Storytelling Skills for Product Management Success

J. D. Schramm

Silicon Valley Product Management Association,
Saturday April 13, 2019

ILLLUMINATE:
Ignite change through speeches, stories, ceremonies and symbols

jds

Movements Follow a Story Structure

Movements share a common pattern that mirrors the structure of a story through five stages of transformation.

Leaders guide travelers through transformations using a series of galvanizing moments. Together these moments create movements, which mirror the structure of a story. It follows the classic three-act format, encompassing five stages of transformation.

In the first act, leaders ask travelers to commit to your Dream and cross the threshold to Leap toward it. Travelers tend to prefer their world as it is, so you'll need to coax them to move.

In the next act, travelers must Fight obstacles and Climb toward your goal. This is the hardest part because it's where the transformation happens.

In the final act, travelers cross the final threshold to Arrive at the goal. This is the time to reflect on what you've accomplished together before embarking on the next adventure.

BEGINNING — MIDDLE — END

DREAM | LEAP | FIGHT | CLIMB | ARRIVE | (re)DREAM
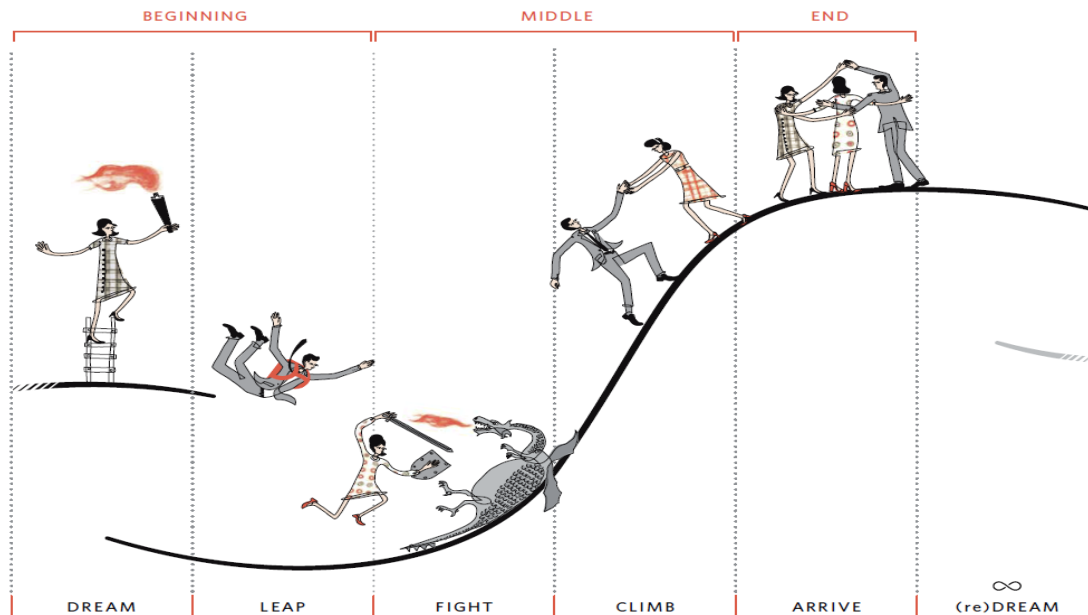
Moving Through the Venture Scape

DREAM

You kick off a vision, initiative, or product, which sets in motion a new season of transformation. Your travelers need to understand and find inspiration in the journey ahead.

Torchbearer's Communication Toolkit

Through empathetic and inspiring communication, you can create galvanizing moments that sustain your travelers' energy so that they'll see the venture through to a successful conclusion.

Deliver Speeches to create longing for the future by comparing the status quo (what is) to the new norm (what could be).

Tell Stories to help travelers understand in their minds and hearts why and how you're wanting them to change.

Hold Ceremonies to mark where you are in the venture scape and express collective emotions.

Turn emotionally charged artifacts into powerful and memorable **Symbols** of key moments along the venture.
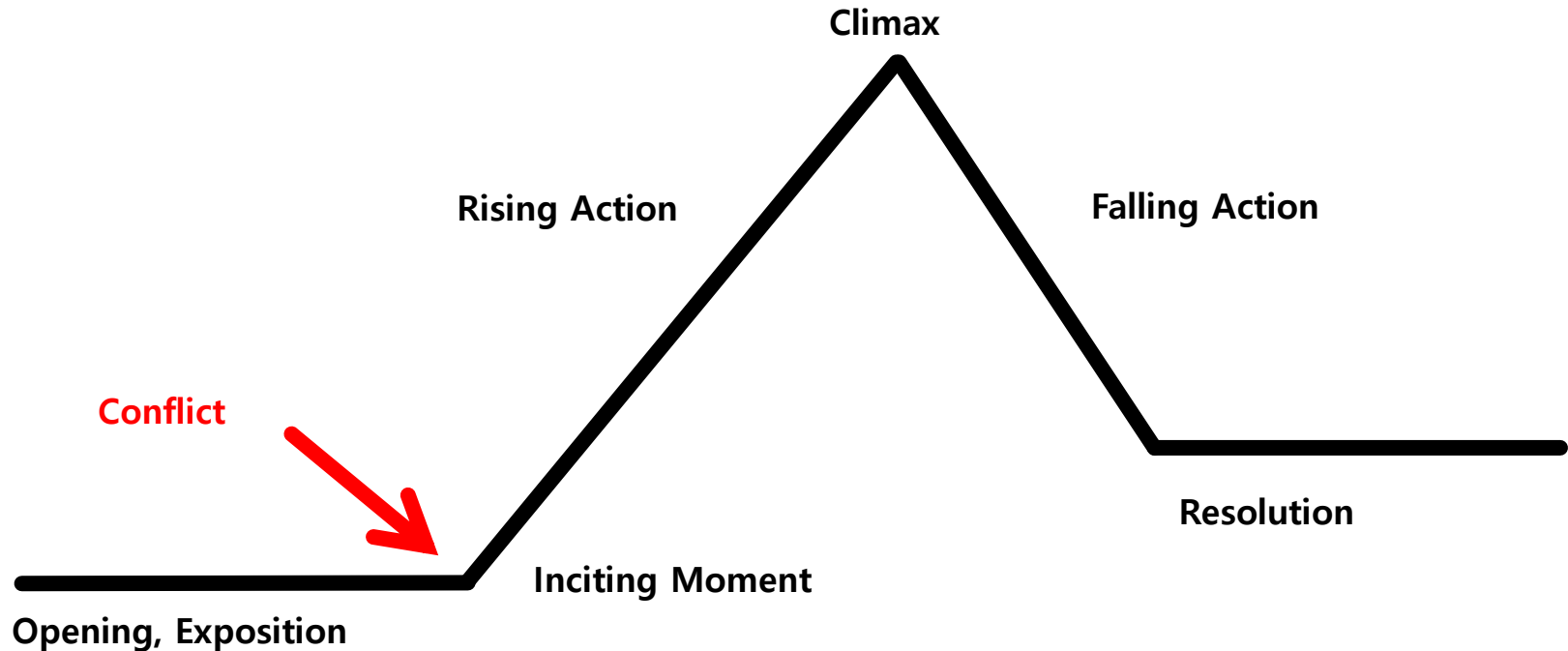
Creating and Sharing Great Stories

Begin with some inquiries

- Why do we love stories?
- What's the basic flow of a story?

Consider the basic story structure

Climax

Rising Action

Falling Action

Conflict

Inciting Moment

Resolution

Opening, Exposition

Freitag's Pyramid as referenced by Nancy Duarte

Begin with some inquiries

- Why do we love stories?
- What's the basic flow of a story?
- What do you recall from today's stories?

