



Simon Hall

# Accelerating your Business through Communication

SIMON HALL

---

# ACCELERATING YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Accelerating your Business through Communication

1<sup>st</sup> edition

© 2020 Simon Hall & [bookboon.com](http://bookboon.com)

ISBN 978-87-403-3518-7

# CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>About the Author</b>                  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b>                      | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>1      The Core Message</b>           | <b>9</b>  |
| 1.1    Brevity                           | 10        |
| 1.2    The Journey to the Core (Message) | 11        |
| 1.3    How to Create your Core Message   | 12        |
| 1.4    The Feeling Thing                 | 12        |
| 1.5    Your Competitive Edge             | 13        |
| 1.6    Your Audiences                    | 13        |
| <b>2      The Elevator Pitch</b>         | <b>15</b> |
| 2.1    The Opening                       | 15        |
| 2.2    Credibility                       | 18        |
| 2.3    Good Manners                      | 18        |
| 2.4    Call to Action                    | 19        |
| 2.5    Body Language                     | 19        |
| <b>3      Websites</b>                   | <b>20</b> |
| 3.1    The Home Page                     | 20        |
| 3.2    Key Words                         | 23        |
| 3.3    Search Engine Optimisation        | 23        |
| 3.4    Website Structure                 | 24        |
| 3.5    Other Points                      | 26        |
| <b>4      Pitches and Presentations</b>  | <b>27</b> |
| 4.1    The Golden Secret of Pitching     | 28        |
| 4.2    The Opening                       | 29        |
| 4.3    The Tale Only You Can Tell        | 30        |
| 4.4    The Structure                     | 32        |
| 4.5    The Ending                        | 33        |
| 4.6    Slides                            | 34        |
| 4.7    The Q and A                       | 36        |
| 4.8    Body Language                     | 36        |
| 4.9    Timings                           | 37        |
| 4.10   Preparation                       | 38        |

|          |                           |           |
|----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| <b>5</b> | <b>Social Media</b>       | <b>39</b> |
| 5.1      | The Basics                | 39        |
| 5.2      | The Bio                   | 41        |
| 5.3      | Picking Your Platforms    | 43        |
| 5.4      | Posting                   | 44        |
| 5.5      | Photos and Video          | 45        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Blogs and Articles</b> | <b>47</b> |
| 6.1      | Specialism and Story      | 47        |
| 6.2      | Writing Style             | 50        |
| 6.3      | Word Count and Keywords   | 50        |
| 6.4      | Selling                   | 51        |
| 6.5      | Lovely Layouts            | 53        |
| 6.6      | Building an Audience      | 54        |
| 6.7      | Titles                    | 54        |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Media Coverage</b>     | <b>56</b> |
| 7.1      | The Golden Rule           | 56        |
| 7.2      | The All Important Angle   | 56        |
| 7.3      | Story Structure           | 57        |
| 7.4      | Quotes                    | 60        |
| 7.5      | Don't Waste Your Work     | 60        |
| 7.6      | Pictures                  | 60        |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Photos and Videos</b>  | <b>62</b> |
| 8.1      | Public Enemy Number One   | 62        |
| 8.2      | Composition               | 64        |
| 8.3      | Angles                    | 67        |
| 8.4      | Foreground and Background | 68        |
| 8.5      | Focus and Exposure        | 71        |
| 8.6      | Lighting                  | 73        |
| 8.7      | Visual Storytelling       | 75        |
| 8.8      | The Business Case         | 78        |
| 8.9      | Videos                    | 80        |
| 8.10     | Making a Video            | 81        |
| 8.11     | A Last Word               | 84        |
|          | <b>Conclusion</b>         | <b>85</b> |

*"Simon Hall demonstrates his deep understanding of media and messaging and articulates a clear set of guidelines that enable the reader to chart a course to achieve key business objectives through better communication. Even a brilliant business vision that builds on real technical insights and great products can not flourish if consumers do not understand or notice the company's offerings. Hall shows leaders how to develop and hone their core messaging so they can prepare to deliver the right message to the right person in the right words at the right time. Successful communications strategies must build on a tightly produced core message that fits into a brief elevator pitch and adapts seamlessly for websites, presentations, social media and blogs and online articles. If you're stuck trying to find the right words to showcase the great work your company is doing, Simon Hall's work offers a great set of principles and guidelines to help."*

- Jonathan Rosenberg, former Senior Vice President of Google

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Hall runs his own communications agency, Creative Warehouse, and is a journalist and business coach.

He teaches communications, media and business skills at the University of Cambridge and in UK government.

He was a broadcaster for 20 years, mostly as a BBC Television News Correspondent, specialising in business and economics.

For more, see the websites for [Simon](#) and [Creative Warehouse](#).



# INTRODUCTION

No matter how brilliant your business, unless you can tell the world why it's wonderful you'll fail to flourish.

But how to communicate all that you offer in a clear, concise, and compelling style?

That's where the ABC of Accelerating your Business through Communication comes in.

The book will take you through all you need to know to master the different strands of your messaging, in the order most businesses will require. And all that with no fuss, and no waffle, just clear and actionable information.

You'll also have access to a series of short videos to help explain some of the key points.

For example, here's a one minute, face to face [introduction](#) from the author.

# 1 THE CORE MESSAGE

This is the stem cell of your communication, in that it provides the foundation for all your business messaging.

Often known as the value proposition, it sums up why you're worth noticing and doing business with.

It also serves as an introduction to your company, and so should make a strong first impression.

Well-known and effective examples include –

- *Tap the app, get a ride* (Uber)
- *Create click-worthy links* (Bitly)
- *Build your brand. Sell more stuff* (MailChimp)
- *Music for everyone* (Spotify)
- *Be more productive at work with less effort* (Slack)

Why do these work so well?

Because they capture the soul of the product. What it does and why it matters.

They resonate, lodge in the mind, and produce an emotional reaction that makes the reader feel drawn towards their offering.

Who wouldn't want to be more productive for less effort? Have access to the music you want? Build your brand and sell more of your product? Create links that get clicks? Get a taxi with just the tap of an app?

So, breaking it down, what does a core message contain? I think of the individual elements as the *fab five points*:

- Enlightenment: telling me what the business is about
- Distinction: positioning the company as a leader in its field
- Emotion: producing a positive feeling by enhancing my life
- Memorability: having the power to linger in the mind
- Intrigue: making me want to find out more

I imagine them as a sort of modern day, business take on The Beatles.

When they Come Together (excuse the joke, you'll get used to these) in harmony they make beautiful music – of a commercial kind, anyway.

## 1.1 BREVITY

I've seen value propositions that go on for pages. And, in fact, it's not a bad starting point - to list all the great things your company has to offer.

But generally, most value propositions will have a headline, followed by a supporting paragraph, and often bullet points, too.

The critical part, though, is the headline. And why is that?

It's the same reason newspapers and websites invest so much time and effort getting their headlines right.

They're your shop window. They catch the eye and lure people in. If they don't work, potential customers just walk on by.

So brevity, while still incorporating at least a sense of the fab five principles, is an important art to master.

Here's an example from Zipcar, a car sharing service.

*Wheels when you want them*

Just five words, but they're memorable, tell me what the service is about, distinguish it as a top performer, impress me, and make me want to find out more.

All that information, emotion, and intrigue in just a few words.

See how *Create click-worthy links* and *Music for everyone* achieve similar effects.

But I know what you're thinking here:

*How can I possibly combine all those important elements and reduce everything my company does to just a handful of words?*

Don't worry. It's a familiar problem. And here's the answer.

## 1.2 THE JOURNEY TO THE CORE (MESSAGE)

If that sounds like an allusion to a sci-fi movie, then good. It was meant to. Because reaching the promised land of your core message can be quite a voyage.

When I start work with a business, I first ask them to produce one page, or a maximum of 300 words for their value proposition.

- This part, they usually cope with more or less fine.

The next time we meet, I ask them to reduce that page to one paragraph, or 60 words at most.

- At this point, they usually protest impossibility.

I do understand that reaction. Many of the businesses I work with, particularly in Cambridge, are spun out from the University. They're often at the cutting edge of science, tech and innovation, and run by some of the cleverest people on the planet.

But I manage to persuade them to give it a try, and eventually we get to a single paragraph.

Here, however, is the twist. All this has just been the build up to the punch line. Because now I ask these incredibly talented entrepreneurs to sum up their core message in a single sentence.

That means no more than ten words at most, and preferably fewer.

I also demand they make it memorable, and intriguing, and include all those other points I mentioned earlier.

- This is where they insist it can't be done.

But it can. And it will, albeit after much teeth grinding and brain straining.

That's the irony of the core message. It may be only a few words, yet it can take weeks of work to nail. But that's time well spent.

Get it right, and it will underpin all your business communication, from attracting customers, to pitches for investment, presentations, social media, and your website.

In messaging terms, it's equivalent to finding the goose that lays the golden eggs - and will keep on laying them, helping you towards success and prosperity.

### 1.3 HOW TO CREATE YOUR CORE MESSAGE

First, ask yourself this basic question: Why does your business exist? What need does it serve?

If you're struggling to sum it up succinctly and stylishly, I find a *heroes and villains* approach helps.

The villain is the problem the customer is facing, and you're the hero, riding to their rescue to solve it.

Take the core message for the website builders Weebly –

*The easiest way to make a website*

The problem, or villain, is the need for a website. And here comes Weebly, the customer's saviour, rescuing them from peril without fuss or hassle.

All that in just seven words.

It's simple, effective and memorable. Which is what makes it difficult to create, and thus why value propositions take so much work.

### 1.4 THE FEELING THING

Apart from summing up the soul of your business, the core message should also stir an emotion in your customer.

I'm not expecting outpourings of love or joy. Simple pleasure, relief and satisfaction at offering to solve their problem are often sufficient to secure a sale.

For example, Slack's *Be more productive at work with less effort* makes a customer happy. As does Weebly's *The easiest way to make a website*, or Uber's *Tap the app, get a ride*.

All of these sound wonderfully like magic.

Who wouldn't feel good about their offerings?

## 1.5 YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

A value proposition should also imply why you're better than your competitors.

Weebly's does it beautifully.

By talking about *The easiest way to make a website*, the company suggests its competitors require lots of fiddling and faffing.

Note that it doesn't need to mention its rivals. After all, why promote the opposition?

It simply sets Weebly out as the leader in its field, without ever saying so. It's all in the implication.

The video hosting site Vimeo's core message elegantly combines enlightenment, emotion, and an edge.

*Make life worth watching*

It's a brilliant example of the art of the value proposition.

You know you're going to be watching videos, it plays with the emotions by suggesting Vimeo will add pleasure to your life, and it subtly implies it's the best in its business.

And all in just four words. Now that's clever.

## 1.6 YOUR AUDIENCES

Note the use of the plural in the title.

Primarily, your core message is addressed to your customers, and should be designed with their needs in mind. But it's also useful for staff, stakeholders, partners, and investors.

Look at Crazy Egg's *Make Your Website Better Instantly*

The company analyses websites to show how they can be improved. Anyone with any kind of stake in Crazy Egg knows it loud and clear from that.

Get your value proposition right, and it sets out a powerful statement of what you do as a business.

Different products or services within a company can also have different value propositions.

