Storytelling Canvas
Creating remarkable narratives

Section A:
Story and the Storytelling Canvas

Stories are the oldest means of communication and are part of our daily lives. Oral communication, a form of storytelling, is the most effective tool to convince an audience. There is no better way to connect with each other than through a story.

Through its simplicity, **storytelling** enables communicating the essence of a very complex idea. Great storytellers have been using the same technique to deliver their message whether in theatre, speeches, or presentations.

With the right storytelling framework, we can communicate any outcome. We can build a story bank of success stories, sell a project more effectively, or simply use it as a personal tool to become a more effective communicator. This is why ITU has developed the following storytelling framework - the **storytelling canvas**.

IDEA What? Why? When? Who? Where? How?

GOALS 3 Goals

COMMON GROUND
Who is your audience?
What interests do you share?

SUPPORT STORIES

PROBLEMS

1.

2.

3.

SOLUTIONS

1.

2.

3.

DESTINATION
Your promise to the audience

PROOF
Social facts and scientific evidences to support your statements

CALL TO ACTION

STRUCTURE Organize pillars by creating contrast. "Ups & Downs"
* Developed on a basis of Story Telling Structure by Nancy Duarte

The storytelling canvas

The storytelling canvas helps you achieve the following:

• Transform very complex ideas into simple ones,
• Build a story bank of success stories,
• Sell a project effectively, and
• Become a better empathic communicator.

Through this canvas, you can achieve a high level of engagement with your audience because they can emotionally relate to your message.

When telling a story, there are indispensable building blocks to take into account. The storytelling canvas presents 8 pillars. The following gives a short descriptive of the various pillars of this canvas.

Idea:

The idea needs to be a simple short explanation of what you want to achieve. It briefly touches on **why, when, where and how** you want to achieve it. This explanation should be **limited to no more than 50 words**.

Remember to use simple and shared language. An analogy commonly used is to word it in a way that can be explained to a 3 year old.

Goals:

Identify the top **3 goals** you aim for when your idea is realized.

Support stories:

Support narratives are needed to highlight the problems as well as the solutions that will lead to achieve the desired goals of a story.

Problems are the challenges that you face while trying to reach your goal.

Solutions are opportunities you leverage to address those challenges.

Common ground:

This pillar helps you create a sense of relatability with the audience by identifying common interests. Without understanding the feelings of your audience, their benefits as well as their disadvantages, you may not be able to move them to your new idea. They will hold back as they cannot connect to your message.

Proof:

A proof can range from social facts to scientific evidence.

They should portray the challenges and opportunities you previously identified, as well as good practices to make your story stronger.

They provide evidence to strengthen the depth of your narrative. Social and scientific facts help reinforce the core message of your story because they make it easier for listeners to trust your narrative.

Destination:

The destination is your promise to the audience. It gives you a picture of what the future will look like when your idea is realized. It is the new bliss you promise your audience.

Call to Action:

Call to Action is your one sentence call to action for your audience to embrace your idea and join you in the transformation journey.

Structure:

Structure helps you organize outcomes for the 7 previous pillars to create contrast and develop a meaningful storyline.

Stories have "ups and downs" that create required contrast and transport the audience on a journey.

Through contrasting stories leading from a current state (what is narrative without the idea), to future state (what could be the narrative with the idea), your audience can embrace and be moved by your idea.

What could be   What could be   What could be   New bliss (new norm)

What is   What is   What is   What is
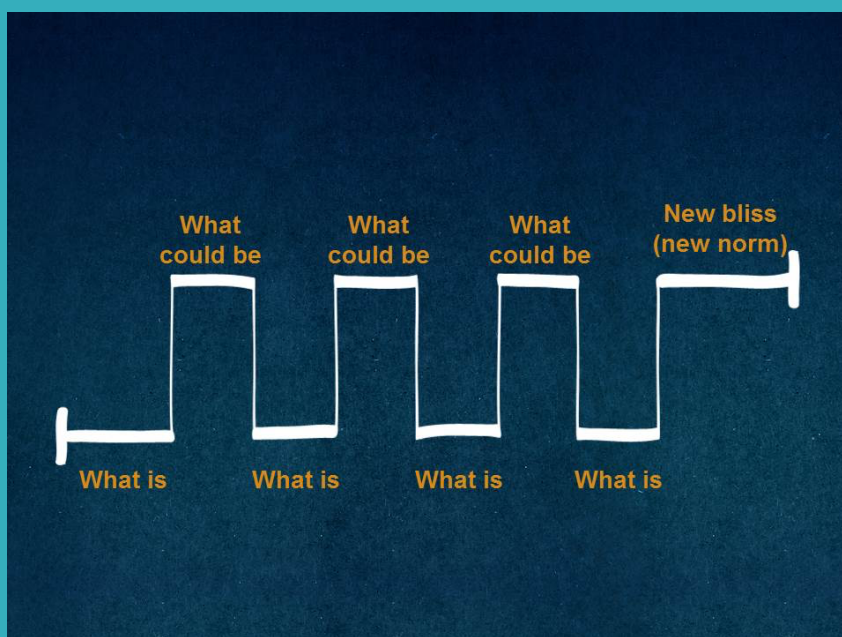
Nancy Duarte, a leading communication author, has pioneered a storytelling structure. This structure has been adapted to fit the scope of ITU's Storytelling Canvas.