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

1. Parachute in…don't pre-amble

Parachute in

11

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

1. Parachute in…don't pre-amble
2. Choose first (and final) words carefully

Choosing first words carefully

Choosing final words carefully

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

1. Parachute in...don't pre-amble
2. Choose first (and final) words carefully
3. Follow Goldilocks' Theory of details

Using a goldilocks level of details

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

1. Parachute in…don't pre-amble
2. Choose first (and final) words carefully
3. Follow Goldilocks' Theory of details
4. Remember the magic grain truck….

Sharing a "Grain Truck" Moment

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

1. Parachute in…don't pre-amble
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4. Remember the magic grain truck….
5. Practice One person…one thought

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

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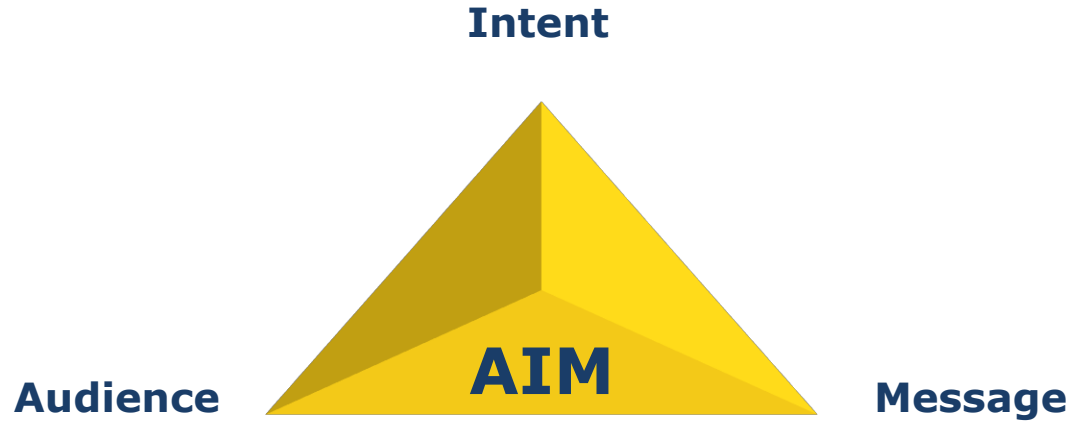5. Practice One person…one thought
6. Use silence

Use Silence

7 Habits of Highly Effective Storytellers

1. Parachute in...don't pre-amble
2. Choose first (and final) words carefully
3. Follow Goldilocks' Theory of details
4. Remember the magic grain truck....
5. Practice One person...one thought
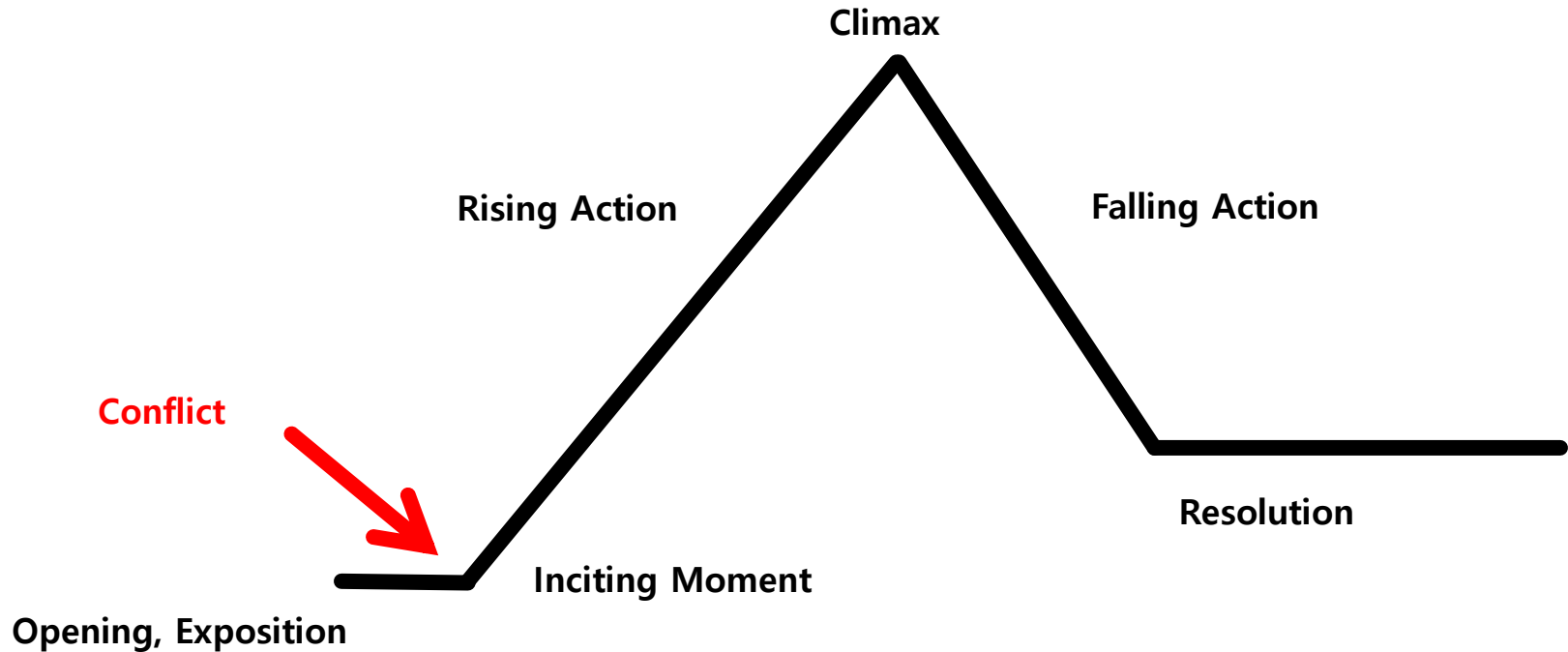6. Use silence
7. Know your AIM

Consider these three dimensions of your strategy

Intent

Audience

AIM

Message

What Story Will You Tell?
Consider questions from Shobhit Chugh

Consider the basic story structure

Climax

Rising Action

Falling Action

Conflict

Resolution

Inciting Moment

Opening, Exposition

Freitag's Pyramid as referenced by Nancy Duarte

Seven Steps to Storytelling Success

1. Parachute in…don't pre-amble
2. Choose first words carefully (and…final words…)
3. Follow Goldilocks' Theory of details
4. Explore poetry….
5. Deliver "one person/one thought"
6. Use silence…
7. Know your AIM…audience, intent, and message

Retransmission

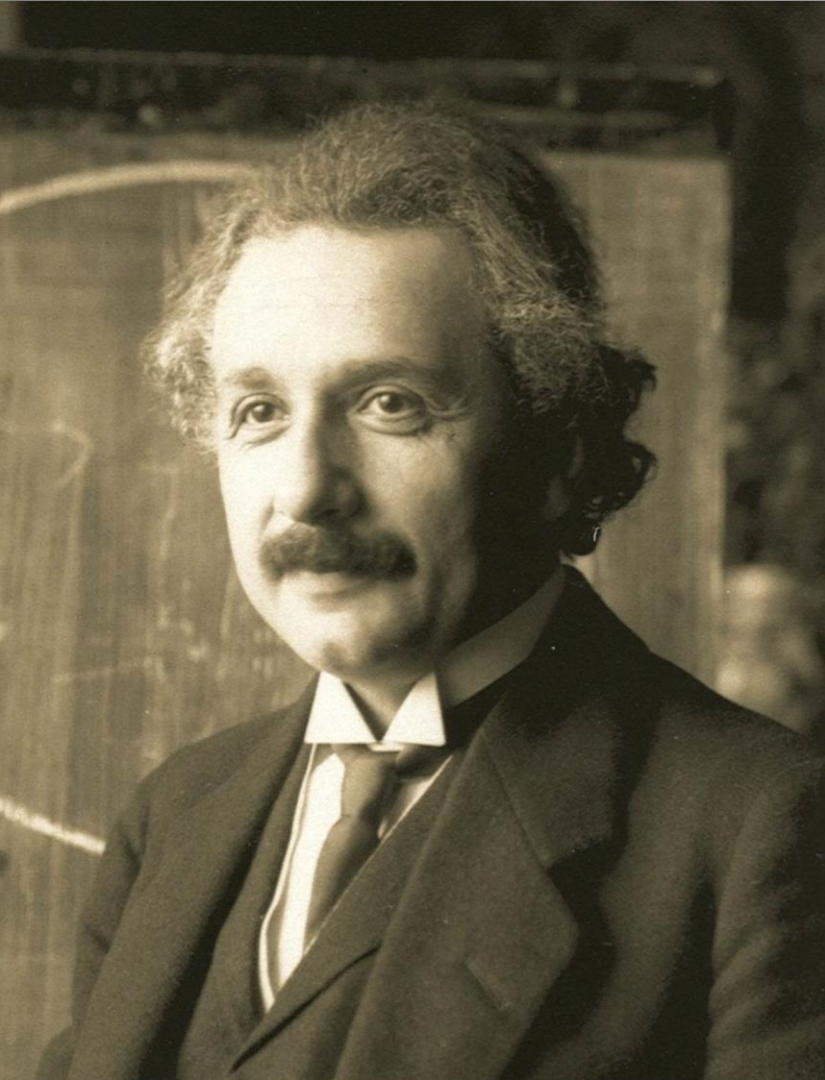"It's not the message you send...or even the message they receive...it's the message they repeat"

