00:00:00:01 - 00:00:07:05
Angus Fletcher
If you're a consumer, really what you want from a company is them to tell you a story about your future that is true and possible.

00:00:07:10 - 00:00:15:24
Shane Meeker,
Brands and businesses need to remember they're the mentor and the hero of the story is your consumer. It's your audience. It's who you're designing it for.

00:00:15:26 - 00:00:31:19
Narrator
Welcome to career EQ, a resource for aspiring young professionals navigating the job search process and the early part of their careers. Your host is Jon Quinn, senior lecturer of marketing at the Fisher College of Business at the Ohio State University.

00:00:31:22 - 00:00:52:22
Jon Quinn
Welcome back to Career EQ. Today we have a very special episode. We're going to talk about storytelling in the context of the business world. So what can movies and great American novel tell us about how to tell a story in the workplace? Well, we're going to find out from two experts. We have Shane Meeker from Procter and Gamble, and we also have Angus Fletcher from the Ohio State University.

00:00:52:28 - 00:00:54:20
Jon Quinn
Welcome to Career EQ.

00:00:54:22 - 00:01:09:08
Shane Meeker,
Hi there. My name is Shane Meeker, and I teach storytelling all around the world to companies everywhere. And because I love movies, I'm also the Procter and Gamble Company historian and corporate storyteller.

00:01:09:10 - 00:01:26:26
Angus Fletcher
And my name is Angus Fletcher. I'm a professor at Ohio State in story science. I work at, Project Narrative, which is the world's leading academic institute for the study of story. And my expertise is how stories work in the brain. So my background's in neurophysiology, and I'm interested not just in how the brain processes story, but how it invents story.

00:01:26:29 - 00:01:39:05
Jon Quinn
Very cool. All right, well, welcome to career EQ, Shane and Angus. Shane and Angus, it sounds like you guys should be in, like, an 80s

Australian heavy metal band. So, Shane, you probably like the sound of that, don't you?

00:01:39:07 - 00:01:40:27
Shane Meeker,
I do, I do.

00:01:40:29 - 00:01:50:23
Jon Quinn
So, Angus, help us kick us off on this topic. One of your areas of expertise is story engineering. What is story engineering and how do you first get interested in it?

00:01:50:25 - 00:02:13:05
Angus Fletcher
So I got interested in story engineering about 15 years ago when I was, teaching at Stanford. And, I was lucky enough to start working with a bunch of people at Pixar, and I was interested in how it was that Pixar was developing these really radical new stories that were incredibly popular, because I thought to myself, if you can create a new story and have it work, that's the secret to everything.

00:02:13:07 - 00:02:35:27
Angus Fletcher
So I was lucky enough to go inside, Pixar a little bit, talk to some people. And of course, it's an engineering company. It's, it wasn't founded by Steve Jobs. It was essentially taken over by him. And he had this method, which you could say is essentially a form of UX or reverse engineering for how you generate stories by working backwards from the effect you're trying to create or the consumer you're trying to reach.

00:02:35:29 - 00:02:48:24
Angus Fletcher
And so that's that's what I mean when I talk about story engineering, I'm really interested in the way that you see yourself. What am I trying to get the story to do? And then you work backwards and you create a new original structure to achieve that effect.

00:02:48:26 - 00:03:08:02
Jon Quinn
Very interesting. Yeah. And that starting from the end and kind of working backward, I think that's probably going to come back in our conversation here a little bit later. Shane, I mentioned earlier that, I wouldn't consider myself a big movie buff, but I know for certain that you are, what draws you to movies and how have you leveraged this in your career at Procter and Gamble?

00:03:08:04 - 00:03:25:11
Shane Meeker,

Yeah. You know, it's it's a great question. I mean, movies for me start going all the way back to 1977. Star Wars, when I actually went to theaters and was able to see that. And I started drawing because of movies, I became an industrial designer where I got my degree, by the way, at the Ohio State University.

00:03:25:11 - 00:03:49:22
Shane Meeker,
And, also because of movies, I got to also do, a project with Industrial Light Magic, which was, George Lucas's company at the time. And work on the Star Wars rerelease is actually back in 97. So it's like Star Wars got me drawing. And then, also got to to work on another thing I worked on got used, by the way, but I can still say worked on it and then I came to PG, where I worked in our design function.

00:03:49:22 - 00:04:10:11
Shane Meeker,
But, I was always convinced I could take my love of film and storytelling and, and use it somehow in my day to day. And, I eventually proposed to one of my bosses that I teach storytelling in the on the side. I've been taking classes out in Hollywood, along with taking classes in many other cities. And she said, well, I guess, yeah, start teaching it.

