

(Lesson 9) When It Comes to Your Story, Less is More

If you haven't noticed by now, I have a tendency to ramble. Most people do. We try and validate ourselves and what we mean by going on-and-on. When it comes to your story, you almost always share more than you need to.

Recently, I created a 10 minute keynote presentation. I wanted to keep things simple, and knew exactly what I'd say. I wrote the speech and created the slides, sure I'd kept it under 15 minutes.

As I practiced, I droned on for 22 minutes. **FAIL.**

A few weeks ago, I wrote a Guest Post for Copyblogger. Although there wasn't a strict word count, I decided it should be less than 3,500 words. The first draft came in at over 4,000, but this was fine because every word had a purpose.

Until I performed the final edit, and deleted over 400 words. **FAIL.**

Whilst writing **TICK to the TOCK**, I deleted over 10,000 words between the first draft and final version. **FAIL.**

Time and time again, I over-write and over-create.

THE VALUE OF SPARSITY

In Lesson 8 I asked you to search a bunch of About Pages and find those you like and don't.

I'm sure you came across those that hold far too little info. I'm sure you hated these because there's nothing worse than an underwhelming story. But by chance, did you stumble across a few overcrowded and chaotic messes, too? **Did you hate these?** Of course you did, because an overwhelming story is just as bad.

It's a fine balance, but when it comes to your story, **I urge a Less is More approach.**

By now your story should be forming nicely, and you no doubt have many ideas you hope to implement. As such, you'll write too much. You'll crowd your About Page. You'll create long videos and showcase too many images. You'll try and share every tiny detail, but if you do, you'll lose all impact.

Because people don't want to know your full story. At least, not on first glance.

Over time, you can drip-feed more details to them, but initially it's about creating impact, hooking them, and ensuring you share a refined, relevant, and simple story. **LESS. IS. MORE.**

Easier said than done, but I do have a process I use with clients and during workshops. It's a quick and simple exercise aimed at doing one thing: *Refining Your Story.*

SHORT(ER) STORIES

I call this exercise **Short(er) Stories**, and it involves starting with something long and large and rambling, and tightening it so only the most important details remain. It's a writing task, but you can use the same premise for videos and visuals and website info.

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We naturally ramble and overstate the obvious. When it comes to your story, everyone does this.

It makes sense in your mind, but as you open your mouth to explain it to others, you find yourself talking... and talking... and talking some more. It doesn't quite come out properly, so you make sure the person listening *'gets it'* by providing more explanation... and then some... and then some more.

In person, you can explain yourself and answer their questions. But if someone devours your story online, **you have one opportunity**. You have mere seconds to gather and keep their attention. If you don't achieve this, it doesn't matter how good and compelling your story is, because they'll never know - *they're long gone already*.

LESS. IS. MORE.

It's not to say you should leave the page empty, but the worst thing you can do is overcrowd and overwhelm. **Why?** Because we live in an overcrowded society as

it is, and the last thing your audience needs is more chaos in their life. If I land on an About Page with loads of videos and images and no real pattern or journey, I run away.

If there's paragraph after paragraph of text, I run away.

If my first impression surrounds confusion, I run away.

If you're honest with yourself, I'm sure you say the same. Do you story justice, and keep it simple.

YOUR CHALLENGE, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT

For today's challenge, I dare you to download the [Short\(er\) Stories PDF](#) and complete it.

The completion of this challenge won't help your actual story per se, but it will help you get into the right mindset. If you like, you can physically undertake this process and adapt it to the copy you write, the videos you create, the other visuals and so on. But its true purpose is to place you in a *Less is More mindset*.

Because by design, stories are complex with many layers. If you're not careful, everything will unravel before your eyes and you'll lose complete control.

Whereas if you remain in a Less is More Mindset, you'll keep things on track.

You'll explain everything in 300 words, not 700.

You'll transform a 5 minute video into a 2 minute one.

You'll subtly integrate visuals and messages into things, rather dedicate specific space for them.

This isn't an easy skill to master, and your first versions will more than likely be long and chaotic. This is fine. It happens to me every time. Don't settle for it, though. Set higher standards. Look at your story and ask, *"What can I delete? What can I get rid of? What can I combine and mash together?"*

And that's another email at an end, but be sure to complete the entire **Short(er) Stories PDF** and include me in your final tweet. I can't wait to read your mini story, and as always, if you have any questions, [Hit Reply and ask away.](#)

Speak soon, TURNDOG