James Buckhouse
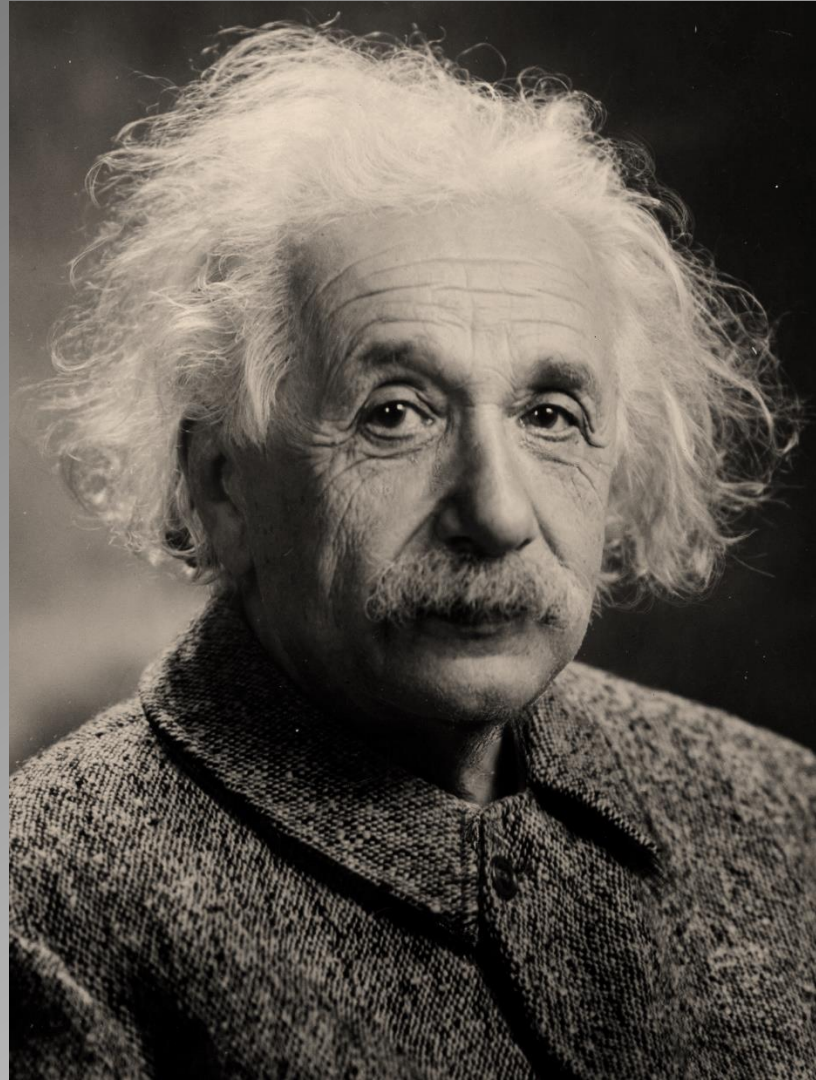
Head of content & Design Sequoia Capital

Schramm's Seven Secrets of Storytelling Success with Superlative Statistics

"Any fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius - and a lot of courage - to move in the opposite direction."

– Albert Einstein
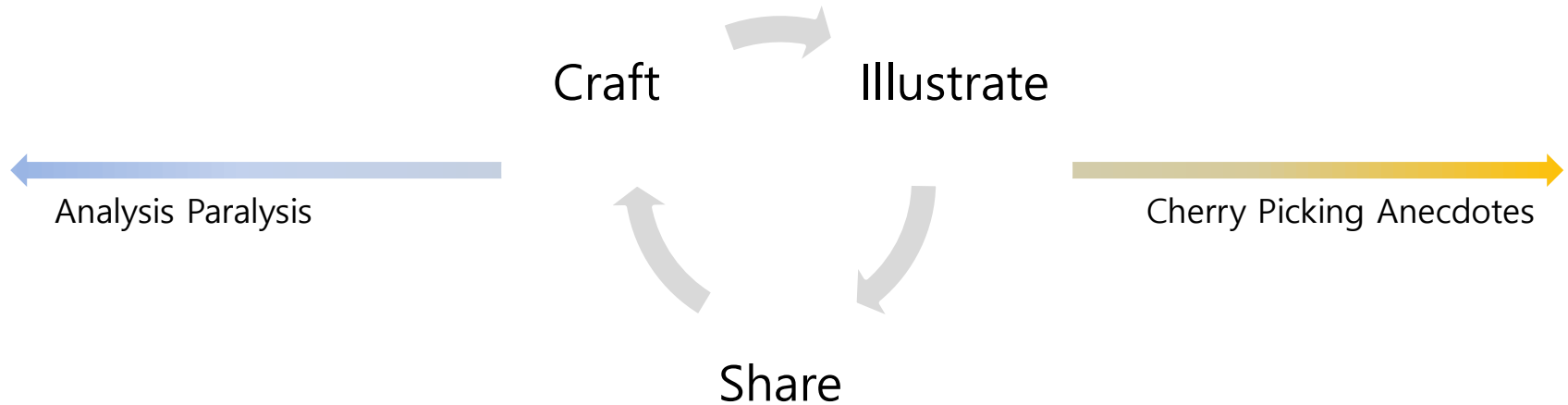
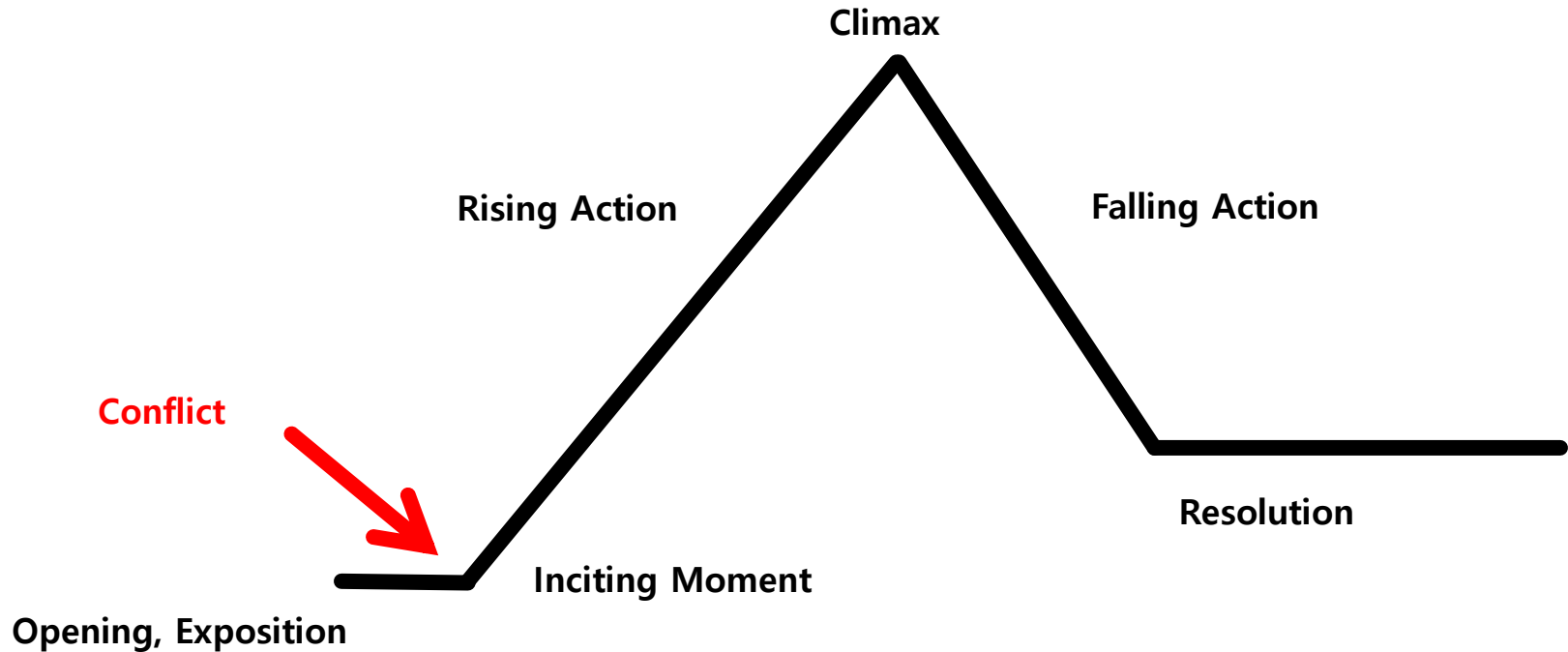"Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler."