Story Telling Structure by Nancy Duarte

Section B:
How to use the Storytelling Framework

Time

Up to 2 hours

What you will need

☐ Flip charts or paper to draw the canvas

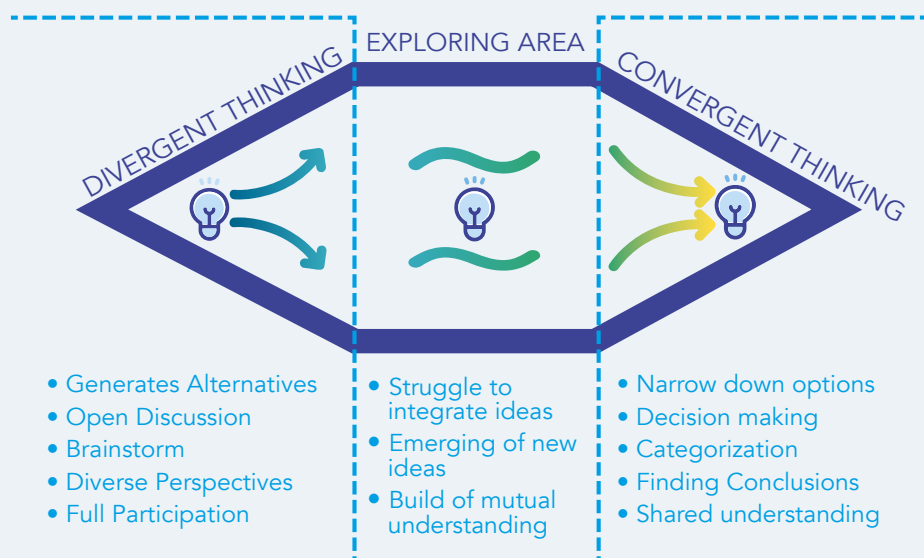☐ Sticky notes (yellow, blue, red and green)

☐ Markers

Steps

1   Identify a story you want to tell your audience

Tip 1 – Divergent and Convergent Thinking

It is recommended to use divergent and convergent thinking to gather the necessary information to identify your story. The thinking mode is the way the participants are encouraged to reflect throughout the journey. Divergent thinking is similar to 'brainstorming', exploring as many ideas as possible without shutting them down. Convergent thinking is when thinking is narrowed down to a few answers. Use one idea per sticky note in brainstorming sessions.

DIVERGENT THINKING

EXPLORING AREA

CONVERGENT THINKING

- Generates Alternatives
- Open Discussion
- Brainstorm
- Diverse Perspectives
- Full Participation

- Struggle to integrate ideas
- Emerging of new ideas
- Build of mutual understanding

- Narrow down options
- Decision making
- Categorization
- Finding Conclusions
- Shared understanding

**2** Fill in the first part of the canvas according to the following color code:

yellow sticky notes for Proof and Common Ground pillars.
blue sticky notes for Idea, Destination and Call to Action pillars.
red sticky notes for Problems.
green sticky notes for Solutions.