00:04:10:11 - 00:04:29:23
Shane Meeker,
I started teaching it, you know, the R&D and then the marketing and then the sales and then the finance and then the design and all the different functions I've been doing ever since. And, things is really cool, too, as long as they take vacation. They let me teach externally, and I've taught at Disney and Fedex and Nike and companies like that, all around the world, because everyone's got great stories to tell.

00:04:29:23 - 00:04:40:26
Shane Meeker,
And quite frankly, I am a huge believer that, all business problems can be solved with what works. And Star Wars, which is a great, compelling, interesting, engaging and informative story.

00:04:40:29 - 00:04:52:12
Jon Quinn
So I guess, what is one of your favorite movies or maybe novels, and how does it illustrate or maybe exemplify good storytelling and what can it teach us about storytelling in the business world context?

00:04:52:15 - 00:05:14:18
Angus Fletcher
So one of my favorite movies is up by Pixar, and that's actually the

movie that I learned how to reverse engineer on. So maybe it's a good example for me to talk through. So what is the point of up? Well, the point of up is up. The point of up is to take you up. And they created a script, a very powerful script, which is all about lifting up an old man in a balloon house and taking him up.

00:05:14:20 - 00:05:33:02
Angus Fletcher
And they showed an early version of the script to people, and people found it incredibly boring. They said, why should I care about this old man? I don't want to go up. And so they sat down. And this is what you do with reverse engineering. And you say, well, if I want to take people up, what? I have to start them, what I have to do is I have to start them down.

00:05:33:04 - 00:05:58:01
Angus Fletcher
And actually the the key to making a movie like up work is I have to figure out how to make the beginning as low as possible. So I'm not going to spoil the beginning of up for anyone. But if you haven't seen the beginning of up For anyone, I just want to say that it's a masterpiece in tragedy, and it is one of the the, the sort of most powerful short pieces that will make you cry in about 4 or 5 minutes.

00:05:58:01 - 00:06:16:04
Angus Fletcher
And so, oh, I know I did. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so yeah. And so basically, that's a great example of how you can have an incredible story. But it doesn't work with an audience. And all you have to do is basically take that one more step backwards to connect with where you're where your audience is. Yeah.

00:06:16:06 - 00:06:20:07
Jon Quinn
Shane, what about you? What about like, what are your favorite movies that we could.

00:06:20:07 - 00:06:42:12
Shane Meeker,
Tell our favorite movies? My gosh, that's a quite a list, by the way. I, you know, I, I would even look at it, a bit broader than a singular film and say to me, all story structures kind of have a very similar layout and understanding the building blocks behind and become really important. For example, pretty much the summation of every story is a hero must go through an obstacle to get to a treasure.

00:06:42:14 - 00:07:06:27
Shane Meeker,
Now, clearly there's lots of details you can sprinkle about and change your orders. You can do all kinds of things, but you you've got to

have a source of empathy somewhere in there, which is the hero, which is the characters you've got to have them want something because desires what drives stories forward. It drives hero forward. And then you've got to have some kind of antagonistic force, because that's what challenges the hero and makes them want to grow and change, which we then want to follow them doing.

00:07:07:00 – 00:07:27:15
Shane Meeker,
And all of my favorite films, if you think about it, you can just jump right in the characters. I mean, I grew up on a farm in Ohio, and I could relate to Luke Skywalker when I was a kid. I mean, he was on a farm, too. And beginning of that, granted, we didn't, you know, farm moisture like he did on tattooing, but that still didn't make him any less relatable to me and allowed me to jump into the narrative.

00:07:27:15 – 00:07:45:19
Shane Meeker,
So, up the same way. I think that's a great example that Angus brought up. That's a film that, you jump right into very, very quickly. You feel with the character and you want to see them achieve their goal, which is eventually realizing that you're never too old to live out your dreams.

00:07:45:22 – 00:08:08:14
Jon Quinn
Yeah. And, you know, it was mentioned when we talked about up. I mean, most men think about Bambi. You know, Bambi starts with a horrible tragedy also. Yes, yes. So some people may have the perception that in the business world, we need to stick just the facts and data. Please explain to me, what do we mean by storytelling in the business environment and why that's important.

00:08:08:17 – 00:08:10:16
Jon Quinn
And you, you want to start us off on that?

00:08:10:19 – 00:08:28:09
Angus Fletcher
Well, sure. I'm not a business person. I should just be honest about that. So my opinion should be taken with a grain of salt. But, it's been it's my experience that humans think in story. Humans don't think in data. And you can experience this in your own life. If I give you a statistic about how many people are killed in a particular war, it won't resonate with you that much.