– Albert Einstein

Graphic display represents the
Tip of your communication iceberg
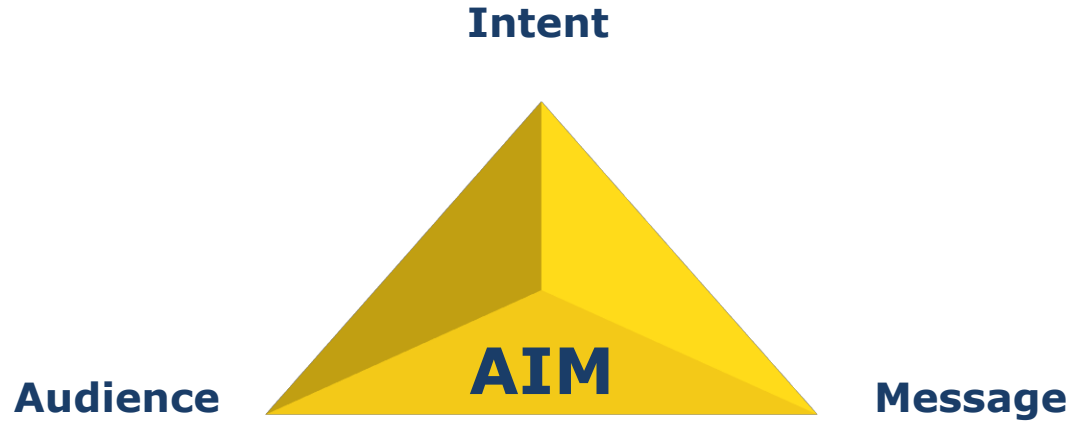
We wander this continuum of data use in stories

Craft Illustrate

Share

Analysis Paralysis

Cherry Picking Anecdotes

Consider the basic story structure

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Rising Action

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Freitag's Pyramid as referenced by Nancy Duarte

Consider these three dimensions of your strategy

Intent

AIM

Audience   Message

Source: Russell and Munter, Guide to Presentations

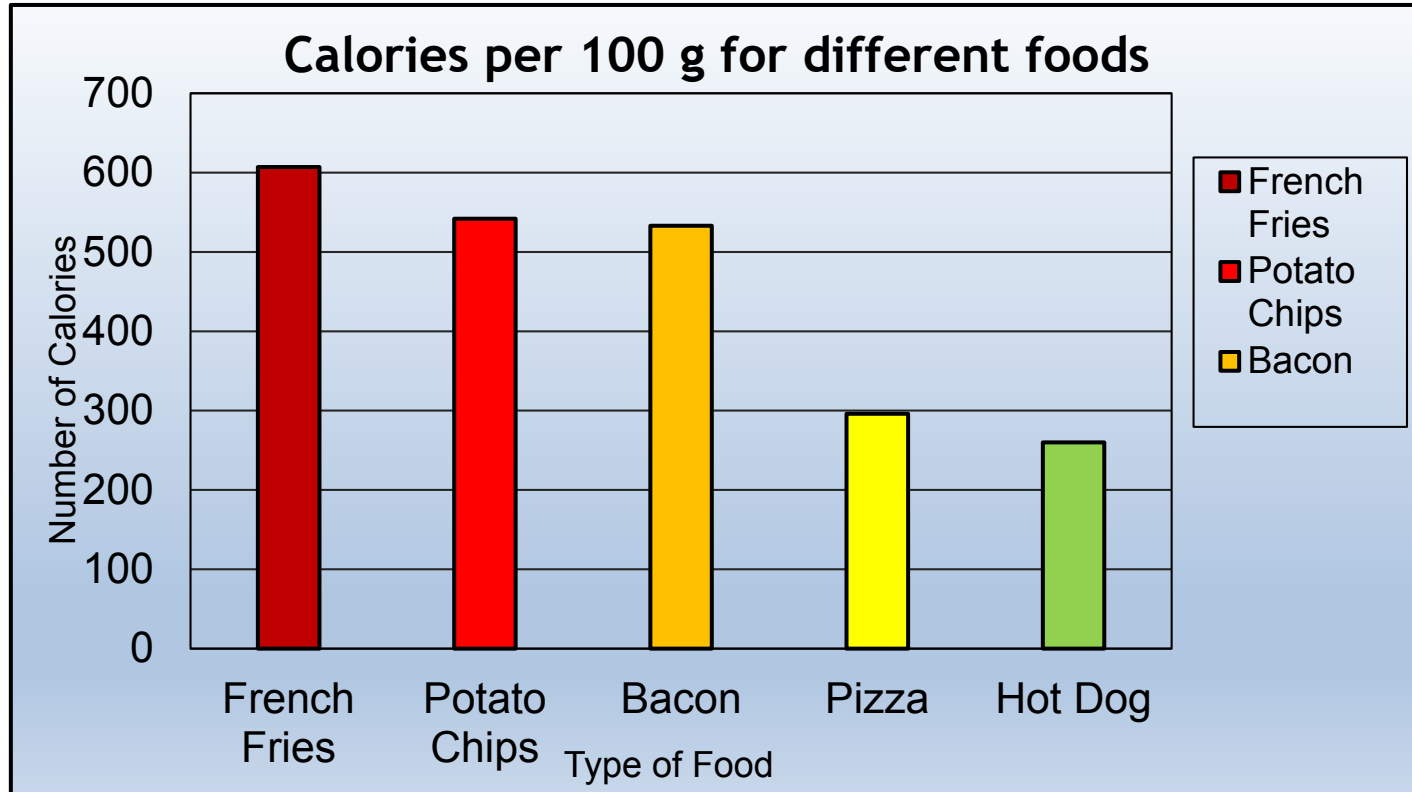# Simple steps to improve graphic illustration

