



How to Use **Storytelling** *to Crush it on* **LinkedIn**



Written by
Lynnaire Johnston &
Robert Tighe

This eBook is based on a LinkedIn Live which you can watch at
<https://linkability.biz/LivewithLynnaire29Sep>

Contents

- ◆ What is an Origin Story?
- ◆ What constitutes a good story?
- ◆ How should stories be structured?
- ◆ The key to writing stories for business.
- ◆ The three C's of storytelling.
- ◆ How do you write a story briefly?
- ◆ Written vs oral stories
- ◆ Stories on LinkedIn
- ◆ Overcoming storytelling fear
- ◆ When life delivers you stories
- ◆ How to inject humour in your stories

Introduction

Storytelling has been a vehicle for sharing information since mankind's early days. This ancient ritual has never lost its appeal or its effectiveness even though the way we tell stories may have changed, along with the content.

LinkedIn is the perfect platform for telling stories as we can do so in several ways – text, audio, video and image. Whatever format we choose, it pays to understand the basics of storytelling to ensure our stories are read / heard / watched and understood.

This eBook is the result of a webinar hosted by Link-Ability's Lynnaire Johnston with storytelling guru Robert Tighe which you can watch at <https://linkability.biz/LivewithLynnaire29Sep>.

What is an Origin Story?

Developing your Origin Story is a process of reflecting on your past to get a better understanding of who you are now. It can help you come up with a library of stories you can use to connect with people. People connect with people who tell stories, so your Origin Story gives people a peek at the personality behind your job title or your role. It helps people get a sense of who you are and what you stand for.

An Origin Story is particularly useful on LinkedIn where we tend to hide behind our professional information and forget we're connecting with other humans. A good place to include your Origin Story in your LinkedIn profile is the About section where you can add some personal details that help people get to know you better.

What Makes a Good Story?

A great story makes people care. It makes them feel something. Kathryn McGarvey is a New Zealand marketing strategist who posted a great double image on LinkedIn that brilliantly demonstrates this. The first image (below) is of a young hitchhiker with a cardboard sign simply stating his destination. The second image shows the same hitchhiker with the same sign but this time it tells a story in just 6 words. The hitchhiker realised that if he wants to get a ride, he has to make people care.



Stories are a great way of helping all of us on LinkedIn to achieve our goals. Whether that's to inspire people, educate or connect with or sell to people. Even your banner can tell a story.

How Should Stories be Structured?

Every story needs a structure. It might sound obvious but a story should have a beginning, a middle and an end. That doesn't necessarily mean it has to be chronological. Jumping in at the most dramatic point and working backwards or forwards from there is an excellent technique. It gives your audience a reason to keep reading.

Stories have similarities with copywriting in that you need to grab people's attention in those opening couple of lines or paragraphs. You need to give people a reason to keep reading so the start is crucial. Spend more time on this than the rest of the piece to get it right and it will fall into place. The structure will follow automatically from your opening lines.



When it comes to the ending – and this especially true of storytelling on LinkedIn – you need a call to action. Similarly, you need to tell people or explain what the point of the story is, although not necessarily explicitly. Sometimes the point of the story is very obvious, but quite often it's worth summing up at the end. You can do this by saying, 'The reason I'm sharing this story is x, y and z', or 'The point of this story is x, y and z'. A good strong opening and relating the story back to what you do now at some point in the story is very important, especially on LinkedIn.

Robert's tip: Try not to overcomplicate it. Simple is often best.

The Key to Writing Stories for Business

Start with why you're telling the story. What point are you trying to make? Try to highlight or celebrate some of the key personality traits that make you so good at what you do or that demonstrate why you're so passionate about the industry or sector that you're in.



Lynnaire's tip: In the Experience section of your LinkedIn profile add a short 3-5 paragraph story about your current work or role that highlights your skills.

The Three C's of Storytelling – Context, Change and Consequences

Every story should have these three elements.

Context is where you set the scene for your audience or your reader. You do that by giving specific details about where the story is set, i.e. the time and place, and an identifiable character that people can relate to. In most cases that will be you but it could also be a client or a customer, either fictional or real. A lot of people go too high level with their stories. Give people some details so they can paint their own picture.

Change must happen to the main character in the story. That doesn't have to be huge. It doesn't have to be a transformation. Some people make the mistake of thinking they have to tell an epic story but small, simple stories can be just as effective, as long as some change happens to the main character.

Consequences occur out of that change. Something has to happen to make the story interesting and to prompt people to think about what happens next. That's at the heart of every good story. What happens next and why should I care?

How Do You Write a Story Briefly?

One word: Editing. People make the mistake of thinking they can just throw a first draft on the page and that's it, done. But you can't write a great story on a first draft. It's just not possible. So editing is key. It takes a bit more time but the results are worth it.

