new stories (day 4) to fuel growth and innovation for your company. Next, we delve into how to use personal stories to lead (day 5), and determine the direction of growth for a company (day 6). We reveal how story can be used as a process or an operations toolkit to help you tell a global story to discrete stakeholders, including investors, employees and customers (day 7). Finally, you will create an Innovation Playbook, to be complemented with a three minute verbal pitch of your growth story on Pitch Day (day 8). In the end, stories can also help us define the different chapters in our lives, a starting point to finding meaning over the course of time and in the everyday (day 9). **The End.**

GRADING

Class Contribution (40%)

Class contributions is based on two components, equally weighted. First, your team will evaluate your contribution to the team final project. Second, show up and contribute in class. Please notify me by email of any absences. If you have to be absent, please know that your participation grade will be lowered (emergencies are excused), and multiple absences will affect your grade in a nonlinear fashion. Note, there are two options for extra credit in this class. The first is to make up a single absence is by doing an extra credit assignment (only one absence is allowed). The second opportunity is if you would like to generate an extra credit assignment related to your interest or an exercise that you think would benefit the class. For either assignment, generate a proposal (less than 2 paragraphs), and email it to Stephanie Zhan during the term. Lastly, please don't use laptops and tablets in class as it distracts.

Quiz (10%)

Although the final project is team-based, a portion of your grade is individual - based on an online quiz given via Canvas (in the Assignments Tool on your course website). It will be multiple choice questions based on the lectures, readings and videos of the first 3 weeks of class. The quiz will be available at 6:00 AM on 5/21 and open till 11:59 PM on 5/21. Once you begin the assignment, you have one hour to complete the quiz.

Team Final Project (50%)

There are two parts to the final team project: (1) **An Innovation Playbook**; (2) **a 3 min Verbal Pitch to complement the Playbook**. The team project will be graded on quality and creativity of work. Consider these factors as you design your playbook and pitch (1) Goal: Is your goal clear? (2) Grab attention: Was there a hook? (3) Engage: Does you move stakeholders to where they need to go? (4) Trigger Action: Does the audience know what to do, think or feel after hearing the pitch or reading the playbook? Examples of the Innovation Playbook are on the course website.

Story Off (ungraded)

At the end of a prosperous career, you will have hopefully collected a portfolio of signature stories – stories that defined you, your leadership style, your values and what you believe. For the last day of we want you to imagine coming back to Stanford to give a commencement speech. In 3 minutes during class, you will share that commencement speech story from a point of reflection. You could focus on a humorous personal discovery story, a comeback story, or a professional development story – whatever you want. The goal is to let you leverage the tools you have learned in class to craft and share a personal story without any visual aids during the presentation. We encourage you to meet with each other outside of class individually to provide constructive feedback as you build upon your story. You will deliver your 3 minute speech in small groups, vote on the most engaging, inspirational stories in groups, and based on your peer reviews, a small set of students will deliver their speech in front of the entire class. This assignment is not graded.



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THE

Theme

The Story of the Class

Day 1. TH 5/5 - in Colab
Intro: The Importance of Story

Welcome! Today we'll dive into the science of story – when and why story matters, and how to integrate data and story as you seek to understand customers, build brands and teams.

Day 2. TH 5/7- in Colab
How Story Builds Teams

Stories can be a powerful tool for persuasion, useful in the context of understanding customers and building brands – but also leading teams. In this class, we'll focus on the role of story to build engaged and productive teams. You'll learn about the cognitive differences between members of your own team, discuss ways to leverage each member's unique skillset, and practice strategies for connecting across differences through stories.

Day 3. TH 5/12 - in CoLab
How to Design for Empathy

Today you will embark on a Secret Mission with your team to investigate stories from users of your brand. We have set up interviews for you with users of your brand (both beginners and expert users) on campus. Your challenge is to find them, do a deep dive and seek to understand their pain points, goals and story.

Day 4. TH 5/14 - in CoLab
How to Create Momentum

With a clearly defined design challenge and a rich collection of insights from your Secret Mission, what is the innovation story that you want to tell? In this course you will run a brief "hackathon" – where your team will ideate solutions to key challenges facing your user. Then your team will develop a "story map" - showing how your user faces extraordinary challenges – ultimately to achieve something quite remarkable by means of your innovation.

Day 5. TH 5/19 – in M104
How to Harness Personal Story to Lead

Effective leaders are also effective storytellers. Learn how to leverage stories to build trust and respect from your fellow co-workers. Develop skills to influence the key stakeholders in your organization, and advocate for your ideas. Build your own personal story bank of experiences from your career to help further your professional growth.

Day 6. TH 5/21 - Offsite
How to Define the Story

On this day, team will run an offsite to create a rough draft of your Innovation Playbook This will be an active work session for your team. (Meet wherever your team works best – outside of class).

Day 7. TH 5/26 – in M104
How to Harness Story in a Digital World

It takes great storytelling on at least three levels to accelerate a digital commerce business globally. Investors need to understand why this strategy will create real shareholder value. Internal partners need to be inspired to provide their support. Consumers need a reason to "shop your store" when other alternatives are just a click away. How do you reach a wide range of audiences with different backgrounds, and how do you do that at scale to build a strong global brand? Today's class will focus on building strong global brands by tailoring your story to audiences and by utilizing different media channels.

Day 8. TH 5/28 - in CoLab
Pitch Day

Today is the big day: the presentation of your Innovation Playbook and a 3 minute team pitch, targeted to your brand partner and venture capital. Good luck!

Day 9. TH 6/2 - in CoLab
Story Off

Story-Off! Today is about you. Based on the techniques, tools and frameworks that you've learned in class, you will pitch your own 3 min "commencement speech" stories to the class. We'll conclude by focused on the bigger picture. Stories are not just a powerful way to connect people and build brands -- they help build community, teach, and provide the kind of happiness that comes from a sense of empathy, togetherness, and belonging. **The End.**

SCOOP

In Class	Readings and Videos	Assignment Due
Welcome!	Reading: The Dragonfly Effect Video: James Buckhouse (Sequoia)	Six word story about you (ungraded, to share in class)
Brand Audit	Reading: The Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing Video: Nancy Duarte (Duarte Design)	Brand teams formed
Secret Mission	Reading: User Stories: A Strategic Design Tool Video: Jeff Jordon (Andreessen-Horowitz)	(none)
Mini-Hackathon James Buckhouse (Sequoia)	Reading: Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing, and Story Map (Buckhouse) Video: Christian Roman (Pixar)	(none)
Storytellers in M104 Amy Brooks (NBA) Nathan Hubbard (TWITTER)	Reading: Four Truths as a Storyteller Video: Tory Burch (Tory Burch)	Six word story that captures your best idea for Commencement Story speech (ungraded, to share in class)
Offsite	Reading: What Is Your Story Video: Nicole Kahn (IDEO)	Online quiz (graded)
Storyteller: Christiana Shi (NIKE)	Reading: Nike's Story: Just Tell It Video: Christiana Shi (Nike)	(none)
David Hornik (August Capital)	Reading: Do the Stories They Tell Get the Money They Need? Video: Blair Christie (Cisco)	Innovation Playbook (due 5/27 midnight via Canvas), and 3 min team pitch prepared for class (graded)
You!	Reading: Business Case for Happiness Video: Steve Jobs (Apple, Commencement Speech @ Stanford)	Story-Off Finale (3 min Commencement Story speech (ungraded, to share in class)