Do:
- Begin w. blank landscape
- Use reveals to tell story
- Deploy color strategically
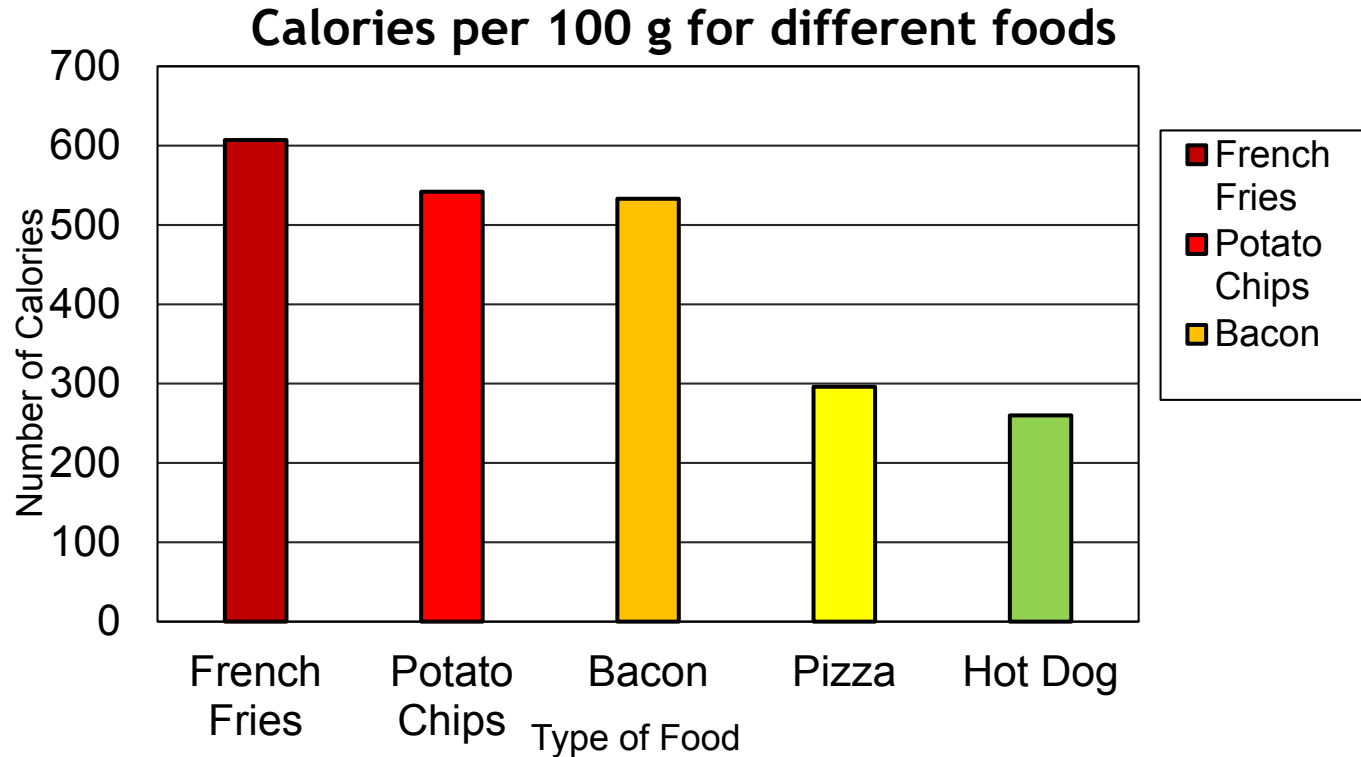- Reduce clutter & load
- Limit your use of legends

Don't:
- Complicate the simple
- Use double axis charts
- Simply use default charts
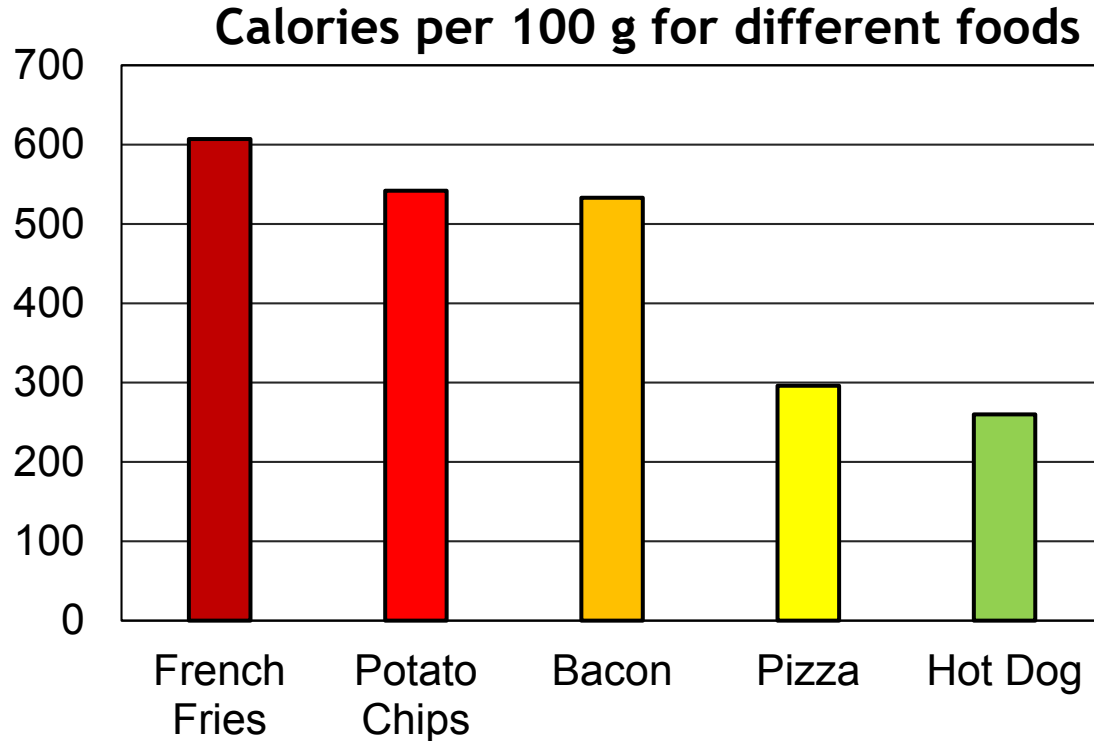- Use the food charts
- Manipulate the axis