00:08:28:15 – 00:08:50:16
Angus Fletcher
But if you look at the face of one child has been displaced by that war, you'll have an immediate response to it. And the thing about, the

way that stories work in general is they create a human to human connection where we build a sense of trust and a sense that we know that person. So the term we often use is authenticity, a sense that we're we're getting real access to that person's interiority.

00:08:50:18 - 00:09:05:27
Angus Fletcher
And so the one thing that I always find hardest with, with businesses, but in the end, I think it's the most effective, is forcing them to be honest. Business people hate to be honest about their companies. They always want to spin things. You know, they always want to say, how can I frame this story in the most effective way?

00:09:05:27 - 00:09:25:11
Angus Fletcher
How can I how can I, you know, in some way make customers believe that I'm perfect? And if they embrace my product, their lives will be perfect, too. And of course, that's nonsense. No product is going to make you perfect and no company is perfect. So the key always is to find that story that makes the person telling it a little bit uncomfortable.

00:09:25:11 - 00:09:48:14
Angus Fletcher
So the story that they don't want to share, because that's actually what the audience wants to hear. And encouraging companies to have real vulnerability to start to open themselves up. Not pseudo vulnerability, but real vulnerability where they start to feel a little bit out of their comfort zone, and then figuring out how they can explain to the audience where that uncomfortable moment came from so the audience can appreciate it.

00:09:48:16 - 00:10:05:09
Angus Fletcher
That's where you get real empathy. It comes from candor, comes from honesty. And I would say that audiences today are more savvy than ever and more able to see when there is kind of fraudulent marketing happening. And that's why, as a business, if you really want to connect with people, you do have to be willing to make yourself a little bit uncomfortable.

00:10:05:09 - 00:10:26:27
Jon Quinn
Yeah. Shane, let's take that idea. And like, maybe we could talk about a couple different examples of storytelling in a business sense, like what are some different applications that you coach some of your folks either whether you're working as a consultant, they're working internally with Procter and Gamble. What are some of the context in which you're coaching them and how to use storytelling?

00:10:27:00 - 00:10:56:18
Shane Meeker,
Well, I mean, data and facts, by the way. I totally agree with everything Angus said. And data and facts. You know, I always go back to a quote Brant Dikes had at Forbes, which was people hear statistics, but they feel stories and and so I think data and facts can be an incredibly powerful part of a narrative if you don't lose the emotion behind it too often, like he was saying, you know, there's it's some giant numbers, something which if I can't pull it down to individual relatability, it makes it very difficult for me to say, so why should I care about that?

00:10:56:19 - 00:11:13:10
Shane Meeker,
Why should I care about that? So yeah, I often will coach him if he's got to use data, especially if they're writing a proposal or something like it. But you the data can be very important. Just make sure they understand the story behind the data. What is the emotion that those numbers represent that you're trying to share?

00:11:13:16 - 00:11:29:06
Shane Meeker,
Tell me the context and the scenario that that data actually is trying to explain in a way that makes it easy to understand and very approachable. So, yeah, it's, data and facts I think can can be an important part if they're handled correctly.

00:11:29:08 - 00:11:50:15
Jon Quinn
So let me follow up for that on that just for a second. So, about making him feel something. So maybe it's for example, in the context of a consumer product, how does it change that consumer's target audience is life. How does it make their life better? How does it not only solve their job to be done, but how is it actually improve the quality of life?

00:11:50:17 - 00:12:10:14
Shane Meeker,
Yeah. Or how much money? Maybe it saves them over a year or, you know, whatever that may be, as long as again, it authentically, as Angus was saying, you know, fits the story that they're trying to tell. And it makes it, I think, down to the individual, you know, at a PG, for example, they they always talk about how consumer is boss.

00:12:10:16 - 00:12:34:01
Shane Meeker,
So all the brands are always, you know, get their insights are designed for, developed for that particular consumer in mind. And to do that you have to do research with them. You have to talk with your consumers and brands have to kind of take on a very classic story

archetype character called a mentor and a mentor whose job in a story is to guide and inspire the hero and to give the hero things that help them on their journey.

00:12:34:04 - 00:12:53:03
Shane Meeker,
So, you know, Obi-Wan talked the force and gave Luke a lightsaber and, you know, everyone from Dumbledore to Gandalf to fairy Godmother, to Glenda the Good witch, to, you know what a pick, your pick, your storyline. But there's always, you know, a mentor character there. And brands and businesses need to remember they're the mentor. And the hero of the story is your consumer.