Uber has a specific offering for drivers – *Get in the driver's seat and get paid* – to that which I've mentioned for passengers.

Remember as well that a value proposition is not a slogan or catch line.

These might be catchy and memorable – think Nike's *Just do it*, or *Never knowingly undersold* from John Lewis - but they don't communicate what product or service the company offers.

It's equally worth mentioning that a core message can evolve with a business or its products.

Many companies never stop refreshing and renewing theirs in order to retain a competitive edge.

## 2 THE ELEVATOR PITCH

You've had a lucky break. You're at a conference, you're taking the lift, and it's just you and your perfect customer or investor trapped together in close confinement.

Opportunity isn't just knocking, but beating away like a heavy metal drummer playing a particularly enthusiastic solo.

You've got the time between floors, 30 seconds, or 100 words maximum, to make a good impression, secure a follow up conversation, and possibly land a very big deal.

But stage fright strikes. And by the time you've stumbled out with, *I'm sorry to bother you, but, um, I wonder if you might possibly be interested in our business. We... ah... err, well, kind of what we do is...* the doors are open, your target is away, and a beautiful opportunity has gone.

How are you going to be feeling for the rest of the day, the week, and quite possibly the month?

But get your pitch right, have it ready to go, and you've got a vital asset in the business world on standby for anytime and anywhere you need it.

That's the elevator pitch. And this is how it's done.

### 2.1 THE OPENING

First, some good news.

Now you've cultivated the fruitful seed of your value proposition, the elevator pitch will grow elegantly from it.

Let's start with the opening words, the most important part. And why is that?

Do some research. Observe human nature. What's the first thing most people do with a few spare seconds, like when they're taking a lift?

Yep, they take out their phones and check their messages, social media, or the news.

Your first challenge is to make yourself more interesting than any of that. So a strong, sharp and striking start is critical.

Happily, your value proposition is now at hand, ready to help. Let's look again at the examples from the beginning of the book to see how.

- *Tap the app, get a ride* (Uber)
- *Create click-worthy links* (Bitly)
- *Build your brand. Sell more stuff* (MailChimp)
- *Music for everyone* (Spotify)
- *Be more productive at work with less effort* (Slack)

These companies have done so well I doubt they have much need of an elevator pitch anymore, as just about everyone knows them.

But imagine they did, and how their 100 words could be launched by their value proposition. So Uber's elevator pitch might begin:

- *We make getting a taxi as easy as tapping an app.*



**Discover our eBooks on  
Time Management Skills  
and hundreds more**

**Download now**

**bookboon**

How about that? Just 11 words, but it immediately grabs the attention of a potential customer or investor.

Who hasn't struggled to get a taxi? Which means a business that solves such a common problem, and so simply, is instantly interesting.

For Bitly, their elevator pitch might be:

- *We create links that get clicks and drive sales.*

Only nine words this time, but still doing exactly the same job. Outlining the problem, albeit implicitly, offering a solution, and making it all so easy.

In the modern world, with your online presence critical, who wouldn't be interested in that?

Finally, the elevator pitch for Spotify might begin:

- *We offer all the music you could ever want, wherever and whenever you want it.*

Once more the words immediately engage by offering something irresistible. These days, who doesn't travel around with earbuds on standby, ready to listen to their favourite tunes?

I have one more handy tip for an opening which offers immediate impact, and it's something shamelessly borrowed from the art of public speaking. I might put it this way -

*Who needs rhetorical questions?*

Excuse another awful joke, please. But the serious point is starting an elevator pitch with a question can be highly engaging. It forces people to think about what you're saying.

I sometimes use the trick myself, when summing up what my communications agency, Creative Warehouse does.

*Would you like all your communications problems solved at a one stop shop with a watchword of excellence?*

It helps that the sentence has a certain memorable rhythm, and I'm happy to say I've never known it fail to catch the attention.

## 2.2 CREDIBILITY

A fearsome creature inhabits the world of writing, communication, and indeed much of the arts.

It's known as the second book, second album, or second whatever syndrome. You've done well with your debut, but now the pressure's on for an equally impressive follow up.

It can be daunting and inhibiting. It certainly was for me, with my second novel.

A similar problem often troubles the elevator pitch. You've made a great start with your opening line, but now where do you go?

My favourite answer is to establish your credibility.

For Creative Warehouse I talk about my team.

*We've got decades of experience from the BBC, Google, the University of Cambridge, The Times, Independent and Guardian newspapers, and we've worked across government, business and the public sector.*

You might cite figures about the number of customers you've already signed up, the progress of your research, or the investment which is pouring in.

But whatever it is, setting your company out as already making its mark is an important element of the elevator pitch.

## 2.3 GOOD MANNERS

It's only polite to introduce yourself, so don't forget your manners. They can help make a positive impression.

Many elevator pitches begin with an introduction, but I believe that's a mistake. Your name is hardly likely to be the most striking thing about you.

Get in hard with the hook, as we've discussed above, and establish your credibility before you move on to the introduction.

Besides, your name is far more likely to be remembered if you've got the first parts of your pitch right.

## 2.4 CALL TO ACTION

All your excellent work in making a good impression, and outlining the great things you do risks being wasted if you forget a call to action.

I find the best way here is to link it to how you introduce yourself.

In the elevator pitch for my company, I usually say –

*I'm Simon Hall, Director of Creative Warehouse, and if you give me your card I'll get in touch to see how we can help you.*

You can judge how to pitch this depending on the circumstances, and reception you receive.

For example, if you're at a conference, and the person sounds genuinely positive, you could ask to meet later for a coffee and chat.

## 2.5 BODY LANGUAGE

This is the most commonly overlooked part of an elevator pitch, but it's important.

Don't try to be cool and slouch around. Equally, don't be too keen and right there, up close and personal in your victim's face.

Don't go too fast, either. The nerves might have struck, but control them and measure your pace.

Stand tall, maintain eye contact, and be calm, confident and clear.

I know it sounds dull, and you've got a thousand other things to do, but I encourage entrepreneurs I work with to practice their elevator pitch over and over again.

It's time well spent, I promise you.

Invest a couple of hours and you'll have it just right, learnt by heart, smooth and striking, all ready for when that big opportunity comes.

## 3 WEBSITES

Imagine you've impressed Mr Perfect Customer or Ms Wealthy Investor with your knockout elevator pitch, and now they want to find out more about you. Where's the first place they go?

Yes, of course. Online, and onto your website.

It needs to say what you do in an instant, look good, and answer the important questions.

What's your offering? Your plans? Your values?

What about your team? Are you credible and convincing?

This chapter explores how to build on your core message and elevator pitch to make your website informative, but also attractive, and accessible.

### 3.1 THE HOME PAGE

This is the most important page, as it's effectively a formal introduction to your company. As the old saying goes, you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression.

In the early days of websites, home pages were usually a blizzard of information in an attempt to gain prominence in search results.

Nowadays, sites tend to be simpler, with striking images, and fewer words.

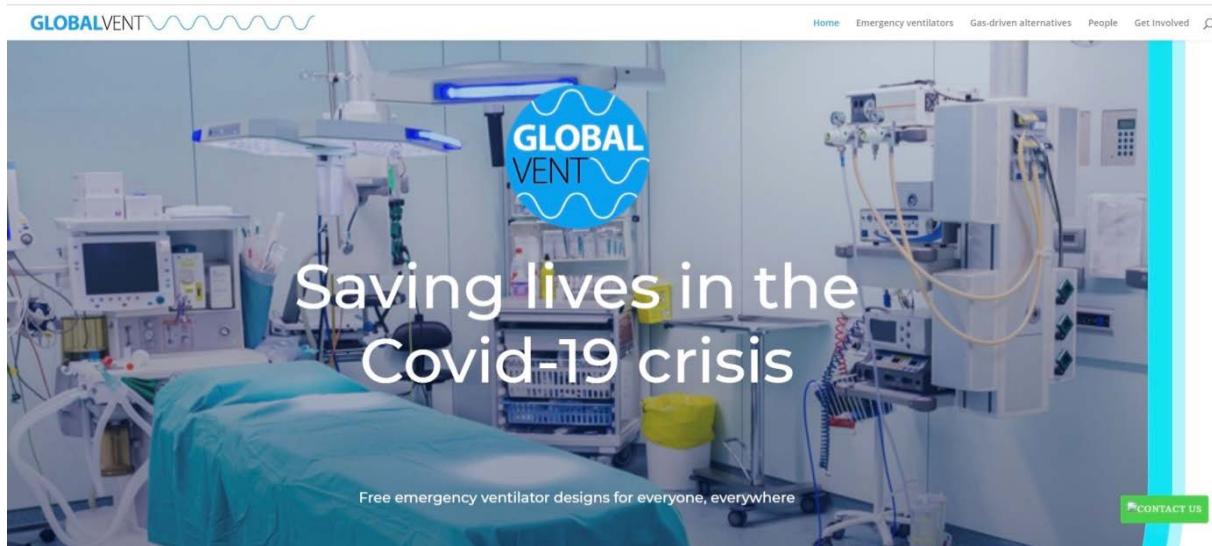
That's because search engines are more sophisticated, for speed of loading, and due to the rise of viewing on mobile phones.

The critical art is making the words the right ones. For both potential customers, and search engines.

The structure should be right, too. Start with the most important information, and expand from there.

For example, in the Covid-19 pandemic, Creative Warehouse worked for free for various organisations which made noble efforts to help society through the crisis.

This is the website we produced for a partnership of scientists and doctors which built low cost ventilators for use around the world.



Always remember that people are busy, and have limited attention spans.

They need to know they're in the right place to find what they're looking for, and in just a few seconds. Otherwise, they'll simply click away to a competitor's site.

For a search engine, hunting relevant content, it's also very clear what this collaboration is about.

Notice as well how simple the site appears, with gentle, friendly colours, and an easy to read typeface, both of which should be consistent throughout.

The first thing a visitor sees is the company name and logo. Then comes a mission statement – *Saving lives in the Covid-19 crisis*.

Next is the organisation's value proposition – *Free emergency ventilator designs for everyone, everywhere*.

A powerful image forms the backdrop to that brief, and precise summary.

There's more information below, but not a great deal:



**GLOBALVENT**

We're an international collaboration of scientists, engineers and healthcare professionals in Cambridge and beyond, working to create freely-available designs for emergency ventilators to help save thousands of lives in the coronavirus crisis.

Our goal is to produce an open-source design for an emergency ventilator in kit form, using widely-available parts. As part of the project, we are designing a universal control panel that can be attached to any ventilator to help doctors use a range of different machines easily.

Doctors in some countries are already having to make the heartbreaking decision about who lives and who dies because of a shortage of ventilators.

We believe no one should ever be put in that position.

If you can help with expertise or funding, please get in touch. Find out more about what we are doing and what we need below.

Everyone on this project is working for free.

[Get in touch](#) [CONTACT US](#)

The principle is to lure the visitor in, reveal more as we go, and, critically –

Tempt them to hit the *Contact us* button so we can start a conversation. Which is where the real business gets done.

Whether forging new partnerships, in this case, or securing sales in others.

Contrast that approach with a website which is known for a very different philosophy:



**LINGS CARS.com** 

Leader of the Pack - The UK's favorite car leasing website!