Keep it simple

Remove the background and the border
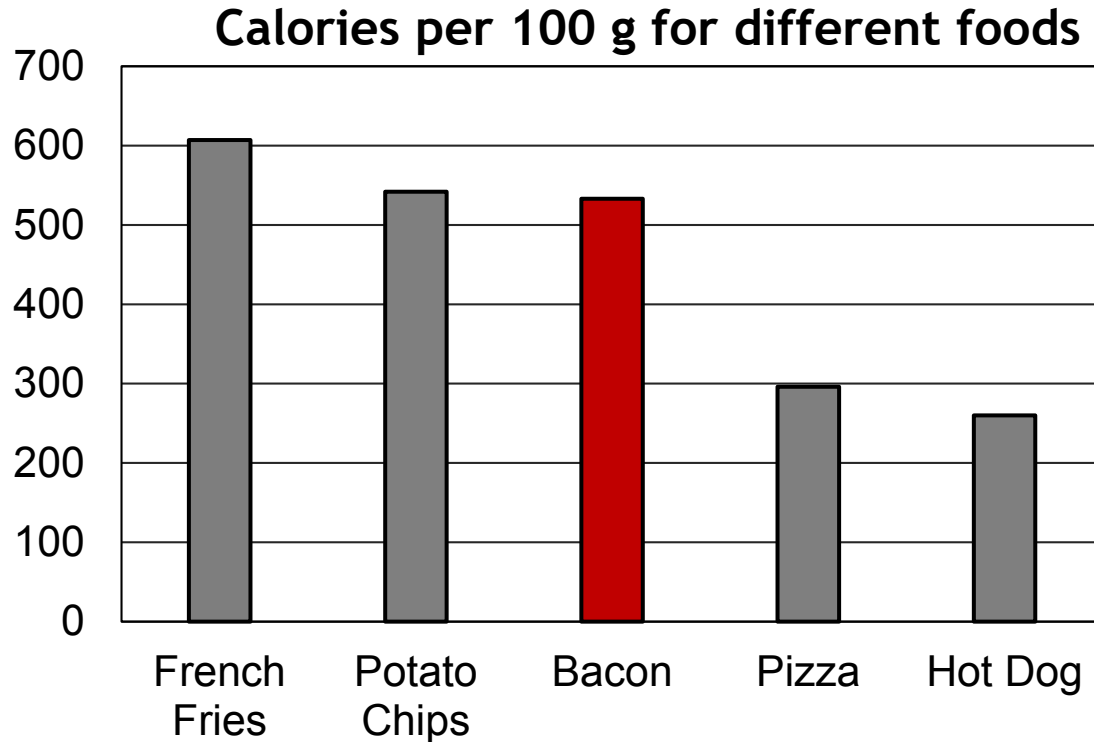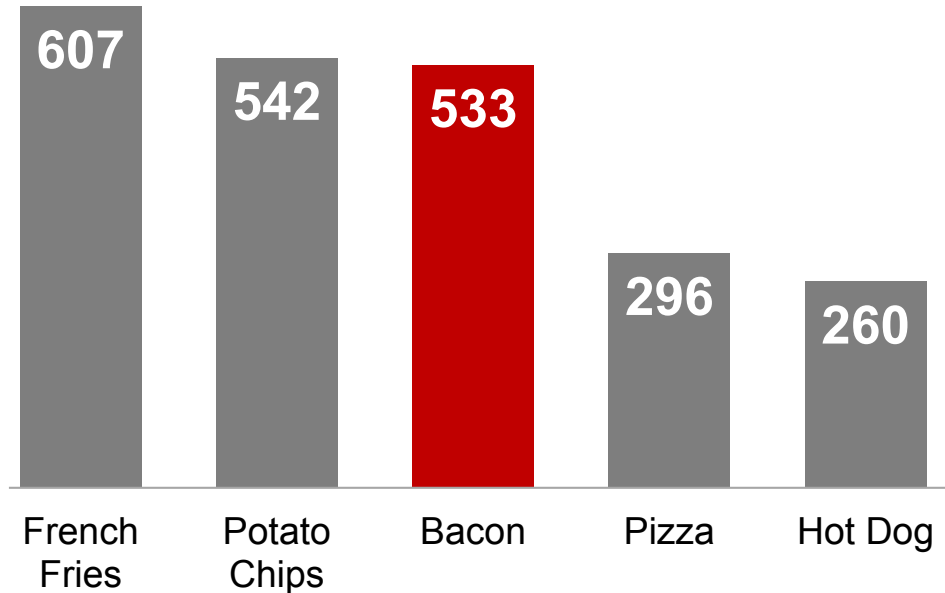
Eliminate the legend and axis labels

Calories per 100 g for different foods

Highlight the data point that matters

Calories per 100 g for different foods

Simplify even further making it bolder

Calories per 100 g

Let's Consider a Makeover

2015 Global Projects

Inferior relationship, 7
Price, 11
Scope of work, 18
Delivery timeline, 19
Inferior relartionship, 8
Outside target market, 8
Knew wouldn't win, 12
Too small, 22
Insufficient capabilities, 24
Wins, 37
Out of scope, 76
Couldn't meet RFP deadline, 56
Insufficient resources, 42
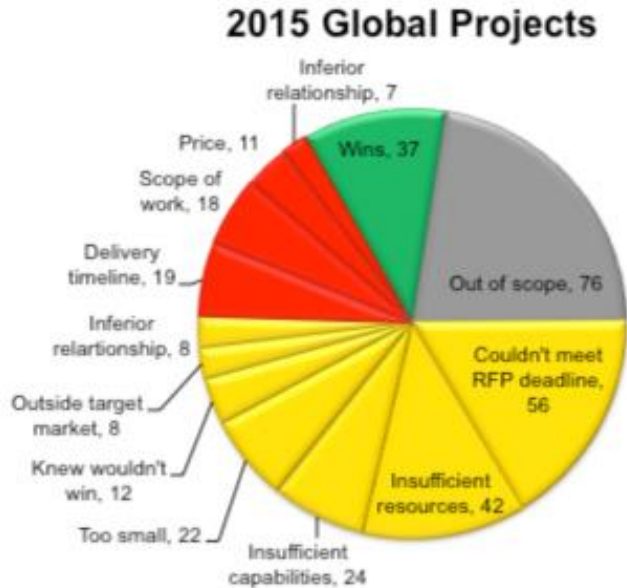
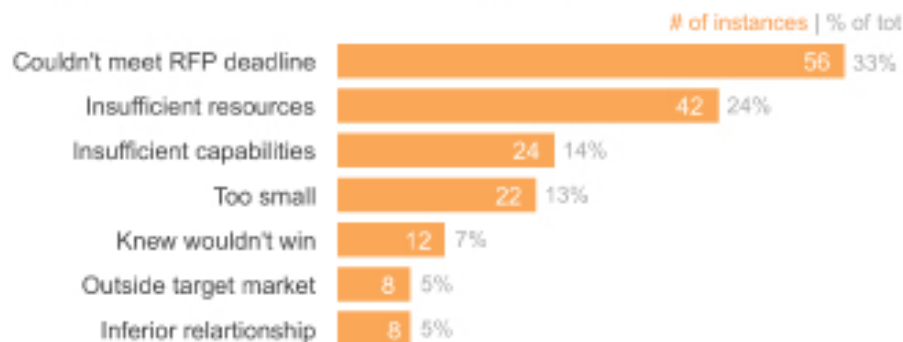| Global Competitive Summary (1/1/2015-12/31/2015)	
	Global
Total Projects	340
In Scope	264
Proposals	92
Wins	37

Timing & resource issues are top reasons we aren't submitting/winning proposals

Global project summary
January - December 2015

# of projects at given step in process

Total Projects	340
In Scope	264
Proposals	92 — No proposal submitted
Wins	37 — Lost

Why we aren't submitting proposals

of instances | % of tot

Couldn't meet RFP deadline	56	33%
Insufficient resources	42	24%
Insufficient capabilities	24	14%
Too small	22	13%
Knew wouldn't win	12	7%
Outside target market	8	5%
Inferior relartionship	8	5%

Why we aren't winning proposals

of instances | % of tot

Delivery timeline	19	35%
Scope of work	18	33%
Price	11	20%
Inferior relationship	7	13%