00:12:53:03 - 00:13:08:06
Shane Meeker,
It's your audience. It's who your designing it for because it's their journey that you're jumping into, not the other way around. And so also reminding brands and businesses to always, I call it unleashing your inner Dumbledore becomes important.

00:13:08:09 - 00:13:41:20
Jon Quinn
Okay. All right. So, let's talk a little bit about like, maybe some specific situations, like, say you're going to do a 20 to 30 minute presentation versus a 30 to 60 second chance encounter with the CEO in the hallway or in the elevator. What role does storytelling play in these, in these type of environments? And how can you use it to be more effective in your communication, whether it's just to the CEO in the elevator or is it to maybe the executive staff in a boardroom?

00:13:41:22 - 00:13:43:21
Jon Quinn
Shane, you want to start off with that one?

00:13:43:23 - 00:14:08:06
Shane Meeker,
Jurors? I you know, there is, two kinds of presentations in many ways. You know, there's an information and their story. By the way, information is not a story, but a story can also contain information. Those are different. So I often, will, you know, coach people that are new to a company. If you're new to a company, you're in the hall and your boss stops you and asks if you're the project you're working on is on track, do not tell them a story, all right?

00:14:08:09 - 00:14:28:05
Shane Meeker,
They don't need a story there. What they need is a piece of information, which is, yes, it is or no it's not. And here's what we're doing that's different than if they stop you and ask, so why are we doing this project at all? Again, that has the opportunity for a

story. Because now again, I have to explain who the story is for what they're after and what's in their way.

00:14:28:05 - 00:14:43:20
Shane Meeker,
Which are those three building blocks again, a hero, an obstacle and a treasure. Who that's who has stories about what they're after and what's in their way. So deciding what you need, and always having those two tools ready. Do I need a piece of information? Do I need a story, or do I need a story with information?

00:14:43:20 - 00:14:50:00
Shane Meeker,
And it's always a choice that you have to be ready to make, depending upon who your audience is and how much time you have?

00:14:50:02 - 00:15:17:07
Jon Quinn
Yeah, yeah. So, Angus, you mentioned something earlier about how, effective storytelling actually resonates and sticks with the audience more than just give him facts and figures. Tell us a little bit about, like, why that is true and, maybe an example, in a, in a business context, like in, in a proposal, in a meeting.

00:15:17:09 - 00:15:43:13
Angus Fletcher
So what did the human brain evolved to do? It didn't evolve to compute data. It evolved to win and survive. How do you win? You have a better plan than the other guy. What is a plan? A plan is another word for a plot. What is another word for a plot? It's a story. So what the brain evolved to do is it evolved to make stories of the future and then make them real.

00:15:43:16 - 00:16:04:25
Angus Fletcher
And so what defines an intelligent person is their ability to come up with stories that are new. So they're they're able to act in ways outside of what their competitors are trying, but they're also possible. So if I just sit around in my room and imagine that I'm a wizard, that's not going to get me anywhere, even if it's the newest and most interesting wizard of all time.

00:16:04:27 - 00:16:31:17
Angus Fletcher
Right? So the reason that stories are really interesting to the human brain is because the brain is always on the hunt for good stories, and if you're a consumer, really what you want from a company is them to tell you a story about your future. That is true and possible. And a lot of bad marketing essentially involves lying to customers about how, well, you know, if you take this product that will make your life

better or so and so forth, but it doesn't.

00:16:31:19 - 00:16:56:00
Angus Fletcher
But good marketing helps audiences see how a product is actually going to improve their lives. So, you know, I mean, a very simple, classic example, the Just Do It campaign by Nike. And if you remember the very first ad for that, it's just a 32nd ad, but it's one of the most revolutionary ads. And I mean, people don't realize this, but before Nike, released that ad, it was on an a severe downward trend.

00:16:56:00 - 00:16:58:13
Angus Fletcher
And that entire campaign turned tourism around.

00:16:58:16 - 00:17:00:20
Jon Quinn
It was think very early 1990s.

00:17:00:23 - 00:17:38:24
Angus Fletcher
No, it's I think it's 1980s. 80s. Yeah. Yeah, I think it's 1980s, mid 80s. So, what happens in that ad, what you just see, like this really old guy running really slowly across a bridge and in your mind you're like, who is that dude? What is he doing? He's got like, this weird tattoo on his chest, you know, and, you know, over the course of the ad, what it's revealed to you is this is someone who gets up every morning and does this run, and he's not a track star, you know, he's not a hero.