\*\*\* I'll find you a car quickly. But, don't be too fussy...  
If the Virus means you need to cancel, I'll fully support you. \*\*\*

**LEASE A NEW CAR**

**FULLY ONLINE NO VIRUS RISK HERE**

**BREXIT RISK FREE!** **FREE WITH EVERY CAR ORDER**

**LING'S BREXIT BORIS PROMISE:** If the UK leaves the EU with "no deal", tariffs may apply to EU built cars landing in the UK after Brexit day (31st Dec). If this is the case with YOUR car, and IF the price increases due to tariffs, YOU will be able to cancel the car order at **NO COST** to you. **YOU can order a new car from me, with NO BREXIT RISK.** - Ling

**MY BEST SELLING CAR LEASING DEALS!**

**CARS A-Z**

I AM LING YOU CAN TRUST ME

**Menu**

- [Home](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Vans](#)
- [Customers](#)
- [About Ling](#)
- [Fun stuff](#)
- [Free stuff](#)
- [Live staff](#)

**ABARTH**

595 Convertible  
595 Hatchback  
595 Competizione

**14 DELIVERIES IN LAST WEEK**

|                         |              |                       |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| VW Golf Mk7             | Ronan        | INVERKEITHING, KY11   |
| VW Golf Mk7             | David        | ST. ALBANS, AL3       |
| Nissan Leaf             | Inspire W... | BISHOP AUCKLAND, DL14 |
| Skoda Superb            | Russell      | WIRKSWORTH, DE4       |
| Audi A4 Estate          | Steph        | LAMBOURN, RG17        |
| VW Golf Mk8             | Laura        | LONDON, SW13          |
| Audi Q2 Estate          | Matthew      | WINDSOR, SL4          |
| Skoda Kamiq Hatchbac... | David        | GREAT MISSenden, HP16 |
| Volvo S90 Saloon        | Gary         | DARTFORD, DA1         |
| Kia XCeed Hatchback     | Simon        |                       |

Which of the two sites do you immediately find more appealing and approachable?

### 3.2 KEY WORDS

Key words tell a search engine about your content, and thus the products or services you offer. Get them right, and more visitors will find your site.

To understand what key words you need, think like a potential customer. What would they type to search for your offering?

For example, with Creative Warehouse I imagined potential clients asking about media, public relations, copywriting, design work, or crisis communications support. So those words feature prominently on our home page.

But we have plenty of competitors, and I wanted more of an edge in markets where we were most likely to find work.

Which means, as the majority of our clients are in London and Cambridge, I added those locations as well. But I was also careful not to exclude other areas, and mentioned we were happy to travel anywhere.

That's part of the art of key words. To balance a broad appeal with knowing who is most likely to be your customer, and making yourself particularly visible to them.

I also teach public speaking. But if I relied on just that term, my personal website would probably get lost in a deluge of results.

If, however, I make it *public speaking training, specialising in pitching for investment*, I'm more likely to be found by my target market.

Using key words in headings, and sub headings, can also be effective in improving your ranking in search results.

### 3.3 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the art of ensuring your website is highly ranked by Google and co., and so more likely to bring in business.

Research indicates appearing on the first page of search results is critical. Few potential customers venture any further.

Key words and SEO work as sweetly together as strawberries and cream when it comes to websites.

I won't go into SEO or key words in more depth here, because they're fields of their own, and constantly evolving. Fortunately, I can direct you to the people who really know, given they dominate the search engine world.

Google have published their own guidelines on SEO, which are frequently updated. You can read them [here](#).

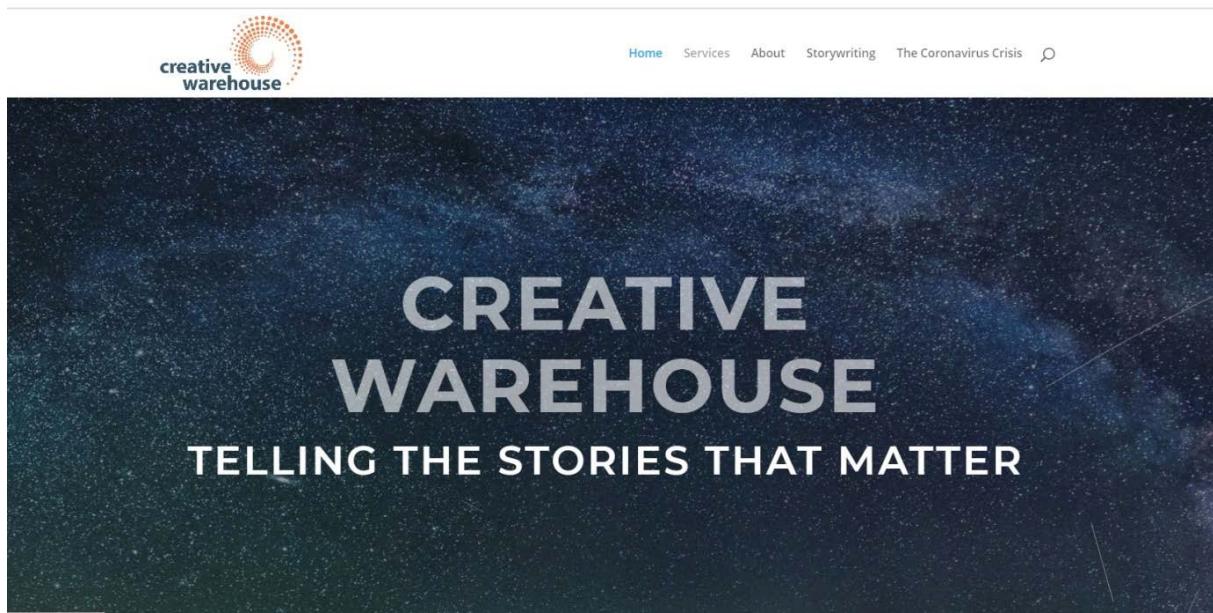
One of my team at Creative Warehouse, who used to work at Google, also recommends [Moz](#) as a well-informed, and user-friendly resource.

### 3.4 WEBSITE STRUCTURE

Now you've sorted your home page, where next?

That depends on what you believe is most important for a visitor to know.

With Creative Warehouse, as you can see from the menu, I thought it was our *Services*. That's why potential customers come to us, after all.



Following that, it was the *About* page, because it emphasises our credibility. Particularly as I'm lucky enough to have a highly talented and experienced team, as you can tell from meeting just two of them.



John Cary

Co-director

John brings four decades of experience in journalism and communications to the team.

As deputy editor of the flagship Today programme on BBC Radio 4, he steered coverage of momentous global events and turbulent political times. During 20 years at the BBC, he also won awards as editor of Simon Mayo's programme on 5 Live, and established Simon and Mark Kermode as Britain's leading film review show.

John has worked widely across print, broadcast and online journalism. He continues to work in national newspapers as well as passing on his knowledge to the next generation through teaching journalism at the University of Essex.

His skills and enthusiasms include writing, editing, media relations and strategy, and an inexhaustible appetite for puns. John always strives to find clear and direct language to bring complex stories alive for the widest possible audience.



Lucy Ward

Writer and Editor

Lucy is a journalist and communications specialist.

She covered politics, education and social affairs as a correspondent for the Guardian, and previously worked for the Independent, and Times Education Supplement.

She was the first Communications Manager at Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, and then at Cambridge University's Faculty of Education, and is a governor at Anglia Ruskin University.

Originally from Manchester, Lucy studied Early and Middle English at Balliol College, Oxford. She is currently working on a book focusing on inoculation in eighteenth century Europe.

*Services or Products*, and your *Team* are musts for an effective and credible website.

But you might also consider having a *Blog*, focusing on what you've been doing, and potentially an *Our Story* page, featuring the history of your company.

Blogs are a great showcase for your work and plans, and our story pages can emphasise your experience and passion for your business. I'll talk more about writing blogs later in the book.

Finally, you should have an easily accessible contact form. Floating icons are a popular way of doing this.

If you click on the [Creative Warehouse](#) site, and the one we produced for [GlobalVent](#), you'll see a small email symbol follows you as you scroll around.

It's designed to be unobtrusive, and so not annoying, but to make life as easy as possible for a visitor who wants to get in touch.

### 3.5 OTHER POINTS

This sounds obvious, but it still gets overlooked. Your website has to impress whether a visitor sees it using a laptop, tablet, or phone. So it needs to be optimised for all viewing.

A video is also important. If, as the old saying has it, a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video is often worth many thousands more.

It can explain what you do, include impressive testimonials, and establish a direct emotional connection with the viewer.

Look at the video I produced for [GlobalVent](#). See how it says more about the project, and its potential impact, in a few seconds than pages of text could.

The video should be displayed prominently on your home page, no more than two minutes long, interesting to watch, and simple to understand.

Testimonials should also feature on your home page. What people say about you is generally more telling than what you say about yourself.

See how my company does this with a carousel, which maximises the impact without taking up too much space.

A statement of your values is also important. Consumers actively seek out companies which are committed to doing the right things in the right ways.

Finally, don't just invest your time and money in producing a website, then forget all about it.

Your site should be updated regularly as your company grows, the market changes, search engine optimisation moves on, and fashions for websites change too.

After all, it's your shop window. It should be kept fresh and interesting.

A website which has been neglected can look as obvious – and unappealing – as someone strolling down a street today decked in a 1970's kipper tie, tank top, and flares.

## 4 PITCHES AND PRESENTATIONS

The big moment has arrived.

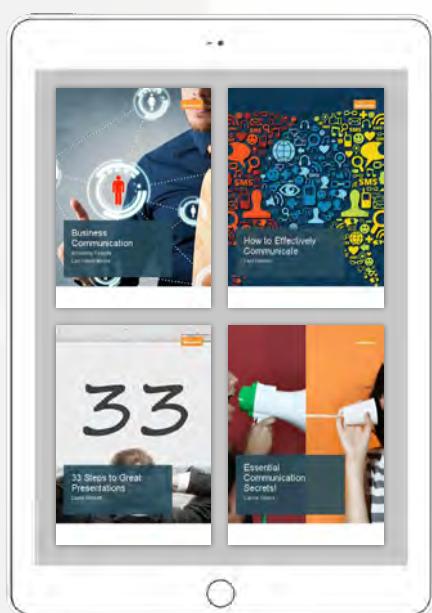
Mr Perfect Customer, or Ms Wealthy Investor, was enticed by your elevator pitch, wowed by your website, and now...

(Cue drum roll)

You've got a standard five minute pitch to impress them so much they're ready to sit down with you and sign that contract.

The nerves are needling, the pressure is pounding, and your mind's a maelstrom. But relax – well, a little, anyway.

The good news is the work you've done so far can provide a firm foundation for your storytelling.



Discover our eBooks on  
**Communication Skills**  
and hundreds more

[Download now](#)

**bookboon**

## 4.1 THE GOLDEN SECRET OF PITCHING

Let me tell you a sad story about lost love.

I know this is a business book, but it won't take long. And the lament contains an important insight for all your communications, in particular pitching.

After much wooing, one of my best friends, codename Steve, managed to get a date with a woman he had adored for months. He was so keen to make a good impression, he even bought himself a new shirt and cologne - quite a commitment for a man.