www.storytellingwithdata.com

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January - December 2015

of tot
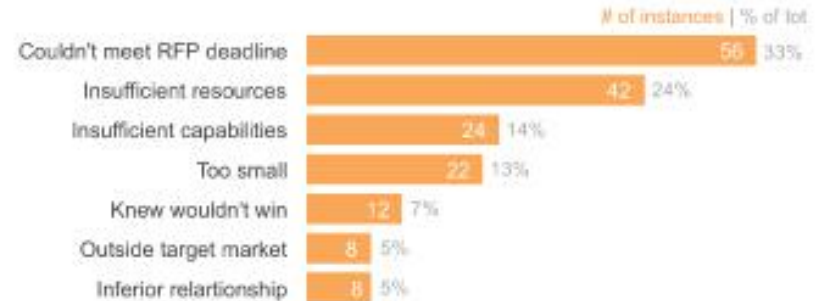
33%

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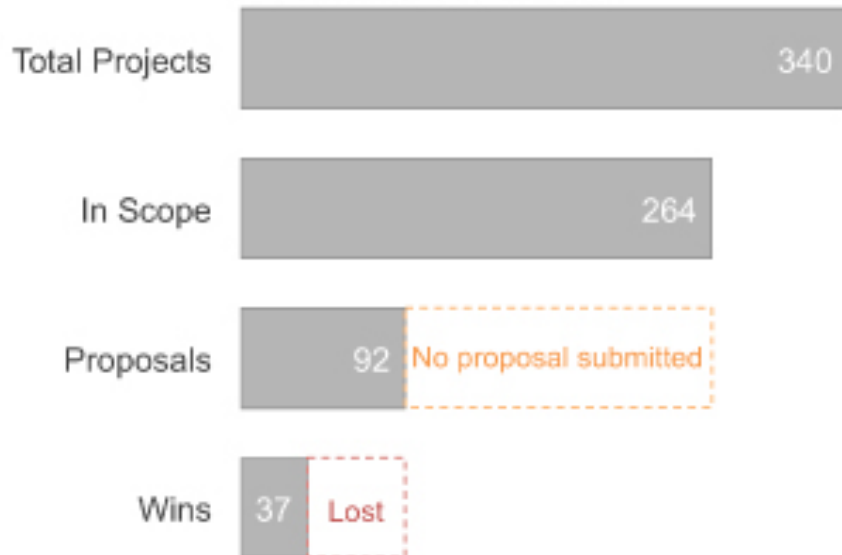
Timing and Resources Prevent Proposal Success

Global project summary
January - December 2015

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Why we **aren't submitting** proposals

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Why we **aren't winning** proposals

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- Simply use default charts
- Use the food charts
- Manipulate the axis

Practice the art....with real data

- Break your group into cross-functional teams
- Distribute identical data set to all
- Provide them an intended audience
- Instruct them "craft a compelling story from the data"
- Illustrate that story in no more than 3 slides
- Provide a "campfire setting" where they share the stories

SHARE

your story with the right
audience at the right time

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Share your story with strength and style

- Research your audience...meet them where they are

- Begin with a blank landscape

- Use a "Goldilocks" level of details

- Call the audience to take an action
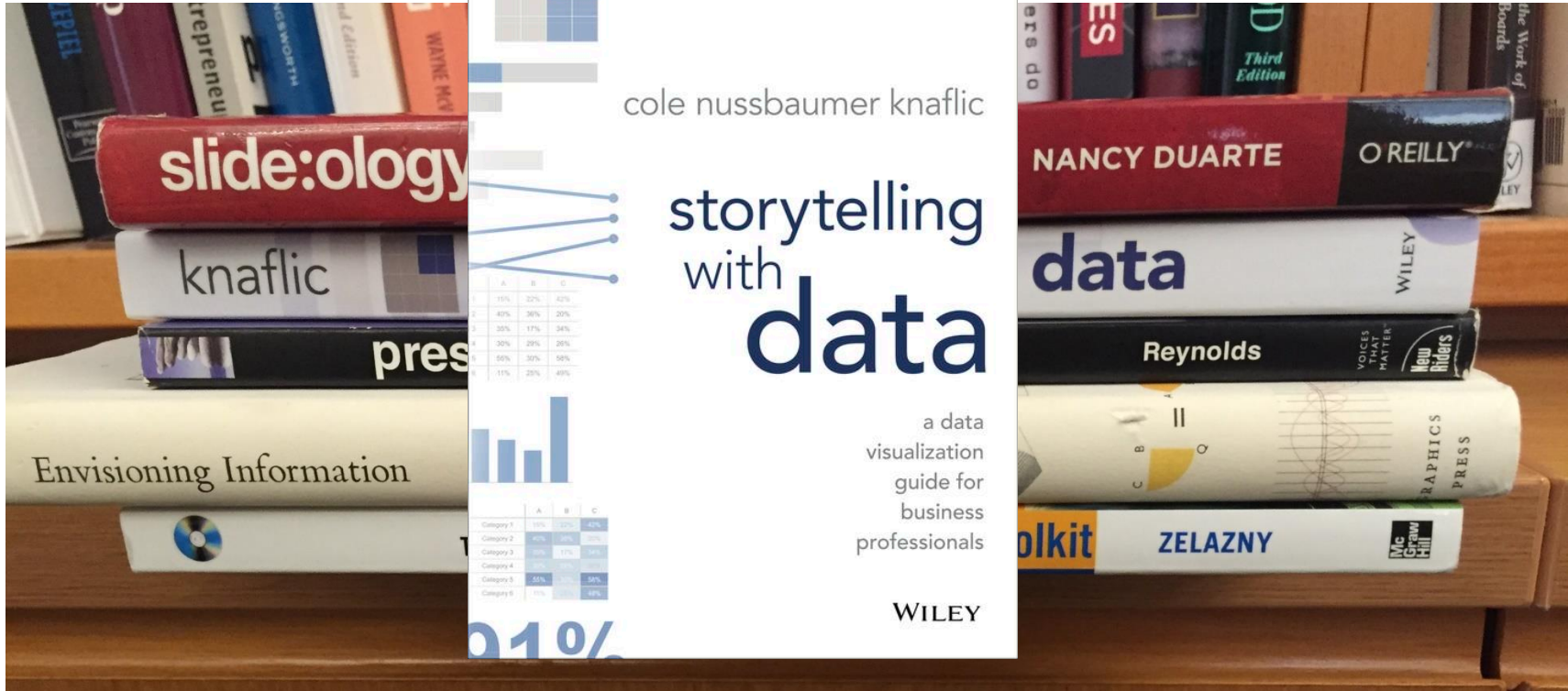
How my son persuaded me to spend $500 on sneakers

162% Jordan 3 Black Cement

134% Apple

82% S&P 500
STANDARD &POOR'S

2011   2015
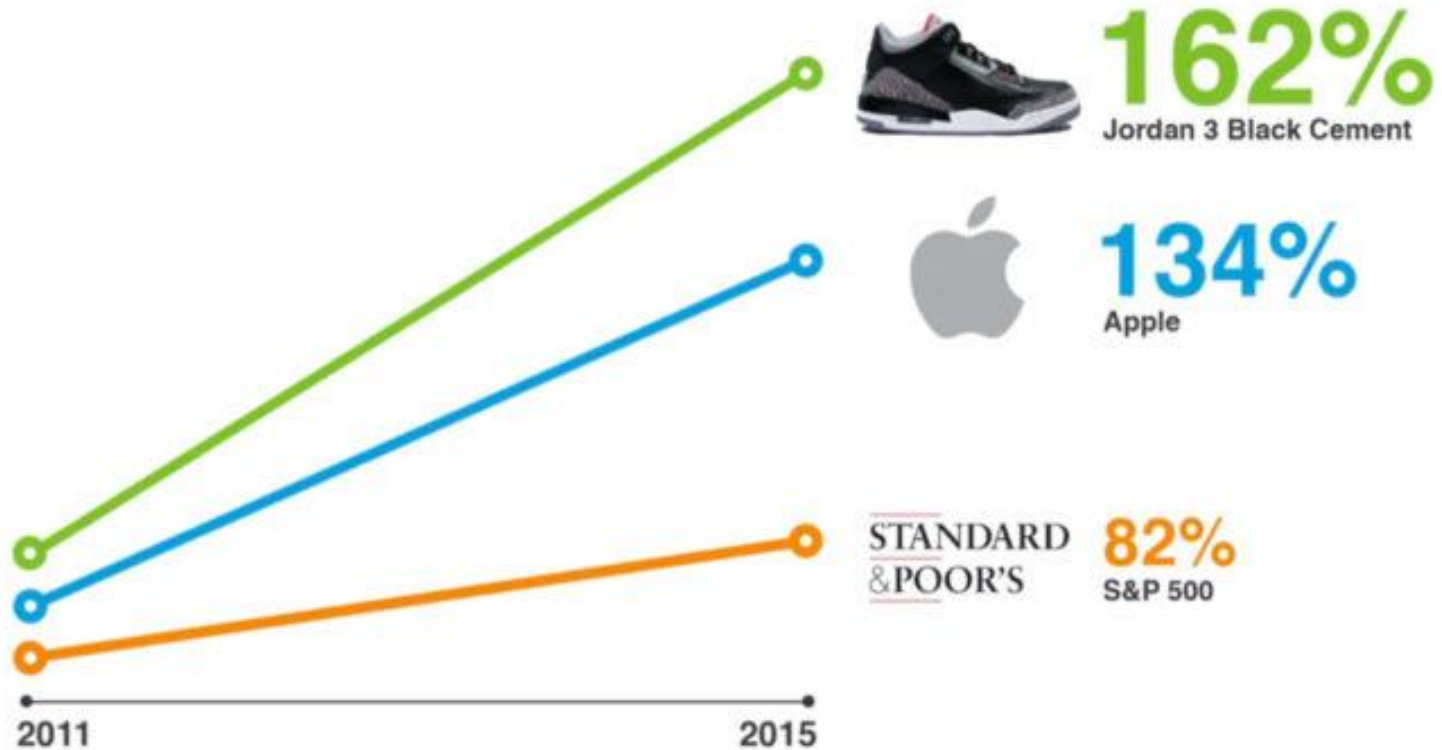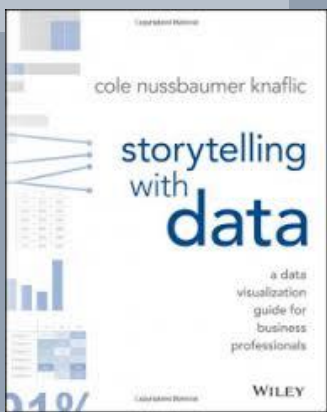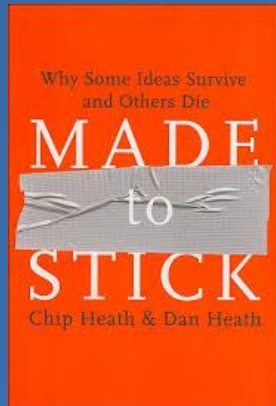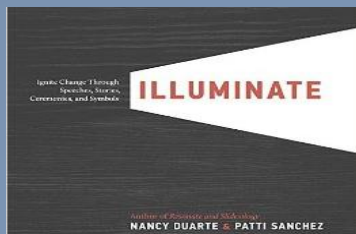
Resources to support your journey