Start with a brain dump – get your thoughts, your story down on the page and then be ruthless with it. The simplest writing advice is to 'omit needless words'. For example, if you read a piece of writing, you'd be amazed how many times the word 'that' appears and how easily it can be removed without changing or affecting the meaning. Another editing trick is to edit out words ending in ~ly. They are often unnecessary.

Watch out for repetition because it's easy to repeat the same point, albeit in different ways. Keeping words, sentences and paragraphs short is also good advice. Short words are more punchy. They have more energy and they get your message across faster.

Lynnaire's LinkedIn tip: Edit all your text on LinkedIn, not just your posts. Edit your profile carefully to keep it succinct yet powerful.



What's the difference between written and oral stories?

When you have just a short time, say on a LinkedIn video, the key is to identify one topic or point you want to get across. And then use one story to illustrate or highlight that point. Don't try to pack too much in.

General public speaking rules also apply. Keep your sentences very short. Pause for effect at key moments in the story. Vary your tone, volume and pitch because delivery makes such a difference. Zero in on one point in your story and don't try to include too much.

Making your story complicated makes it very easy to get off track and forget what you're trying to say. The consequence is that you lose people if you don't keep to the point.

Lynnaire comes from a radio journalism background and sentences written for radio are generally no more than 25 words long. Partly that's so you can breathe between sentences. Trying to read 100-word sentences without taking a breath is difficult and it's easy to get the intonation and emphasis wrong. So, when preparing LinkedIn videos, keep sentences short.

As a Business Platform, Should Stories be Used on LinkedIn?

There has long been a belief that personal stories are better suited to platforms like Facebook than LinkedIn. However, this is changing. We are now seeing many more such posts, for example about personal challenges that people have overcome, presented as a story.

Here's an example of a powerful story by Australian leadership and storytelling consultant Gabrielle Dolan. She wrote about applying for a job when she was 17. Gabrielle was excited about going to the interview but was gutted when she saw the same job advertised in her local paper a week later. She said to her mum, 'Obviously I didn't get the job.' Her mum replied, 'Obviously nobody else got the job either' and encouraged her to reapply. Gabrielle sent another letter, highlighting what she had learned about the job and the company in the first interview. She got called back for a second interview and was offered the job on the spot. She finished the post by crediting her mother with showing her the importance of resilience and not giving up.

The post said nothing about Gabrielle's job. It didn't mention her role as a leadership consultant or as a storytelling, talent consultant, but it spoke volumes about who she is as a person. It spoke about her work ethic and her 'never gave up' attitude. That one post got more than 20,000 likes, comments and shares, and opened up a whole host of new doors and opportunities for her. This shows the reach a simple story can have. It also shows that not every story has to be epic.



Robert's tip: Don't put all your vulnerabilities on show; keep those skeletons in your closet!

How to Get Over The Fear of Sharing Your Stories on LinkedIn?

The fear of sharing stories is very real. Robert was a journalist for 15 years and very used to seeing his words in print. But he was surprised at how terrified he was when he shared his first personal stories on LinkedIn because he found there's something very different about sharing a personal story as opposed to writing about other people's stories.

How did he overcome this fear? Simply by confronting it and doing more of it. He suggests taking baby steps such as sharing a story in the comments section of someone else's post.

We tend to worry too much about what others will think of us. Some people are afraid of coming across as boastful and are wary of the tall poppy syndrome. Those fears are very real. But if you can relate your stories back to what you do, turn your stories into a business point, you'll be on safe ground.

Nobody's trying to win any awards with LinkedIn posts, all we're trying to do is make a small difference to those who are most interested in what we have to say or in our area of expertise. People can often get sidetracked by wanting their posts to be absolutely perfect. But what happens is they just don't get them finished and published.

Another factor preventing stories being published is overwhelm. When you think about your life and your career, you'll realise you have hundreds of stories in your head. It can be hard to decide what to share on LinkedIn. One way to overcome this barrier is to ask yourself, 'what story can I share that means something to my audience?'

The 3 Periods of Your Life That Provide Great Stories

There are three stages of your life from which you can draw:

- ◆ Stories that have shaped you;
- ◆ Stories that have changed you and
- ◆ Stories that define you.

The first is the period in your life up to about the age of 18. For example, Robert and Lynnaire both love books and reading. Robert's mum bought him a typewriter when he was 13. Lynnaire's mother read to her from a very early age and these factors contributed to their later decisions to become writers.

Do you have a story from that part of your life that explains what you do now and why you do it?

The second period in life that produces great stories is your 20s and 30s, when you were trying to find your way in the world. Then you were likely making key decisions about your career, where you wanted to live or who you wanted to marry. There will be stories from that period of your life that others will identify with because we all go through similar experiences and make similar decisions.

Third are the stories that define you or the role you're in now. Why are you so passionate about what you do? What has happened recently that makes a good story and is related to what you do?