The much-anticipated evening arrived, and, like a good friend, I phoned the next day to find out how the date went.

*Great, he said. I told her all about my job, my life, my family, my hobbies, what I like to eat and drink, my schooldays, my dog, everything.*

*Right, I replied. And what did you find out about her?*

*Mmmm... well... not a lot.*

*So, are you going to see her again?*

*That's the strange thing. I've sent a couple of messages, but she hasn't been in touch.*

I don't think we need to explore what went wrong, do we? So, back to the point.

I understand how you feel about your company. I really do. I'm just the same about mine.

You live and breathe it. You want to tell the world all about it, the great things it does, much like Steve wanted to tell his poor date all about himself.

Remember, however, a pitch alone is unlikely to land you a deal.

It's an important step - but only another step - on the way to the critical moment. That big meeting where the contract finally gets signed.

A good pitch paves the way to a deal, just like a good date paves the way to a relationship.

(Or not, in the case of lonesome Steve.)

The art is to say enough to enhance the interest of a potential customer - or partner - but not so much that you bombard, bore, and baffle them away, straight into the arms of a rival.

## 4.2 THE OPENING

Do you remember what we said was the most critical part of your elevator pitch? And indeed website, and just about all of your business communications?

Of course you do. It's tattooed on your heart in letters of fire by now, I've prattled on about it so much.

Yes, it's the all-important opening. And surprise, surprise - it's just the same with pitches and presentations.

I know you're tempted to say *Hello*, and *thank you for inviting me*, and all that standard preamble. But don't. Your job here is to be noticed and remembered.

You're likely to be up against competition. How do you think most of your rivals are going to start their pitches?

Yet again, you're ahead of me.

Yes, it's *Hello, thank you for inviting me, I'm Henry Hopeful, and it's a pleasure to be with you today to talk about my new...*

These are important people you're pitching to. They're busy.

Begin that way, and I can already see them reaching for their phones to check their emails.

Remember how you grabbed the attention with your elevator pitch? So wheel that heavy artillery into action once more, and shock and awe them into sitting up and taking notice.

*You hate hoovering, hiring a cleaner is expensive and they're unreliable, so we've built a robot Hoover that turns your house shiny as a show home in just minutes.*

Excuse my strange imagination, but who wouldn't be interested in a pitch which starts that way?

But yes, you're right - you should introduce yourself. Just do it in the second line.

*I'm Henry Hopeful, and we're Very Voracious Vac, making the horrors of housework the merest of memories.*

In short, it goes like this:

It's no use being the proud owner of a beautiful thoroughbred of a pitch if it falls at the first fence.

Begin strikingly, engage the attention from the outset, and you've made a flying start in the race to the winning post.

### **4.3 THE TALE ONLY YOU CAN TELL**

This is a secret weapon in the pitching world. It's very powerful, but all too often underused.

Let me explain.

One business I'm very proud to work with here in Cambridge is Happyr Health.

You may not be aware, but millions of youngsters suffer the precious days of their childhoods being marred by the chronic pain of migraines.

One of the founders of Happyr, Nicola Filzmoser might be smiling now. But in younger years, she very much wasn't.



As a child, Nicola too suffered terrible migraines. Which, you won't be surprised to hear, is why she started the company.

When we worked on her pitch for investment, Nicola thought about beginning by setting out the scale of the problem. It would be a very valid start.

The figures show there's a vast market. And it tugs the heart strings, which, believe it or not, even the most grizzled business people still possess, no matter how much they might pretend otherwise.

But instead, how about a start like this:

*Millions of children suffer their childhoods being blighted by the agony of migraines. Believe me, I know. Because I was one, and now I'm going to stop other children hurting in similar ways. I'm Nicola Filzmoser...*

How much more impactful and engaging is that?

And why? Because it's the story only Nicola can tell.

It still sets out the issue, and the size of the market, the problem and solution, but it also makes me feel the commitment of the founder to the company.

That's important because, as we all know - and all too well - business can be a tough game. It rarely goes to plan. There will come a time when even the toughest entrepreneur feels like giving up.

How much more likely are they to persist, and find a way to win, when they're fuelled by such a powerful emotional investment as Nicola?

Never forget this when you're pitching:

We don't just buy into your company. We buy into you, as well.

Do we trust you? Do we believe in you?

Critically, do we think you won't quit when the going gets tough?

What is there in your story which can show us that? What's the tale that only you can tell?

## 4.4 THE STRUCTURE

This is controversial, but true. There's no right or wrong way to structure a pitch.

Some coaches say you must start with your team, or end with your ask, but there are an infinite number of ways to tell a story. The trick is to find which works for you.

There are, however, certain elements which should feature, particularly if you're seeking investment. I think of them as the pitch decathlon.

- **Striking start**

As discussed, there's no point what follows being brilliant if no one is tuned in to hear.

- **Problem and solution**

Remember our heroes and villains approach to your value proposition.

Here you build on the problem you're solving, and why you're best placed to show it the door.

Think Happyr Health and migraines.

- **Target market and value**

Now we're getting into the meat of the business case.

How big is your target market? What slice of it can you hope to take?

- **Business model**

Who's the customer? How are you selling to them?

A freemium model? Subscriptions? Or simple sales? And why will your approach work?

- **Show off your secret**

It's a trick of mine to put this half way through a pitch, which comes down to my life as an author.

In a book, or TV show, we writers live in dread of the saggy middle.

We've established the crime, fearful threat, or romance. But now there's a risk the plot starts to slow and the audience drifts off.

So what do we do?

Put another murder, fight, or big reveal half way through is the answer, to keep up the interest.

That can also work with pitches. Showing off your secret, the reason you're going to become billionaires, half way through, helps to refresh the attention.

- **Going to market**

How are you going to get your product, or service, in front of your customers?

- **Check the competition**

Show you've done your homework. Who are you up against? Why are you better? Incidentally, saying there's no competition is rarely a good answer. It tends to mean you just haven't looked hard enough.

- **Timeline**

To be frank, I usually see this as the biggest leap of imagination in any pitch.

The truth is we rarely know how long it will take to shift through the gears of a business. But an educated guess is worthwhile, although please be realistic.  
World domination in two weeks only happens in Hollywood.

- **The team**

This is critical. Have you got all the important bases covered?  
Who's the science, tech, or innovation expert? Who knows the business side? Where's the marketing, intellectual property, legal advice etc. coming from?  
A balanced team is a must for any ambitious business.  
If you're a sole founder, get yourself a team ASAP is my strong advice.  
All the statistics say you're much likelier to succeed if you're not alone. Many investors won't even consider offering funding unless you have a team.

- **Ask, and the big goodbye**

Every pitch should have an ask.  
It might be money, mentoring, media coverage, or a range of other requests. But a platform is an opportunity, so use it.  
The big goodbye means you should leave us on a high.

What do I mean by that? Well, since you ask...

## 4.5 THE ENDING

If the start is the most important part of your pitch, what do you think is the second most important? The other element your audience is most likely to remember?

Yes, you got it again. The ending.

Standby, I'm going to be literary here, just to show I'm not as daft as you might (understandably) have begun to suspect. But don't worry, it probably won't happen again.

In his masterpiece, Four Quartets, the great TS Eliot wrote, *In my beginning is my end.*

That's a good guide for pitches and presentations. You want a short, sharp and memorable ending, and one which reflects your start.

What you certainly don't want is to tail off into nothingness, with vague mumblings about thanking the audience for listening.

Take the example we discussed earlier. A powerful conclusion to that pitch might be:

*I'm Nicola Filzmoser and we're Happyr Health, easing the agony of migraines, and restoring the joy of childhood to millions.*

See how it's an elegant way of saying goodbye, and reiterating the core message in a memorable manner?

The other point to remember about endings is to leave your audience clear that you've finished.

Don't just fade away. Add an emphatic *thank you*, stop, and that's the cue for wild applause. Hopefully!

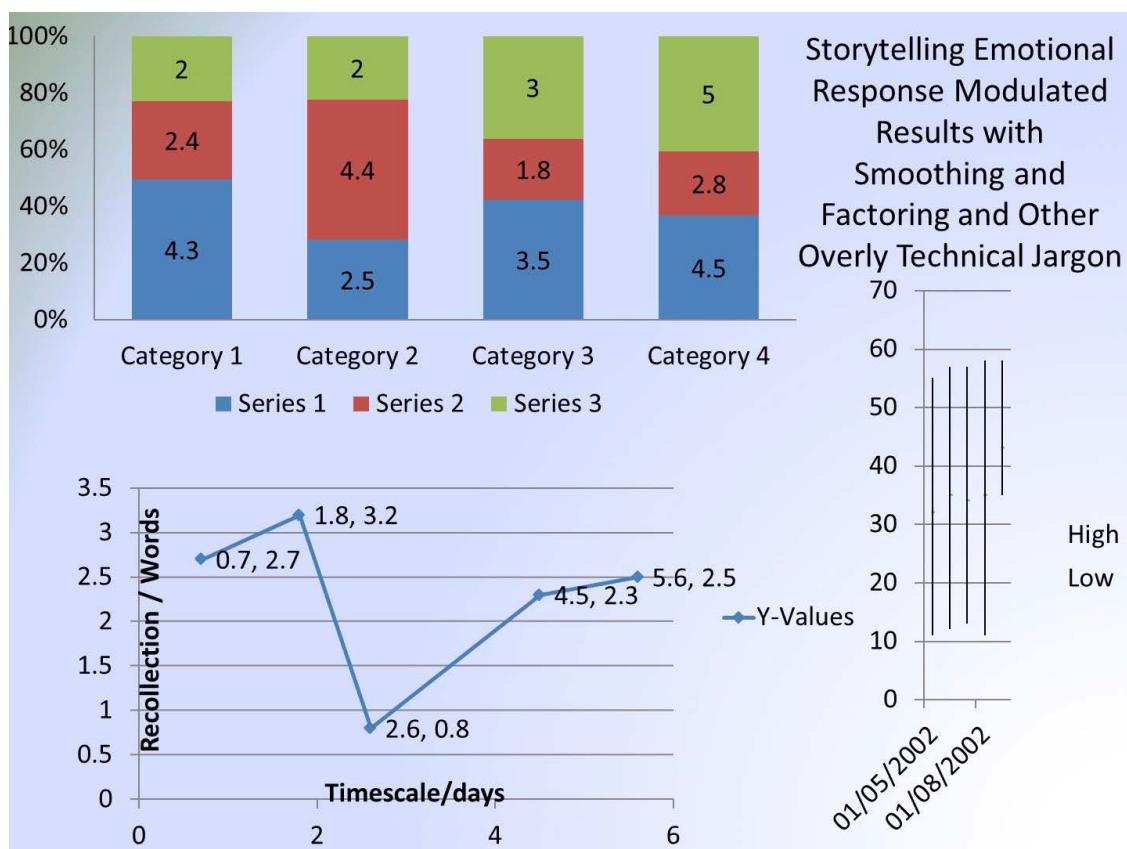
## 4.6 SLIDES

An old saying has it that a slide should contain no more information than a T-shirt.

That's good wisdom, because it's worth remembering this:

Your audience is either reading the slide, or listening to you, but not both. So your commentary should elegantly complement your slides.

How do you think a group might cope with these statistics on the impact of storytelling? How long would it take to convey all this information in words?