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The Product Manager's Storytelling Bookshelf

- *Illuminate,* Duarte & Sanchez
- *Slide:ology & Resonate*, Duarte
- *The Credibility Code*, Alter
- *Storytelling with Data*, Cole Knafflic
- *Made to Stick*, Heath[2]
- *Speaking up without freaking out*, Abrahams

Just three of many blogs to suggest

- **Storytelling for product managers**
  by Shobhit Chugh on Product Management Insider
- **Why a product manager needs to be a great storyteller**
  by Alex Alesakis on prototypr.io
- **How to become a better product storyteller**
  at productplan.com

Embrace the Masters in the field

You only need a dozen ways (if that...)
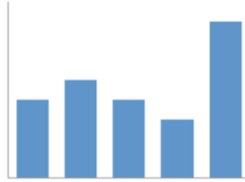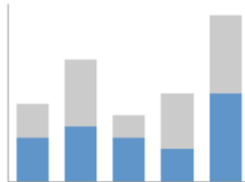
Source: Storytelling with data

Explore and Exploit these Resources

- Lowkeynotes Library
  - **http://tinyurl.com/GSBLowkeynotes**

- GSB Communication Lessons Collection
  - **http://tinyurl.com/GSBCommLessons**

Parting Thoughts…

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Email: jds2296@columbia.edu

Please keep the conversation going

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Deploy Power Verbs in Resumes, Profiles, Slides, and More...

- abandon
- absorb
- abstract
- accelerate
- access
- accrue
- acknowledge
- activate
- add to
- allow
- alter
- analyze
- apply
- appraise
- argue
- arrange
- ascend
- assemble
- assert
- assess
- associate
- assume
- attribute
- behave
- believe
- bisect
- bombard
- bond
- broaden
- calculate
- carry
- cease
- cede
- challenge
- characterize
- circulate
- clarify
- classify
- coalesce
- code
- collapse
- collect
- color
- combine
- compare

- compose
- conclude
- condense
- consider
- constrain
- construct
- construe
- contain
- continue
- contract
- contrast
- contribute
- converge
- convert
- create
- criticize
- crystallize
- curb
- debate
- decide
- deduce
- define
- delineate
- demonstrate
- depict
- deposit
- derive
- descend
- describe
- design
- designate
- detail
- deteriorate
- determine
- devise
- diagram
- differentiate
- disagree
- discharge
- discover
- discuss
- disintegrate
- disperse
- dissect
- disseminate
- distinguish

- distribute
- divide
- dominate
- dramatize
- eliminate
- elongate
- emanate
- emit
- employ
- encompass
- enrich
- estimate
- evaluate
- evolve
- examine
- exchange
- exert
- experiment
- explain
- express
- expunge
- extend
- extrapolate
- exude
- fill in
- force
- forecast
- form
- formulate
- fracture
- fuse
- generalize
- group
- guide
- halt
- hypothesize
- identify
- illuminate
- illustrate
- imply
- indicate
- infer
- influence
- inform
- insist
- inspect
- interact

- interlock
- interpret
- introduce
- invade
- inventory
- invert
- investigate
- invoke
- isolate
- join
- judge
- lag
- link
- list
- locate
- maintain
- manage
- maximize
- mean
- measure
- memorize
- migrate
- minimize
- mix
- model
- modify
- name
- narrate
- note
- observe
- obtain
- occur
- operate
- order
- organize
- orient
- originate
- overlap
- overlie
- pattern
- penetrate
- permeate
- plan
- plunge

- point out
- postulate
- practice
- precede
- predict
- prepare
- present
- preview
- produce
- propel
- propose
- prove
- provide
- question
- quicken
- radiate
- recall
- reclaim
- recognize
- reconstruct
- record
- regroup
- reiterate
- relate
- remove
- rename
- render
- reorganize
- repeat
- repel
- report
- represent
- require
- restate
- restore
- restrict
- result
- reveal
- review
- rotate
- rupture
- saturate
- scatter
- schedule
- separate
- set forth

- set up
- show
- simplify
- sinter
- sketch
- slow
- solve
- specify
- speculate
- state
- streamline
- substitute
- subtract
- suggest
- sum up
- summarize
- superimpose
- superpose
- support
- surmount
- surround
- symbolize
- synthesize
- systematize
- take apart
- terminate
- test
- think
- transect
- transfer
- translate
- transmit
- traverse
- trend
- uncover
- underlie
- use
- vary
- verify
- yield

Actions Speak Louder in *Verbs*

Have others you'd like to see included? Contact JD to help expand this list.

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http://sps.columbia.edu/career-design-lab

Great Resources for slide design

Colour Palettes

www.colourlovers.com

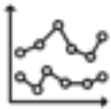www.colorpalettes.net

Fonts

www.dafont.com

www.fontsquirrel.com

www.fonts.google.com

Diagrams

www.duarte.com/diagrammer

PowerPoint>SmartArt

Icons

www.thenounproject.com *

www.flaticon.com

icons8.com/icons

Infographic Builders

www.infogr.am

www.venngage.com

www.piktochart.com

www.canva.com

www.easel.ly

databox.com

Images

www.unsplash.com

www.pixabay.com

www.pexels.com

www.flickr.com

www.freeimages.com

www.gettyimages.com *

www.istockphoto.com *

www.adobestock.com*

Inspiration

www.slideshare.net
www.duarte.com
www.powerframeworks.com *
www.presentationzen.com
www.slideforest.com *
www.youexec.com*
www.elements.envato.com*

Photoshop Alternatives

www.gimp.org
(Software to download)

www.pixlr.com
(Browser based)

* Indicates a fee for these services

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jds2296@columbia.edu
http://sps.columbia.edu/career-design-lab