00:17:38:27 - 00:18:00:20
Angus Fletcher
He does it. Why does he do it right? Why does he do it? Because he wants to do it. And the idea behind the advertising campaign is, look, if you put on these shoes, you can do things that you want to do to, you can do hard things to. And so when you watch this campaign, you start imagining to yourself, it's like, what bridges do I want to cross or marathons do I want to run?

00:18:00:22 - 00:18:17:19
Angus Fletcher
And you develop an emotional connection to the shoe because the shoe to you, on some level, is about unleashing your potential as a human, and it's about imagining a future story in which you can do anything. And so that's what effective stories do, is effective stories open up your sense of potential and possibility. They don't sell you things.

00:18:17:22 - 00:18:34:15
Angus Fletcher
I mean, the thing about being sold something is it makes you dependent

on the product. Nobody wants that. What they want instead is a shoe that allows them to run faster. What they want instead is a piece of tech that allows them to think faster, you know? So that's why that story connection is important to humans. That's why we don't think in data.

00:18:34:15 - 00:18:53:06
Angus Fletcher
I mean, we live in a world where I think we've been brainwashed to think that data is more important than it is. But the thing to remember about life is life is always changing and change breaks data. What was true statistically yesterday is not true. Statistically. Today. We're stories by the very nature live in the future.

00:18:53:08 - 00:19:12:11
Jon Quinn
That's very cool thought. So Shane, we've got Angus mentioned about, the Nike example, and Tony's story. How about one from Procter and Gamble that actually tells a story about, you know, how it may actually makes their, the consumer's life actually better?

00:19:12:14 - 00:19:34:17
Shane Meeker,
Sure. So, you know, one of my favorite campaigns was from Swiffer and it's called Billy and Morty campaign. And it's it's got this older couple on it. And basically it starts off, with her getting out a step ladder, because she needs to dust and, at a high shelf, and she's getting out a step ladder and, you know, in her feather duster to step on, do out of the sponge.

00:19:34:20 - 00:19:51:23
Shane Meeker,
Her. Yeah, yeah. And her husband says, whoa, whoa, stop. That is not a safe thing to do. That is not a safe thing to do. And he even says there's got to be a better way to do this. And the doorbell rings and there's this big green box out waiting for them, which is the Swiffer box, and they open it up.

00:19:51:23 - 00:20:07:29
Shane Meeker,
And inside is the duster with the extendable handle and the the top that bends down so that you can turn it, you know, parallel to whatever surface that you're dusting. And she comments immediately, oh, wow, I can extend this. Oh, I can turn it this way. Oh, now I can step up there without getting up on the ladder.

00:20:08:01 - 00:20:29:19
Shane Meeker,
And again, that's a, you know, a great example of who it's for and the stories about what they're after and what's in their way. I can answer

all of those. And you know, the brand, the consumer again is the the hero of that story. They're the focus and the brand is just stepping in to try to, you know, help inspire and provide an item that helps them on their journey.

00:20:29:21 – 00:20:35:22
Shane Meeker,
And in that case, the journey was just one simple thing, which was being able to dust in hard to reach places. And that was it. Yeah.

00:20:35:24 – 00:20:53:12
Jon Quinn
So check the episode notes. I'm going to put links to both of those spots in the episode notes. Let's talk a little bit about, story form and structure. Now, when I was in graduate school, I got I was lucky enough to see Kurt Vonnegut speak, and he talked about different story arcs, and I'm sure you oversimplified it, but there's.

00:20:53:12 – 00:20:54:23
Shane Meeker,
A classic talk, by the way. Oh, yeah.

00:20:54:27 – 00:21:19:22
Jon Quinn
And he talks about the bell Curve. Yeah. Main character has nothing, gets everything, loses everything. Great Gatsby, it would kind of follow that kind of story arc. Right? And then there's the inverse. Where. Right. Everything's great. Everything falls apart and then kind of regains some sort of glory. Struggling for an example of that one right now. But, but he said, I like stories that just start off off, and then everything just goes to hell.

00:21:19:22 – 00:21:37:20
Jon Quinn
And he did this big dramatic like, yeah. Marker on the whiteboard, swoosh down where. So but let's talk a little bit of form and structure like, in story arc, what are the primary components of a good business story and what is the structure?

00:21:37:22 – 00:21:43:06
Angus Fletcher
Well, you shouldn't ask me because I don't believe in structure. So why don't we pick that one over and then I'll talk about why I don't believe in structure.

00:21:43:06 – 00:21:43:16
Shane Meeker,
All right.