Ok, I made all that up. It's meaningless. But you get the point.

How many similar bombardments of information have you seen in pitches? And how much of it did you actually remember?

Now compare it to a very different slide I might use to emphasise the importance of storytelling.



**"Story was crucial to our evolution - more so than opposable thumbs. Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to."**

Which do you think is more effective? Not to mention memorable? A blizzard of data, or a striking image and one meaningful point?

As a rule of thumb, to help you know how much information is appropriate, each slide should be on screen for about 30 seconds.

Also, never forget your audience.

Your slides can be more technical if you're talking to experts in the field, and it's the industry style. That's the case with many scientific presentations.

But if you're dealing with potential customers and investors, who don't boast your in depth knowledge, better to keep it simple.

They can always ask for more detail about your science and technology in the question and answer session which invariably follows a pitch.

On the subject of which...

## 4.7 THE Q AND A

Your five minutes are up, and you've done a great job. Time to relax, right?

NOOOOO!

(That's me emphasising the answer is a big no, in my usual hilarious way.)

The question and answer session is as significant as the pitch itself. Try to anticipate what might be asked, and have an answer, and slides ready, if necessary.

With Creative Warehouse, I'm sometimes asked for a sample publicity campaign we've run, so I have one detailed in a separate slide.

Being ready to field key questions demonstrates professionalism, good preparation and thoroughness.

## 4.8 BODY LANGUAGE

The same principles we discussed in your elevator pitch apply to more formal presentations.

Stand up straight, be calm, clear and confident. Project your voice, and moderate your pace. Resist the nerves which urge you to babble.

There is one more important point to bear in mind.

You'll probably have a desk, or lectern. I understand the desire to hide behind it, where you feel safe. But don't.

Come out and stand in the middle of the floor, so you can sweep the room with your gaze and make eye contact with everyone. That projects confidence and authority.

If you need to buy yourself a clicker to control the presentation, then do. It's a worthwhile investment.

Resist the urge to look behind you at the slides, as well. You're talking to the audience, not the screen.

Take a colleague, or friend along. Sit them on the front row with a laptop open, facing you.

They can mirror the presentation and change the slide as the images change behind you, reassuring you all is well and allowing you to maintain your conversation with the audience.

## 4.9 TIMINGS

You've got five minutes, and you've got a lot to say. So you rehearse five minutes, right?

Wrong.

Many pitches and presentations involve a hard count. I've seen trumpeters used to drown out any poor presenter who trespasses so much as a second over their allotted time.

I always recommend leaving 10 per cent leeway. So if you've got five minutes, prepare four and a half.

Why?

Because something unexpected will always happen. It's one of the annoying rules of presentations.

A slide will stick. A door will slam. You'll forget what to say next, and pause to gather your thoughts.

If you're hard up against time, you'll get flustered, start to rush, and you're much more likely to make a mess of your big moment.

Time in hand helps you to relax, and perform at your peak.

## 4.10 PREPARATION

Finally, prepare and prepare until you're word perfect, and then prepare some more.

I love this quotation from the great boxer, Muhammad Ali.

*The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses – behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights.*

So it goes with pitches and presentations. Learn the words. Cast aside the notes. Be clear, concise, and in control.

Prop up your phone and record yourself in action. Work at your words, body language and timing until they're spot on.

But don't just content yourself with rehearsing at home. If one of my companies is pitching for high stakes, I insist we get to the venue several hours early.

That allows time to check the angles. Where will the presenter stand to see everyone clearly? How far will they have to project their voice?

Critically, what about the technology? Will the presentation run smoothly?

Test it, check it, rehearse it, again and again.

The more comfortable and confident you feel going into the pitch, the better you're likely to perform.

If you have five minutes to spare, here's an example of how I might [start and end a pitch, and more on the highs and lows of slides](#).

# 5 SOCIAL MEDIA

Up to this point, you might have been a little shy to talk too much about your business, waiting first to make a few more waves in the kingdom of commerce.

But now you've nailed your value proposition and elevator pitch, your website doesn't just work, it wows as well, and you've raised a cascade of cash courtesy of your preeminent pitching.

So it's time to spread your message. Which means you've got to get online, and onto social media.

But which platforms are best for your business? And how do you present yourself on them?

It will be the pleasure of this chapter to be your guide through those questions, and help you do social with style.

## 5.1 THE BASICS

I know it's tempting to get posting right away, but whoa there! Resist.

First, let's sort the basics of your social media. And they don't come much more fundamental than this:

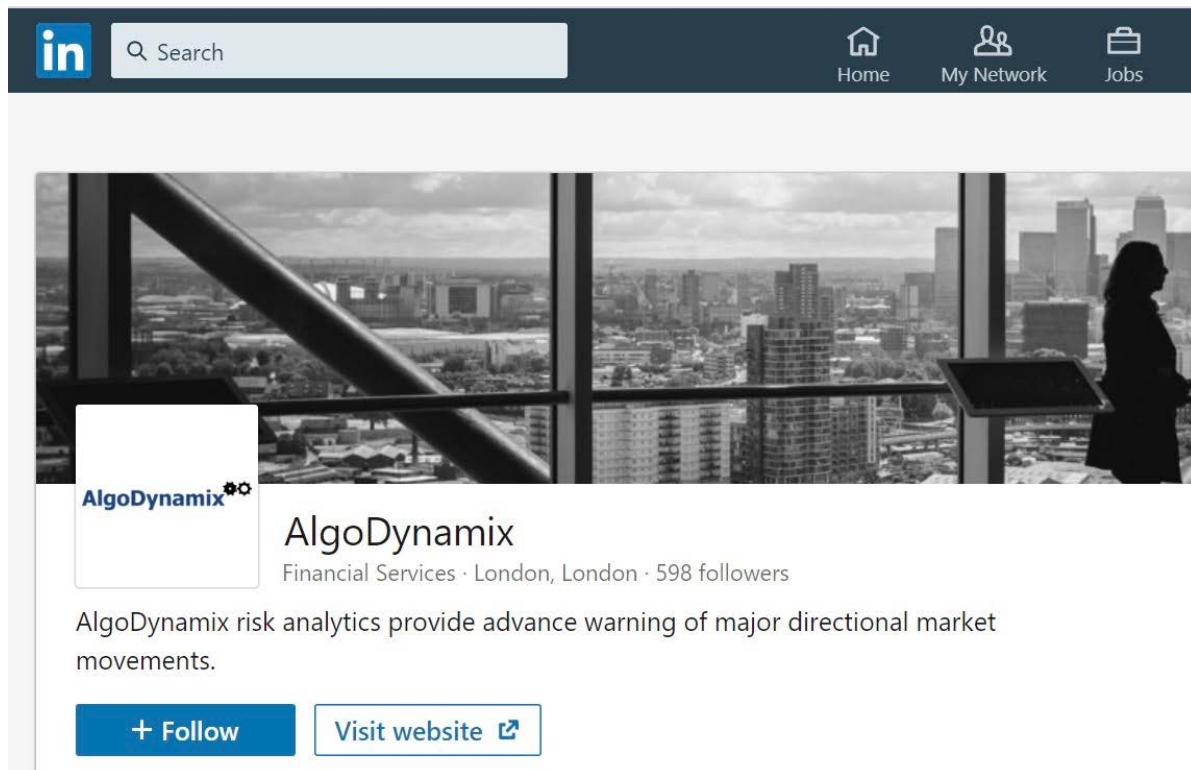
Who are you?

Don't worry, it's not a brain bending philosophy question from a Cambridge University exam. But it is time to decide on the character of your business.

Are you dark and disruptive? Cool with the kids? Or more upright and formal?

The answer depends on the nature of your work, and the image you want to portray.

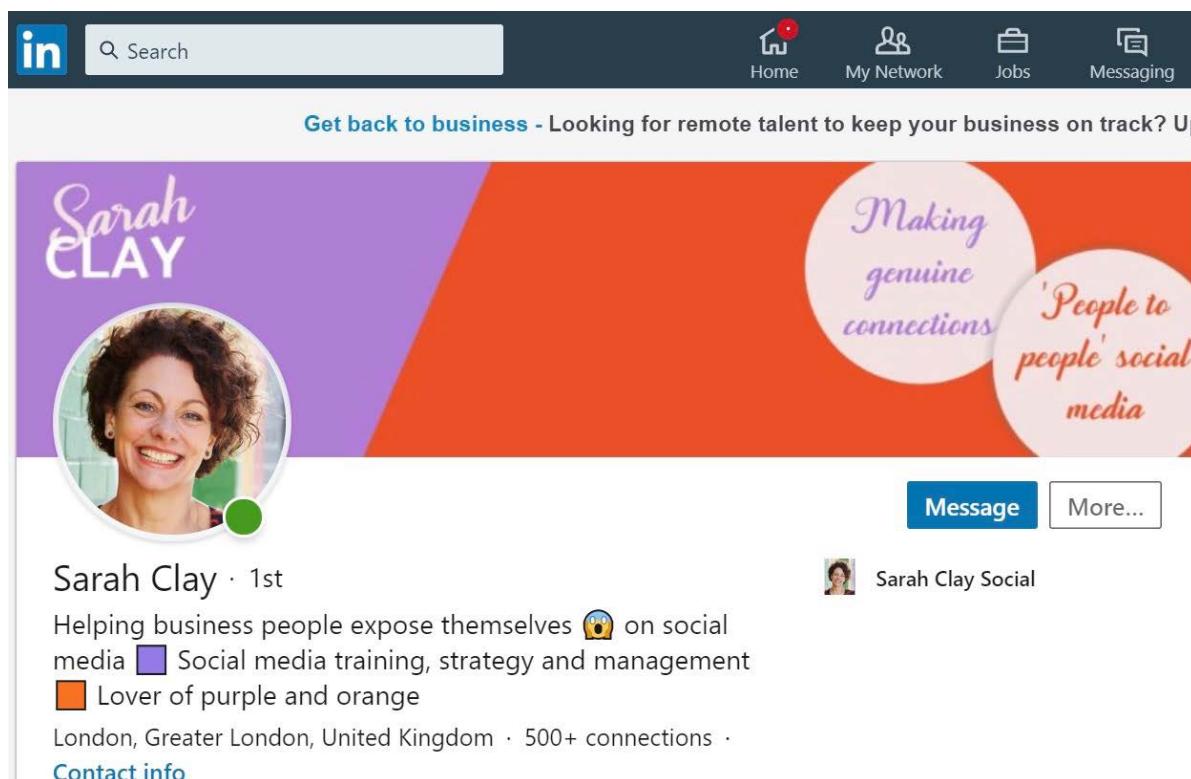
For example, look at the difference between a financial risk forecasting firm I work with here in Cambridge, AlgoDynamix, and well known social media strategist Sarah Clay.



The image shows a LinkedIn company profile for 'AlgoDynamix'. The header features the LinkedIn logo and a search bar. To the right are links for 'Home', 'My Network', and 'Jobs'. Below the header is a large window view of a city skyline. On the left, there's a sidebar with the company name and a follower count of 598. The main content area displays the company's name, 'Financial Services · London, London', and a brief description: 'AlgoDynamix risk analytics provide advance warning of major directional market movements.' There are two buttons at the bottom: '+ Follow' and 'Visit website'.