When done well, the storytelling process takes time, reflection and self-awareness. You need to think through the different periods of your life – the highlights AND lowlights – and consider how you can share your stories and relate them back to what you do now.

When you're reflecting on your stories, you can reframe them by looking through a different lens or reinterpret them to your advantage. That way it's not about propaganda, making up stories or lying about key details. Reframing them is a way to make a business case or a business point. Part of what Robert does with clients is help them reflect on those stories and identify those they can use in a business context.

Lynnaire's LinkedIn tip: Places where storytelling could be used on your profile are in the:

- ◆ *Profile cover video*
- ◆ *Featured section*
- ◆ *About section*
- ◆ *Experience section*

Humour in Stories

Not everyone can write humorous stories well so here's a workaround: people love to hear about our failures. If you're self-deprecating and if something bad happens that you can spin into a story and paint in a positive light at the end so it's not all negative, do it.

One of the early stories Robert shared on LinkedIn was how as a freelance writer he got snared and then distracted by the video game, Championship Manager, which is one of the most addictive video games ever created. The reaction to this post was huge because so many people could identify with that idea of trying, failing and trying something again. We're all familiar with procrastination, right? So, if you struggle with humorous writing, don't be afraid to laugh at yourself, because people will identify themselves in your story.



Summary

As with coming up with ideas for LinkedIn posts, dreaming up stories takes practice. Not all stories will translate well to LinkedIn because it is a business platform, so the stories you tell should relate to your work in some way. But they could be a business lesson learned at an earlier age in a different context. They could be something you learned from working with a client. They could say something about your personality.

Ideas are everywhere but it pays to be discerning with the stories you share. Think about what your audience wants to read or learn about.

Good stories have a beginning, middle and an end. They have context, change and consequences. They can even have humour, although this is not always pertinent.

Learning to tell stories well takes practice. But don't be afraid to start. You'll never improve if you don't try and the best time to start is today!

About the Authors

Lynnaire Johnston is an internationally recognised LinkedIn strategist and trainer based in New Zealand. She is a former broadcaster and editor, and author of *Link·Ability, 4 powerful strategies to maximise your LinkedIn success*. She is also the co-author of *Business Gold – Building Awareness, Authority and Advantage with LinkedIn Company Pages*.

Lynnaire works with individuals and businesses internationally to help them achieve their professional goals using LinkedIn. She does this through done-for-you profile makeovers, training and coaching of teams and individuals, and creating LinkedIn strategies for businesses, coaches, consultants, founders and other professionals.

Her Link·Ability members site provides a wealth of information for those who are serious about LinkedIn. She is a popular podcast guest and hosts free monthly LinkedIn Live webinars that attract hundreds of attendees.

On LinkedIn she consistently publishes posts, articles and newsletters that help her connections and followers to crack the LinkedIn code.

Connect with Lynnaire at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lynnairejohnston/>



Robert Tighe has been working with words for 20 years, initially as an award-winning journalist and more recently as a storytelling consultant and number-one bestselling ghostwriter.

Previously he was the New Zealand Country Editor for The Red Bulletin, an adventure lifestyle magazine published by Red Bull, before he started his own company to help businesses tell better stories.

He works with founders, owners, entrepreneurs, business leaders, consultants, and professional services firms to discover their Origin Story and share it with the world.

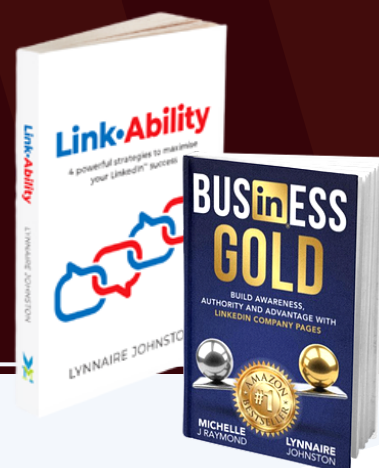
Telling better stories enables leaders to communicate with confidence, connect with stakeholders and lead with purpose.

It establishes your credentials and answers three very important questions:

- ✓ Who you are;
- ✓ Where you've come from;
- ✓ Why you do what you do.

You can find out more about Robert and the work he does at <https://roberttighe.com/> or connect with him on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/roberttighe/>



Where to Learn More About Using LinkedIn to Achieve Your Professional Goals

Connect with [Lynnaire Johnston](#)

Follow the [Link•Ability company page](#) for tips about using LinkedIn

Read *Link•Ability, 4 Powerful Strategies to Maximise Your LinkedIn Success*. Available at [Amazon](#)

Read *Business Gold – Building Awareness, Authority and Advantage with LinkedIn Company Pages*. Available at [Amazon](#)

And if you are serious about LinkedIn, join our [Link•Ability members site](#) for content, community and coaching. Your first week is **free**.