00:21:43:23 – 00:21:47:13

Jon Quinn
I make it a point of view that. All right, guys, start us off. Shane.

00:21:47:15 - 00:22:09:00
Shane Meeker,
I mean, you know, I think that there is some fundamental mapping, if you will, that you can always do. But I also am a believer that, yeah, a lot of it you can customize and do as necessary. But you know, I would think in some kind of arc, you know, if you, if you want to use that terminology, there is kind of a beginning, a middle and an end of a sort.

00:22:09:01 - 00:22:23:12
Shane Meeker,
Now, you don't have to be linear with that. You definitely don't have to do it that way. But think of it more is kind of how Aristotle used to talk about there's a set up, there's a challenge, and there's a resolution. You decide how that's going to bring it to life. And the resolution doesn't have to be the end either.

00:22:23:12 - 00:22:39:23
Shane Meeker,
I mean, sequels are built off the idea that they don't necessarily have to resolve it, and that they can keep going over time is necessary to. But it's a good way to kind of plan things. And I often when I'm creating something, I will start with an end in mind and work backwards. Quite frankly, too, which I also find is a helpful thing.

00:22:39:25 - 00:23:06:07
Shane Meeker,
So I think structure, much like Campbell used to talk a lot, is never meant to be followed too literally, but more as a way to help outline and organize thoughts that then you find a way to very creatively bring it to life and do something different with. But I helpful outline for sure, for sure. But yeah, I would be very careful following those to to you know, systematically.

00:23:06:07 - 00:23:08:02
Jon Quinn
Yeah, yeah. Angus. Yeah.

00:23:08:04 - 00:23:19:21
Angus Fletcher
Well, so I think the main thing that's important about a story is that it works and I think there's a lot of structures that you can take to work. And I think if you find a structure that's effective for you, whether that's a hero's journey or whatever, and that works for you in that context, you should use it.

00:23:19:21 - 00:23:37:14

Angus Fletcher
It's the same thing, like if you're building a car, right? And four wheels happens to work for your car, you should go ahead and use it. But I just find when you go into businesses and you start talking about structure, it gets them away from the main thing, which is candor, emotional, vulnerability. And also just novelty.

00:23:37:20 – 00:23:52:21
Angus Fletcher
What audiences want is they want a sense of something new has arrived. And when you think about a movie like Star Wars, part of the reason that it's amazing is because there's all these crazy new stuff in it. I mean, there's Wookiees, there's lightsabers, there's all this stuff that as a child you're like, that's amazing. I want to go in that world.

00:23:52:22 – 00:24:07:04
Angus Fletcher
I want to play in that world, and I want to see what happens when I'm in that world and what novelty does is it makes you into the hero of the story. And I think it's really important to remember as a business that your job is to make the customer the hero of the story and not make yourself the hero of the story.

00:24:07:06 – 00:24:26:03
Angus Fletcher
And of course, you could have a customer in the story who's your who's your hero, and you're giving the example, but you don't need to. You can just fire their imagination. You know, I mean, Apple's, famous 1984 commercial doesn't really have a customer in it, right, who's a hero. But you, as the audience watching, are like, yeah, man, I want to smash that stuff.

00:24:26:03 – 00:24:56:14
Angus Fletcher
I want to break out of that world. So, you know, the main thing I would say, particularly to anyone who's who's who's thinking about starting a marketing campaign now, is you can bring in a lot of very talented storytellers who can help you fix the ending or the beginning of a story once you've got the raw material. But the raw material is what you really need to focus on, and the raw material comes from making that extra emotional cuts and really thinking hard about, you know, to take the example of the Swiffer, what I love about that example is that sense that the husband really cares about his wife.

00:24:56:15 – 00:25:14:28
Angus Fletcher
Yeah. I mean, you, you know, and you want to be that person. You want to be that family person who's like, you know, really sitting there, not just me. Like, I expect my wife to clean the house. You know, I

expect the meal to be on the table, you know, like, whoa, you know, I'm going to intervene here and take a duty of care and protect your ship, you know, and that and I think that that's one of the reasons that that that works so well.

00:25:14:28 – 00:25:30:00
Angus Fletcher
So I think encouraging people to make that extra human dig, you know, and that's why I say I'm against structure, not because I think structure is bad, but because I think that when you start to focus on that, you get formula. Yeah. And when you get formula, you get predictability. When you get predictability. Yeah. Yeah. People don't don't really tune in.

00:25:30:00 – 00:25:54:00
Jon Quinn
Yeah. No that's a really good point. So when I talk to my students and when I'm coaching them in a case competition or for presentations, I, I urge them to incorporate it. Element storytelling. And I, and I talk a lot about like the different components of storytelling and and they seem to struggle with inspiration for this story.