AlgoDynamix play it straight, with conventional colours and appearance, which suggests reliability and formality.

In other words, just the image you want when you're working in banking and finance.



The image shows a LinkedIn profile for 'Sarah CLAY'. The header includes the LinkedIn logo, a search bar, and links for 'Home', 'My Network', 'Jobs', and 'Messaging'. A promotional banner at the top says 'Get back to business - Looking for remote talent to keep your business on track? Up'. The profile picture is a woman with curly hair, and her name is displayed in a stylized font. To the right are two circular graphics: one saying 'Making genuine connections' and another saying 'People to people social media'. Below the profile picture, the name 'Sarah Clay' is listed with '1st'. Her bio includes: 'Helping business people expose themselves 📸 on social media 🎨 Social media training, strategy and management', 'Lover of purple and orange', 'London, Greater London, United Kingdom · 500+ connections', and 'Contact info'. There are 'Message' and 'More...' buttons at the bottom.

Sarah, on the other hand, is modern, cool, and brimming with character. Which is just how she wants to be seen to match the world of social media.

All this is set by your biography. So before you even start posting, make sure you get your bio right. It sets the tone for all your online adventures.

## 5.2 THE BIO

There are three critical elements to your bio. The profile picture, header image, and words.

Even more of a challenge, it's ideal if you can get them all working together in harmony.

But don't fret. The work we've done so far on your core message, elevator pitch, and website can help.

For a company, the profile picture is usually your logo.

The header might demonstrate what you do, and preferably strikingly, just like with your website. This renowned agricultural machinery firm is a good example:



The words are usually the biggest challenge. On Twitter, you have 160 characters to play with, which equates to about 30 words. Not a lot, to be frank.

And within those, you have to set out what you do, plus provide a flavour of your individuality. That's critical as it helps your bio to stand out from the crowd.

Here's one of my favourite examples:



## Barack Obama ✅

@BarackObama

Dad, husband, President, citizen.

⌚ Washington, DC ⚖️ obama.org

⌚ Born 4 August 1961 📅 Joined March 2007

The four simple words say what President Obama does. But here's the cleverness and quirk:

Given their order, what does that say about his priorities in life? And what kind of a character is he?

Look at his profile and header photos, as well. How do they fit with that image? Smart, eh?

As for your guide through the world of business communication, forgive me mentioning myself here. But it's the only time in life I'm likely to share a stage with Barack Obama, so I think you'll understand:



## Simon Hall ✅

@SimonHallNews

Tutor in Business, Writing & Media, University of Cambridge ~ Director, Creative Warehouse ~ Author ~ Journalist, ex BBC ~ Lover of words, thoughts & feelings

⌚ Cambridge, England ⚖️ thetvdetective.com

📅 Joined March 2011

The principles, if not quite the achievements, remain the same.

My bio says what I do, the last line gives a sense of my character, and the profile and header photos follow the theme.

That's the trick of the bio. Get those three elements pulling together and you're starting to establish a clear, distinctive, and appealing online identity.

### **5.3 PICKING YOUR PLATFORMS**

Now comes another fundamental question. Which platforms are best for your business?

Not my use of the plural. Most companies, until they grow and have their own marketing departments, tend to choose two.

That's usually about right to put in sufficient effort to make an impression, but not take up too much of your valuable time.

Generally, LinkedIn is a gimme. It's where just about all businesses are.

I don't have time to go into a rundown of how the various other platforms work here. But if you want a free tutorial, containing most everything you need to know about LinkedIn, see this [video](#) from a social media maestro who is happy to share his insights.

So, if LinkedIn is a no brainer, what about your other platform?

I use Twitter, because most companies, journalists, commentators, and business leaders are there. If you'd like to know more about how Twitter works, and its potential advantages, this is a useful [article](#).

For particularly visual companies, like restaurants, fashion, or design businesses, you might choose [Instagram](#).

Facebook, of course, remains the biggest of the platforms in terms of the number of users. For more helpful information about making the best use of Facebook for business, see [here](#).

All the rival platforms have their own merits and potential appeals for your business. It's worth taking time to read up on their various strengths and weaknesses, before deciding which to commit to.

## 5.4 POSTING

It will probably take a while to find the character and style which works for you on social media. But, to help, here are some important points to remember when you're posting:

- Community

This is critical, yet often forgotten.

Social media is not just about talking, it's about listening and engaging too. Interact with others, particularly in your field.

It helps to get you noticed, enhances your image and builds an audience if you're willing to have a conversation.

There's a clue in the title. Social media is ***social***. Never forget that.

- Timing

Certain times of day are busiest on the various platforms. It's worth knowing which so you can publish your post to the biggest audience.

I tend to post at lunchtimes.

I know that's when the business audience is likely to be online, as they grab a quick break and scroll through their phones to see what's going on in the world.

- Character

Don't be a robot in how you post. Be proudly human. Showing character can act like a magical spell on social media.

Don't be afraid of humour, or self-deprecation either.

This post is from a friend who's a Cambridge University physicist, and it went viral because he wasn't afraid to poke fun at himself.



**Paul Coxon** @paulcoxon · 1d

Hello my name is Paul, I have a PhD in physics and thanks to a random brain freeze forgot the word for photon so had to call it a "shiny crumb" in front of my colleagues 😐

1,754

9,732

72.5K



[Show this thread](#)

On the serious side, that Tweet saw him interviewed by media outlets around the world, which was great for his profile.

- Consistency

Whatever look and feel you choose for your bio, and your style on social media, be consistent.

If it's good enough for Facebook, it's good enough for Instagram, LinkedIn and any other platform.

No smart business dilutes their brand.

- Links, tags and hash tags

These are common features of most of the platforms, and can help you to build an audience.

- Links take you to blogs, news reports, websites, or anywhere else on the web.
- Tags allow you to mention certain businesses, or people, which also alerts them to the post and so makes them more likely to engage.
- Hash tags are a categorisation system, to help browsers find posts which they might be interested in.

For example, I use #amwriting when I'm talking about my work as an author. There are different tricks to using tags, hash tags and links on the various platforms. I'd recommend researching what works best when you've decided which platforms to use.

## 5.5 PHOTOS AND VIDEO

There are more than a few songs which lament that sometimes words are not enough.

They tend to be talking about love. But it's a sentiment which is just as true for social media.

The statistics tell us that posts which include photos and videos are far more likely to be reposted, shared and commented on.

I'll talk more about photos and videos later in the book, as they're an important part of your business communication toolkit. But just to show the impact they can have, let me share with you a story I reported on in my final months at the BBC.

It was summer, very hot (unusually for the UK), and a group of boys at a school in Devon, south west England, asked their headteacher for permission to wear shorts to keep cool.

She said no, as it breached the uniform policy. So instead they wore skirts, pointing out that equality laws meant they could not be prevented from doing so.

Here's the Tweet I posted which broke the story, and almost broke the internet:

 **Simon Hall**  @Simo... · 22/06/2017

Boys at Isca Academy in Exeter wear skirts to school in protest at not being allowed to wear shorts in hot weather.



Spotlight and 3 others

1,697 57.6K 174K

Why did it make such a big impression?

Not because of my words, nor even the fantastic charisma and style of the writer (I wish.)

Yep, you're right. The reason the tweet went viral was all down to the photographs.

## 6 BLOGS AND ARTICLES

So, now you've slammed social media it's time to spread your online wings and write some blogs and articles.

But hang on a moment. Why bother? What's the return on investment for your precious time?

It's a good question – and here's a good answer.

Get them right and you can establish yourself as a leader in your field, enhance your profile, bring in business and attract partnerships, and also enable you to charge premium prices.

Even better, you don't have to spend as long as you might expect, hours upon hours, creating content. Let me show you how.

### 6.1 SPECIALISM AND STORY

It goes without saying, but it's often forgotten, so I'll say it anyway.

When you start blogging, never forget your specialism, or niche.

Ian Fleming didn't suddenly start writing romantic fiction. His hallmark was James Bond, all action spy hero. Just like Barbara Cartland didn't start writing bloodthirsty horror novels. She stuck with love stories.

Both became known, and celebrated, for their specialism. Which is exactly what you want to aim for with your blog.

And wouldn't you just know it?

You've already nailed exactly what you're going to be talking about, and how, from the work we've done so far. This blog I helped to set up in Cambridge is all about life as a [social sciences or humanities researcher](#) at the University.



### Lessons Learned While Interning at the UN

27/05/2020

Doing an internship wasn't something I was remotely considering last year while writing up my doctoral thesis. I read several advice blogs about how

[READ MORE](#)

#### Subscribe via Email

Enter your email address  
to receive our new posts  
by email.

[Subscribe](#)

Follow us on Twitter

Tweets by @camresearcher

 The Cambridge Researcher  
@camresearcher

Mine is full of tips about improving your communication skills.

To help build an audience, and get noticed, stick to your specialism, whether it's cancer research, financial forecasting, or communication.

Within your specialism, there are an infinite number of stories to choose from. Just like James Bond had to overcome a seemingly endless array of despicable plots to take over the world.

To make a mark, ideally you're looking for a story which is interesting, and offers an insight that readers can put to use.

Recent topics of mine include how to communicate most effectively on a webinar, the importance of body language in public speaking, and the dangers of misunderstandings in emails.

I blog once a week, and tend to choose something I've experienced that week as my subject. I find it's a good way to make the story feel fresh and relevant.

# ALWAYS ASK

It can be hard to do, but it's essential if you want to get on in business, your career, and so many areas of life.

What am I talking about?

It's the big ASK - the thing you really want to come out of this meeting / talk / moment / whatever.

I was privileged to welcome my friend, the brilliant screenwriter, Julian Unthank, to Cambridge last week, where he gave a fascinating lecture on careers in the TV and film industry.



This was a popular blog about the importance of adding an ask to any presentation.

I hosted my friend, the eminent screenwriter Julian Unthank, as he gave a careers talk to students at the University. We had a group of about a hundred eager budding writers. But afterwards, only one asked Julian for his contact details, to help him with advice in his fledgling career.

Which was a shame, because Julian was prepared to offer mentoring to three students.

Also, get into the habit of taking photos, wherever you go and whatever you do. They can be used in so many ways in your business communications, not least really helping to bring your blogs to life, as above.

These days, because of the importance of photos, I rarely write a blog without at least one, and preferably more. They're simply essential for modern messaging.

## 6.2 WRITING STYLE

There's something about sitting down and writing anything that's going to be published which somehow tempts many an author into a trap.

It's this:

Writing rather too formally, as if one were attempting to sue the reader rather than inform, with a plethora of somewhat lengthy vocabulary, multiple excessive degrees of expression, meandering verbosity, not to mention sentences which contain therein such a complexity of clauses that one has nigh forgotten the point of the communication when one reaches the culmination of the seemingly endless rambling.

I think perhaps it goes back to schooldays, when that's how we were taught to write. But for the online world... forget it.

Attention spans are too short for sentences which resemble essays.

Many people will be reading on their phones.

The screens are small. They're hard to scan when packed with info.

Keep your style short, sharp and sparse.

Like this.

Ok?

## 6.3 WORD COUNT AND KEYWORDS

There's no minimum or maximum number of words to a blog. After all, much of social media is effectively micro-blogging, with stories told in just a sentence or two.