1

IDEA What? Why? When? Who? Where? How?	**GOALS** 3 Goals

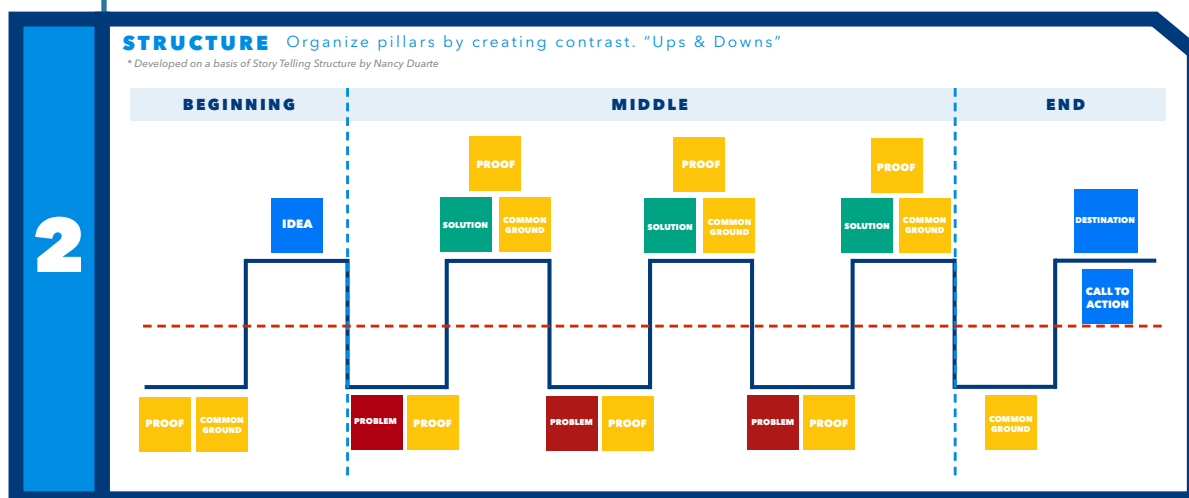| **COMMON GROUND** Who is your audience? What interests do you share?	**SUPPORT STORIES**		**DESTINATION** Your promise to the audience
	PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS	
	1.	1.	
PROOF Social facts and scientific evidences to support your statements	2.	2.	**CALL TO ACTION**
	3.	3.	

💡 **Tip 2 – Large group structure and knowledge wall**

Brainstorming is not effective if the group size is more than 7 people, participants need to be divided into smaller groups. It is recommended to use a knowledge wall, composed of one flip chart for each pillar after an initial brainstorming by each group on the canvas.

IDEA	GOALS	COMMON GROUND	PROOF	SUPPORT STORIES	DESTINATION	CALL TO ACTION
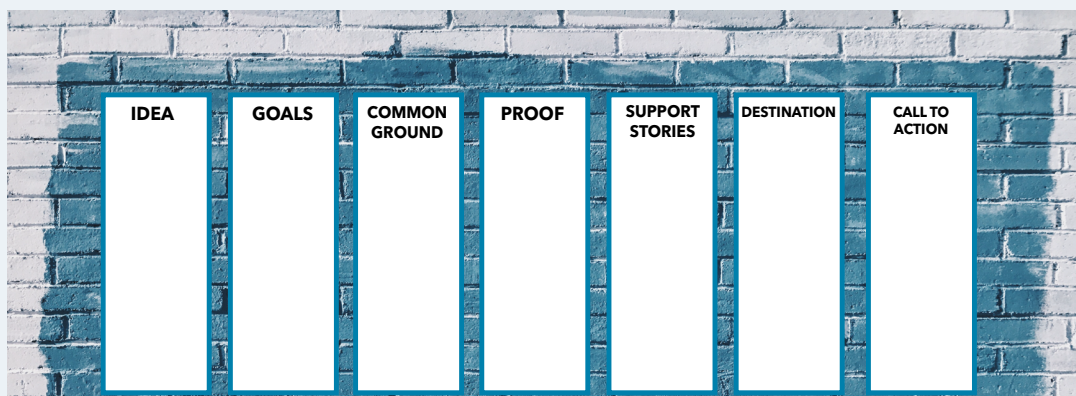
3 Once you have all the information in **section 1**, transfer all the elements to fill in **section 2** of the canvas. Below is an example of how your story structure could look like.

2

STRUCTURE Organize pillars by creating contrast. "Ups & Downs"
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Tip 3 – **Your perfect structure**

An impactful story has a logical structure: **a beginning, a middle** and **an end** with clear transitions from the beginning to the middle and from the middle to the end.

The middle of your story consists of stages. Each stage is composed of support stories (problem & solution) and relevant proof and common ground.

It is not mandatory to have **Proof** and **Common Ground** for each Problem and for each Solution, however, for a trustworthy and engaging story, it is recommended to support each statement by a social or scientific fact and to introduce common interests.

Tip 4 – **Throughline**

It is critical to make sure that all components of your story structure are aligned with what you are trying to say in your story, leading seamlessly the reader from the idea to the destination.

Outcome

Upon completion of this exercise, you will have a structure of your storyline successfully developed.

You can then use that structure as a base for further composing the narratives for your story, such as written reports, presentations, videos, etc.

Key takeaways

• Well-structured stories help you convey complex ideas into simple narratives.
• They will help you sell a project more effectively.
• The storytelling canvas helps you to establish an emotional connection with your audience and let them relate to your message in a more meaningful way.