00:25:54:02 – 00:26:12:00
Jon Quinn
So, so what advice might you give them, to find inspiration, be a weave a story into their proposal, their presentation, their case, competition, whatever it may be? How do they kind of find that nugget of a story?

00:26:12:03 – 00:26:37:17
Angus Fletcher
I guess I'll just hop in here and I'll say, I think the, the thing to do is, is look for something that surprised you. Surprised is always the beginning of any good story. It's the it's it's it's the hook because you you wonder what's going to happen next. And so starting to think to yourself, when I interacted with this product, what was the moment when I was surprised by something that it did or when I walked into this company, what was I surprised by when I was looking at that person on the street who didn't have the product?

00:26:37:24 – 00:26:52:28
Angus Fletcher
What was I surprised by? What they were doing? And if you can give audiences that experience of surprise at the beginning of your presentation where like, isn't this kind of crazy? I mean, they'll be like, yeah, that is kind of crazy. And they're like, well, I'm going to explain it to you. I'm going to explain it to you.

00:26:52:28 – 00:27:09:18
Angus Fletcher

Just listen to me over the next, you know, five minutes and I'll explain to you, you know, why it is that way. And, and so it's a little bit like setting up, you know, a puzzle or a mystery or something like that. And, and so I would say if you're having a hard time finding a story, go back to your own sense of surprise.

00:27:09:21 - 00:27:11:03
Jon Quinn
Yeah.

00:27:11:06 - 00:27:31:02
Shane Meeker,
Change that. Yeah, yeah. Little surprise. I guess that makes it distinctive and more memorable. Right. And then I would also suggest that, sometimes it's helpful to start with semantics and things. So let's say they're going to an interview and they know that the, you know, a particular this company is looking for someone who, you know, is a problem solver.

00:27:31:05 - 00:27:50:03
Shane Meeker,
Is, a leader. And also, makes creative connections between things. You know, they're looking for that. Great. Then ask yourself, with those core thematics in mind, what personal stories do I have that would bring those ideas to life? And they wouldn't necessarily have to be things that they've done as much as they've recognized and seen.

00:27:50:03 - 00:28:09:23
Shane Meeker,
So it could be something else that's happened. Someone like, yeah, you know what? I'll never forget? I had a partner for one of these projects and we did this and we did that. And I remember them having this learning. And ever since that project, I've always thought differently about it. Now because I saw what they learned. I mean, it could be something that's happened to someone else.

00:28:09:25 - 00:28:28:15
Shane Meeker,
But the key is, is they can start to create a toolbox of all these different key somatics that and their position, their job, their career, whatever it is that they maybe do need to be ready to talk about and just organize stories underneath each of those. It's why Ted conferences always have a thematic. Every Ted conference pretty much has a core theme, right?

00:28:28:15 - 00:28:39:28
Shane Meeker,
And then they look for people to speak to that theme. It's a way to, still have lots of varieties of answers, but keep them all organized under kind of a, you know, an idea. Yeah.

00:28:40:01 – 00:28:55:25
Angus Fletcher
Yeah. I think one of the thing maybe that'd be important to remember, too, is that the human brain is incredibly egocentric. And so what we know is that when I start telling a story about myself, your brain is going to start thinking about, does that remind me about a story about myself? And this is why whenever we have conversations with people, you get halfway through the story and the other person interrupts you.

00:28:55:25 – 00:28:58:13
Angus Fletcher
It's like the same thing happened to me. Or let me tell you about this, right?

00:28:58:18 – 00:29:03:12
Jon Quinn
So my wife tells me I do that all the time. So but that's all I can tell her now. That's normal.

00:29:03:15 – 00:29:04:19
Angus Fletcher
That's totally normal. Okay, good.

00:29:04:19 – 00:29:08:21
Shane Meeker,
Yeah, yeah, yeah. The good thing is you get that that's creating reliability. So yeah. Yeah, yeah.

00:29:08:22 – 00:29:39:05
Angus Fletcher
And so just remember when you're telling a story that really your job is to prompt the other person to have that experience. And the way you do that is you try and maintain a certain level of general ability of experience, you know, and, you know, if you talk about, you know, the first time you made, like, a horrible mistake, you know, when you walked into a business room, like, I remember I did that too, you know, and so I would just say, you know, when you are telling stories, think about personal moments in your life that are true, that are candid, but that other people will be reminded of their own personal.