A story is worth what it's worth.

A good guide is to blog it like you'd tell it to a friend over a coffee, with a similar style and duration.

Some blogs go on for longer than others, just like some stories run for longer than others. Although about 300 words is probably the minimum you're looking for.

But there is something you should always find a way to work into your blog, and that's a smattering of keywords.

Blogs are powerful in search engine optimisation, making your website more prominent, as we discussed earlier. So make sure you include the keywords which will be of most benefit to your business.

Strangely enough, I often squeeze the words *communication, Cambridge, media, and public speaking* into mine.

## 6.4 SELLING

There's a great smiling, seductive temptation when you're investing the effort into writing a blog or article. It's so powerful it can actually become a yearning. I know, because I've felt it myself.

### Selling.

(I've made it bold to ensure you register the danger – you know me and my hilarious humour by now.)

The problem goes like this:

You've thought carefully about it, then taken the time to write the blog. You're proud of your work. So surely it's ok to sneak in a sales pitch?

No way whatsoever. Entirely incorrect. Woefully wrong.

In fact, it's so downright naughty that I'll bar you from the Honourable Guild of Business Communication Professionals, if I ever get round to setting it up. Which would be a shame, as you've been doing so well.

Selling is one of the biggest turn offs known to humankind. It's the online equivalent of bad breath.

(Apologies if I made you feel queasy there, but it's an important point, and you know how I like to hammer them.)

I often say the quickest way to make sure you don't land a sale is to start selling.

*So what should I do instead? I hear you cry.*

A far better strategy is to celebrate the difference you make.

Talk about how proud you are to help your customers. How happy you are to see them doing well. How fulfilling you find it to play your part in supporting them on the road to success.

Be helpful. Generous and supportive. Find pleasure in making a contribution.



This is a [blog](#) I wrote in the early days of the Coronavirus crisis.

I'd presented my first webinar in an attempt to help businesses navigate the impact of the virus. Afterwards, I published the blog, offering tips on how to ensure online teaching went well.

It was warmly received, much appreciated, it contained not a word of selling...

And I was subsequently booked for various other webinars on crisis communications.

## 6.5 LOVELY LAYOUTS

Even if we're talking raw, red-blooded business, blogs can still be beautiful.

That's worth remembering, as they're much more likely to be read if the layout is appealing.

Use headings, photos, bullets, italics and lots of white space to help make your blog easy on the eye. This is a good example from the Cambridge Researcher:

Home   About   Meet the Editors   Submission Guidelines   Archives   Contact Us

Home / Social Media / Our Lives on Screen – Our Reading Habits and How To Manage Our Digital Distractions

## Our Lives on Screen – Our Reading Habits and How To Manage Our Digital Distractions

03/06/2020   Blogpost · ResearcherLife · Social Media · Wellbeing



Royalty free image source: <https://www.pxfuel.com/en/free-photo-xvsze>

By **Tyler Shores**, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Nowadays, we're likely spending more time in front of our screens than ever before, and it might be as good a time as any for us to take a step back and think about some of our online reading habits.

**How Do We Read in Print and On Screens?**

My current research looks at our experiences of reading on the printed page and reading digital texts, so this topic is constantly on my mind. The question that very often comes up is: "which is better"? The wholly unsatisfying answer is: it depends. None of us read in exactly the same way and for the same purpose, and this often will vary depending on the content. The following are not either/or categories by any means, but different ways to think about how we read: interstitially, deeply or leisurely.

Subscribe via Email

Enter your email address to receive our new posts by email.

Email Address

Subscribe

Follow us on Twitter

Tweets by @camresearcher

The Cambridge Researcher @camresearcher

We would like to share a reading list composed by @Orlbraam as a resource to educate ourselves and to understand the ongoing protests for justice in the US and around the world. What are you reading? nyl.ms/2XUzd43 @CambridgeBME #BlackLivesMatter

Illustrator: @ganemount



Jun 4, 2020

Embed   View on Twitter

Follow us on Instagram



The author, my friend Tyler Shores, makes use of a range of tricks to ensure his blog is a pleasure to read.

If you're interested, you can see the rest of the story, and his other tricks for ensuring lovely layouts [here](#).

## 6.6 BUILDING AN AUDIENCE

I'm often asked, *How do I build a big audience for my blog fast?*

The answer, I'm afraid, is annoying, but true. Generally, unless you're a celebrity, it's the same as with social media.

You don't.

Building an audience is a long game. It requires consistent content of a high standard to draw more and more people to you as the weeks pass.

And that offers an important lesson:

If you're going to start blogging, commit to giving it a chance.

And that's not just in creating the post itself. Publicise it on your social media channels. Mention it in your newsletter, during talks, podcasts, or any other events you do.

Promise yourself – and your audience – you're going to post once a week, and make sure you find the time.

If not, sad to say your work is likely to be wasted.

## 6.7 TITLES

I mention this finally, because it's often the last thing that gets considered when producing a blog, or article. But actually it should be one of the first. Because titles are critical.

Online is a frantically busy space. Almost unimaginably so.

Don't believe me? Have a look at this [website](#), which monitors the number of blogs and social media posts written every day.

Watch and wonder as the numbers blur before your eyes. It makes very clear how intense the competition for attention is online.

Creating a strong title really helps to get your blog noticed. Even better, they're not difficult to do and can be fun.

The principles of how to produce an effective title are the same whether you're writing a newspaper headline, a book, an academic research paper or a blog.

Some examples:

- Dancing With Your Cat (book)
- Ban Ki Goes to Hollywood (newspaper)
- 12 Weird Tips to Hit the Top (blog)
- Do Woodpeckers Get Headaches? (research paper)
- Elvis Presley's Teeth to Visit Malvern (newspaper)
- The Propulsion Parameters of Penguin Poop (research paper)

I think of the principles for titles as *The Three I's*.

You're seeking something which *Interests*, by immediately catching the eye, *Intrigues* into making you want to find out more, and also *Inform*s, in giving you at least a sense of what the blog is about.

## 7 MEDIA COVERAGE

Journalists are always interested in businesses offering new services and products, and media coverage can be powerful in attracting customers and investment.

After all, it's free advertising of a kind you just can't buy.

But how do you attract the attention of a reporter?

This chapter takes you through writing a news release which gets noticed, and the dark art of dealing with journalists.

### 7.1 THE GOLDEN RULE

This is so important, it's more like the diamond studded platinum rule, but that didn't scan as a heading.

When you're trying to hook a hack, never forget this:

Journalism is one of the most pressurised of the professions.

When I was out reporting for the BBC, the phone never stopped, the emails pinged in every few seconds, and social media buzzed incessantly. And that was alongside the actual filming and interviewing.

Editors think in headlines. Stories are summed up in a sentence.

You have absolutely no time to spare when dealing with journalists. You have to give them your best shot in a helluva hit, and all that in the space of seconds.

Which is where your angle comes in.

### 7.2 THE ALL IMPORTANT ANGLE

One of the most common questions you'll hear in any newsroom, and usually at a yell, is *What's the angle?*

Put simply, it sums up the point of the story. Why should an audience be interested?

I've got good news for you on that front.

Your value proposition won't just help you, it'll act as the smart and smiling waiter who proudly proffers the angle on a silver platter. All you have to do is turn it into a well-crafted sentence to form the perfect start for your news release.

Let's go back to some of the core messages we discussed at the start of this odyssey. Take Crazy Egg's *Make Your Website Better Instantly*.

Their angle might be: *An app which shows where your website is succeeding and failing in an instant has been launched.*

Most journalists, particularly in the business field, would be interested in that. Because they know immediately that their audience would be, too.

Or how about Uber's *Tap the app, get a ride.*

Here the angle might be: *If you've ever struggled to get a cab – and who hasn't? – a new app can solve the problem in seconds, with just the tap of a finger.*

Again, most journalists would eat that up.

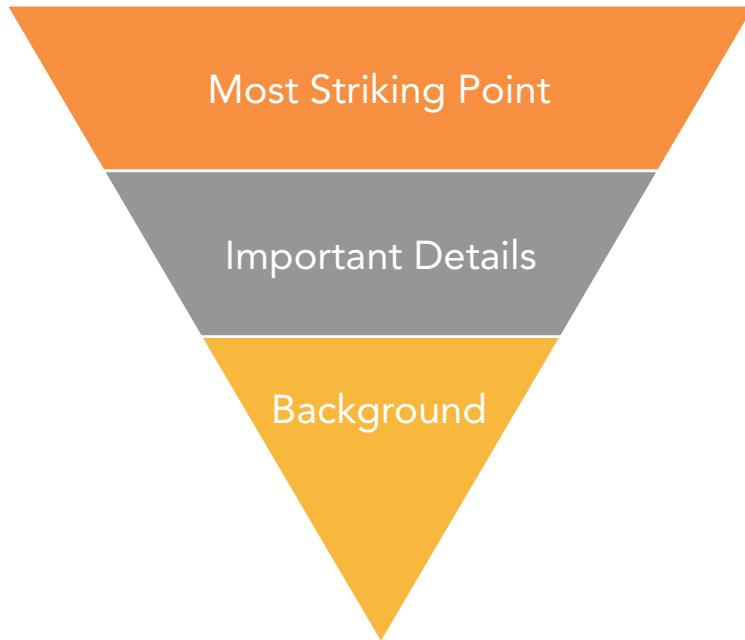
It outlines the point of the story in an instant, shows why the world should be interested, and thus lures the reporter into writing the story.

### 7.3 STORY STRUCTURE

There's a specific way of setting out a story which will help you get a journalist interested.

Like so many of the finest tricks in life, it's simple, clever, and very effective. In fact, it's so useful it can come in handy anytime you're under pressure and have a communication problem to solve.

With all due applause, allow me to introduce the inverted pyramid:



The principle is straightforward.

If you structure your news release, or any communications this way, it will make sense no matter whether you have 50 words or 500.

Here's an example of a press release my company sent out as part of our work supporting businesses in Cambridge following the coronavirus pandemic.

#### **Cambridge Open For Business**

Companies in Cambridge are putting up an *open for business sign*, amid fears the government's quarantine of international travellers could deter vital international workers from coming to the city.

A two-week isolation period for the large majority of travellers arriving in the UK will be enforced from next week (8 June), ministers have announced.

In a city like Cambridge, which relies heavily on highly skilled workers from across the globe, that's causing concern.

Your Space Apartments, which provides a more personal accomodation than a hotel, are setting up a special Covid-19 service to help new arrivals in Cambridge negotiate quarantine.

It includes an apartment address that can be registered with the authorities, assistance with transport direct from airport to apartment door, food packs delivered to the door, and a virtual concierge and shopping service to help while isolated in a foreign country.

Suzanne Emerson, owner of Your Space said, "I would appeal to other companies to join us in saying loud and clear that Cambridge is very much open for business around the world.

'We're proud to support the business community at this critical time as we emerge from the lockdown and try to help the economy recover.'

The most important information – the angle – comes first. Other details follow in order of importance.

The inverted pyramid is invaluable in the media because it gives a reporter or editor great flexibility.

Imagine I was about to go on air, and I had prepared 90 seconds for a live report. But annoyingly, and inconsiderately, another story breaks (and I can't tell you how often this happens.)

