

Durban's Digital Swarm event 'Storytelling' unlocks vital information on marketing

 By [Vanessa Davies](#)

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I attended my first Digital Swarm event, hosted by DigitLab at the Hardy Boys' offices in Durban North on 8 March 2017, with this year's focus on 'Storytelling'. The selection of storytellers were perfectly selected to provide a balanced insight into storytelling and the role it plays in marketing broadly, and digital marketing in particular.

Agency unpacks Trojan horse

Tomfoolery co-founder, David Leslie, was the first speaker. His story was mirrored in his personality, conveying authenticity and honesty from start to finish.

Leslie described storytelling in a world gone mad (the digital world that is) as a Trojan horse. We want to get in behind the barriers our audience erect around themselves to keep from being sold to. To do so, we offer them a great story. They trustingly wheel it in until it is safely locked within the very boundaries they erected to keep us out. Then, when no one is looking, we sneak in our brand message and hope like crazy to achieve our objectives.

To achieve those objectives, Leslie laid out what he and the Tomfoolery team have identified as the most important facets of a good story.



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Good storytelling in a digital world should be:

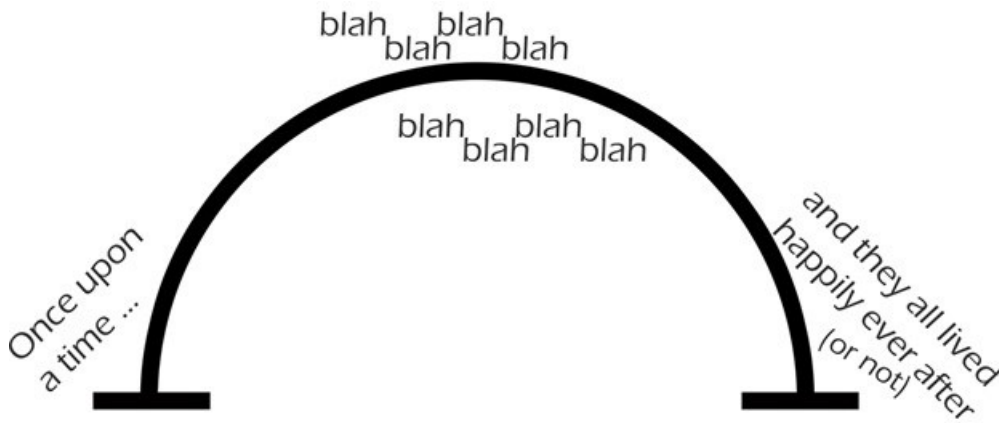
- Disruptive – As CH Spurgeon explained, “Their attention must be gained, or nothing can be done with them: and it must be retained, or we may go on word-spinning, but no good will come of it.”
- In a world that is ever changing, we need to be creating the kind of content that gets people's attention – and keeps it.
- Interesting – It should be new, innovative and interesting and it needs to be relevant to the audience we are trying to engage.
- Human – Humans are the most interesting content on earth. Manifold beings, they bring an infinite variety to everything they do. No two are alike and all are engaging when they are simply being real. Often, real life is funnier than fiction could ever be. Which brings us to the next thing storytelling needs to be:
- Honest – Just be real. Leslie described the arc of Reuters' success, which started with the founder's realisation that information was a commodity that could be bought and sold for profit. In the digital age, information is no longer a commodity. The new commodity of the modern age is authenticity – and it is increasingly rare as we try to measure and optimise every engagement, rather than creating genuine connections with real human beings.
- Craft – the telling of a good story is a craft in itself. Further, great stories include an element of craft: people being makers and creating change in their world.
- Great at using layers – layers refer to the figurative layers of the story itself, as it builds diverse narratives into a meaningful outcome. In addition, they can include media layers, depending on the platform on which they are presented. In the case of Tomfoolery, those layers include story, sound, score, texture, location, and more – all of

which build together to grab and hold the audience's attention, and keep it until the story's climax.

- Narratively rich – This is often the area people battle with most. Telling a story is taking your listeners on a journey.

“ *Storytelling in the digital world, brought to you by David from [@Tomfoolery_TV](#) #DigitalSwarm*
[pic.twitter.com/jBwjFa8low](#)— The Hardy Boys (@THB_DBN) [March 8, 2017](#) ”

The narrative, in Leslie's view, is the most important part of the story. To help us get it right, he generously shared a lesson he had learned from South African filmmaker Justin Bonello, called the Bonello curve.



Bonell Curve

Essentially, a story starts with context. It builds with details and it needs to finish with a strong take away – a solid close. Whenever we are telling any kind of story – in any format – these pillars need to be created before the story can begin.

To demonstrate the power of combining these elements, David shared these powerful short videos: [Bucket Boards](#) and [Hitched Trailer](#). (I am definitely keeping an eye out for this series when it's aired.)

Recommended references were [Simon Senek on Millennials](#) and [Arianna Huffington - Thrive](#).

Read more by Davies on the [Jellyfish blog](#).

ABOUT VANESSA DAVIES

I am an SEO and content marketing manager at Jellyfish's SA office. Words are my first love, and copywriting is what I live for. Search engine optimisation makes it easier to decide what to write, and who to write it for.

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