00:29:39:05 – 00:30:04:02
Jon Quinn
Life and say, found relatable. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So and yes, you said something earlier about, an element of surprise early in the proposal, the presentation. And I often get this question from students like, should I tell them what my solution is upfront, or should I tell them it is towards the end? What are your IT like?

00:30:04:02 – 00:30:18:00

Jon Quinn
What are your recommendations for that? Like, should you can you have an element of surprise without revealing what the what the resolution is? And you still hold the resolution for the end? How would you recommend structuring that in that sort of context?

00:30:18:07 - 00:30:32:24
Angus Fletcher
Yeah, so it depends on what's really novel about your approach. So I mean, let's say what's novel about your approach is your method. Like you have some kind of, you know, new method for doing something, then go ahead and tell them the answer upfront. I came up with this answer, right. Because the surprise is how you got there.

00:30:32:27 - 00:30:33:12
Jon Quinn

00:30:33:15 - 00:30:52:17
Angus Fletcher
Whereas if you're using a regular method that everybody knows, you have a surprising results, then you want to hold off. I would say your answer until the end. So really what you're always trying to do is you're always trying to move your audience. The goal is to move your audience. And in general, I do think it's better to move audiences emotionally then and then intellectually.

00:30:52:19 - 00:30:59:13
Angus Fletcher
But if you are going to move them intellectually, then and by intellectually, I mean, you know, here's a problem and here's.

00:30:59:16 - 00:31:00:16
Jon Quinn
Analysis in the day, right.

00:31:00:16 - 00:31:08:17
Angus Fletcher
Right, right, right, right. Then then, then yes, you want to hold off at least part of your solution to the end. Yeah.

00:31:08:19 - 00:31:11:08
Jon Quinn
Yeah. Jane, what are your thoughts on that?

00:31:11:10 - 00:31:34:16
Shane Meeker,
Yeah, I would agree. There is, a classic kind of construct to kind of remember that works really well with people, which is storytelling is basically a balance of understanding time against emotion. The more

time that progresses, the more emotion you have to create it, which is why big battles are always at the end. It's also why, by definition, the word climax in a story is somewhere towards the end.

00:31:34:18 - 00:31:50:11
Shane Meeker,
Because if you start off with the most emotional moment, by definition, where can emotion only go after that? Yeah, that wants to go down. Which is why, you know, when I spoke at TEDx, one of the things that the folks at the the thing that I spoke at, they said, do not start off with your most powerful story.

00:31:50:11 - 00:32:14:25
Shane Meeker,
Start off with a story. It's going to set the tone, get everyone kind of pulled in and really engage them. Put your content in the middle, but then end with a story that ties it all together, you know, and has that because by proximity, that's the last thing that you know that they're going to remember. I mean, even when I was at OSU, I remember at Professional Practices course and the design school, our instructor told us, when you're at the interview, do not start off with your best project.

00:32:14:25 - 00:32:45:15
Shane Meeker,
Start off with your second best project. Show them that that sets the tone. Put your core skills in the middle and end with your best project that you think totally represents everything together. Because again, proximity. That's the last thing they're going to see. Premises. You want to get away with it. So, I love that idea of, yeah, it's the process driven the answer up front that sets up and then say, but what I really want to share with you is how we got there, because I really discovered a couple of cool things while we did this, and it's going to change how I do my work from now on, then lead into that.

00:32:45:15 - 00:33:02:09
Shane Meeker,
Right? So deciding what you want, that, climax of your story to be is another great planning tool, too. It helps you kind of lay out how you want to put things in there. How do you set it up without giving away too much? How do you still hook them, though in the beginning and get them interesting enough so that they are there till the end?

00:33:02:16 - 00:33:17:15
Shane Meeker,
When you expose that, but think of that build up over time, and really think of when they walk away. What is the emotion you want them to feel as they leave? Does your story deliver on that? Yeah.

00:33:17:17 – 00:33:37:06
Jon Quinn
Well Shane and Angus, this has been a pleasure. I'm going to start implementing some of these ideas in the classroom we talked about and in, in my coaching with my project teams, because, as you both mentioned, it's not a formula, right? Has a lot to do with what you want to reveal, when you want to reveal, and an element of surprise and novelty.

00:33:37:08 – 00:33:53:28
Jon Quinn
So, and hopefully I can take help you this it takes some of my teams to the next level. And, so thank you so much for joining us and for discussing what makes good story telling. And help us be more effective and successful in our careers. This has been very informative and fun. Thanks.

00:33:54:01 – 00:33:55:24
Shane Meeker,
Thank you, thank you, thank you. It was a pleasure.