The Editor yells in my ear that now I've only got 45 seconds. She doesn't even say sorry. (Editors don't.)

But no problem.

Because I've structured my words this way, I simply stop talking when my 45 seconds are up and the report still makes sense.

One final point - make sure you include all the relevant information. I love this rhyme, which acts as a smart and memorable checklist to help:

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and  
Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.*

– Rudyard Kipling, The Elephant's Child

## 7.4 QUOTES

In these sad days of cutbacks to many newsrooms, it's perfectly possible your release can be published just the way you've written it, and soon after you've sent it out.

That's on the proviso that all the required information is there, that is. Which means you'll need to add a quote.

Two sentences, or about 50 words, are what you're looking for. And forget about being your usual gentle and modest self. This is no time for humility.

Make it interesting. Let the passion, pride and personality run free. Look at the quote from Suzanne Emerson in the release, above.

Tell us how your company, invention or innovation, is going to make our world a better place, and how you feel about that.

Editors love good quotes. They can really help to get a story published.

## 7.5 DON'T WASTE YOUR WORK

Journalists are impatient creatures. If they see a story they like, they'll often want it immediately, if not sooner.

So, picture the scene. Your release has arrived in the newsroom. The Editor likes it, picks up the phone, goes to call you for more information, and...

There's no mobile phone number.

Which means your big chance of some lovely, and potentially lucrative publicity has just bounced into the bin.

Make sure to include your contact details, website, and social media as well.

They all help to establish your credibility, and find you, if necessary.

## 7.6 PICTURES

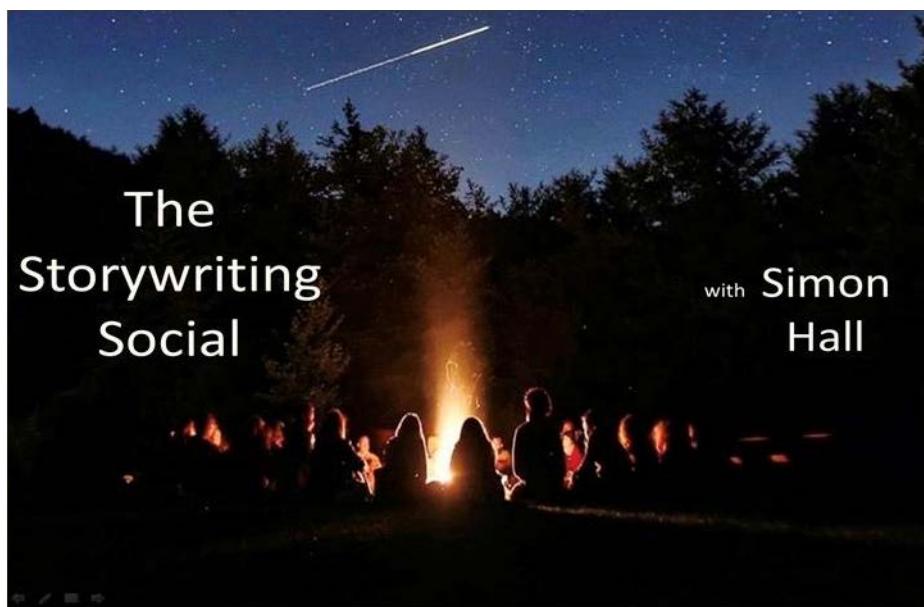
You should also include a photo of yourself, or your team, and your product or innovation.

Pictures help to make a release more appealing, and increase the likelihood of a reporter wanting to cover the story. Here's an example I sent out to publicise a free series of webinars I ran to help us through the early days of the coronavirus crisis:

### **STORYWRITING, SOCIALISING & UPSKILLING TO STAY SANE IN THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS**

If you want to learn how to write a book, a tale of these troubled times, or your life story, as well as socialise, and safeguard your sanity in the coronavirus crisis, a new series of FREE webinars can help.

Designed by a partnership of the Cambridge Network and storytelling agency Creative Warehouse in response to requests for evening events with a relaxed theme, ***The Storywriting Social*** will be entertaining and enjoyable, ideal for sharing with new friends over a glass of wine.



**The  
Storywriting  
Social**      with **Simon  
Hall**

But you'll also learn a fascinating and fulfilling skill - how to write and tell powerful stories.

I hope you notice I'm not just preaching, I do practice these tips as well. There's a strong headline, interesting opening to the story, and an appealing image to help engage the attention.

In terms of the photos to include, usually a decent quality mobile phone picture will do fine. Make sure the resolution is at least a couple of megabytes, and it's well composed and lit.

Funnily enough, we're moving on to photography for business in the next chapter.

Despite appearances, this book isn't just thrown together, you know!

# 8 PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

For our last chapter together, let's see some sights and have some fun. But with a point, of course.

This might sound like a daft question, but bear with me. Which of our senses do the vast majority of people rely on the most?

Of course, it's a no brainer - their sight.

Which begs the question: why do so many companies work hard on their words, yet fail to use pictures well in their communication?

A good image can do so much to explain what a company does, chart its history, add to its appeal, and perhaps most happily of all...

Getting into the habit of taking photos for your business is simple, enjoyable, and can be very rewarding. So let's look at the art of taking beautiful pictures on your smartphone.

For which, as an added bonus, at no extra charge – as it's you, and you've sat patiently through all my waffle – I'll take you on a brief tour of my dear historic Cambridge.

## 8.1 PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE

Well, photography fail number one, to be accurate, but that didn't sound quite so catchy.

There's one basic error that comes up time and again in photography. It's known as failing to fill the frame.

I view this as offensive as asking for a pint in a pub, and only being poured a half. You wouldn't stand for that, would you? Nor should you with a photo.

Because the loss of enjoyment and impact can be much the same.

Filling the frame makes for a much more powerful picture than if the subject looks lonely and lost, floating in acres of wasted space.

First stop on your tour of Cambridge, let me take you to my favourite park, Christ's Pieces.

(It is only a park, despite the name. We're just prone to being a little posh and pompous here.)

Have a look at this pair of photos of one of its delightful wildflower corners, both courtesy of my iPhone.



That's pretty enough, a nice photo, sure. But what if I get closer to the poppy and really fill the frame with it?



See the difference in the impact of the shots? Which is immediately the more striking with its colour, depth, and detail?

The moral of the story is to always fill the frame with the subject of your picture. If you have to walk towards it, or zoom in your shot, or even climb a fence, then do.

The return on the investment of a little effort will be a much finer photograph.

## 8.2 COMPOSITION

Sorry, I've gone all Cambridge, trying to impress you with my intellectual command of photographic jargon.

In the normal world, composition is just a fancy way of saying making a picture look pleasing.

Photography is an art, so there are no absolutes about how to do this. If a picture looks good, generally that's enough. But there is a handy guide, called *the Rule of Thirds*.

Imagine splitting the picture into a grid of horizontal and vertical thirds, like this:



If you position the main features of the picture on the lines, it will generally appear agreeable.

For example, the next stop on our tour of Cambridge, the iconic King's College, probably the most photographed landmark in the city.



This beautiful sunset shot demonstrates how positioning the main features of the photo on the thirds of the screen makes it look appealing.

Your friendly smartphone will even help you with this.

If you go into Settings, then down to Camera, you'll find a button marked Grid. Tap this to on, and now go to take a photo.

See what's happened?

As if by magic, say hello to those handy lines I mentioned earlier.

Use the grid as a guide until you're so much into the habit of the rule of thirds that you don't need it anymore.

### 8.3 ANGLES

The use of angles can make photos far more interesting.

You don't even have to get down on your knees. Just squatting to find an unusual perspective will often do the trick.

Look at these two photos of the University of Cambridge's sixteenth century Emmanuel College.



That's a standard shot, from eye level, and it's perfectly fine.



But what about this one? A different perspective, created just by bending down.

Which of the two pictures do you find the most eye catching?

#### 8.4 FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND

Another way to make photos more striking is to introduce foreground and background into your shot.

Look at these pictures I took of the University's St Catharine's College, or Catz to her friends, when I was teaching there.

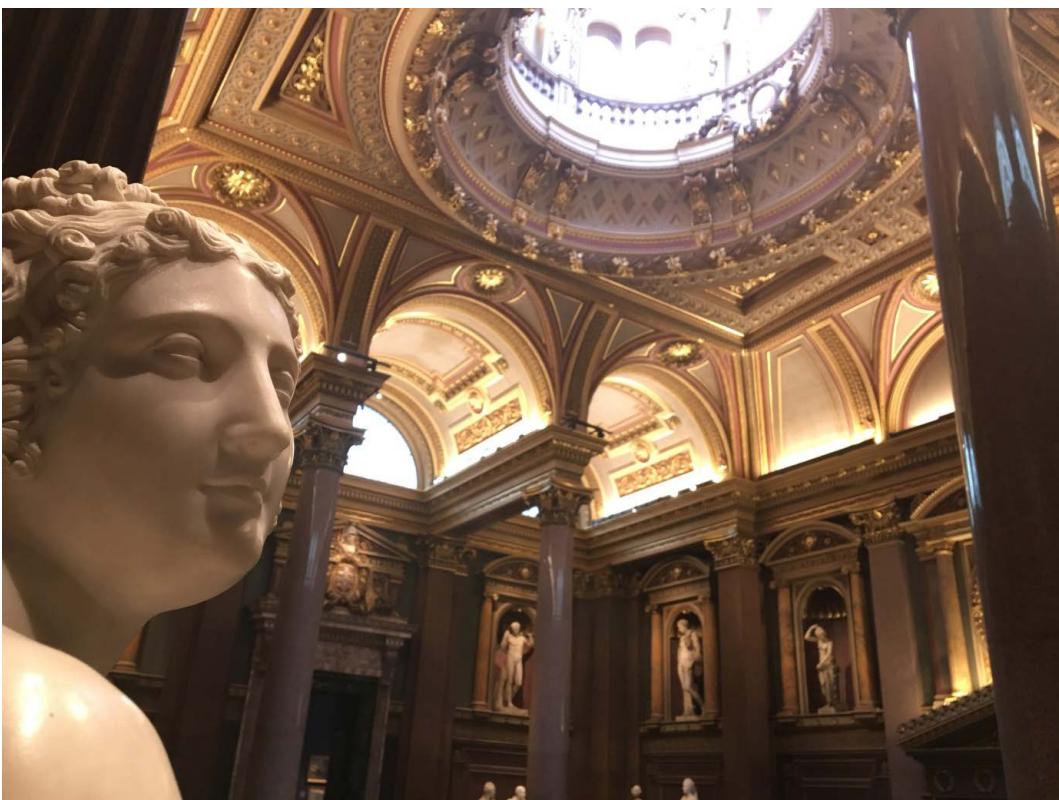


Pretty enough, but could it be improved with the use of some foreground?

You bet! Try this perspective:



And this is a picture I took in Cambridge's magnificent Fitzwilliam Museum, a trove of historic treasures where I often while away an enjoyable hour.



See how the use of angles, foreground and background adds depth and interest to the picture, and makes it much more eye-catching than just a standard photo?

## 8.5 FOCUS AND EXPOSURE

In my view, smartphones should more accurately be named super smart phones. They're that clever.

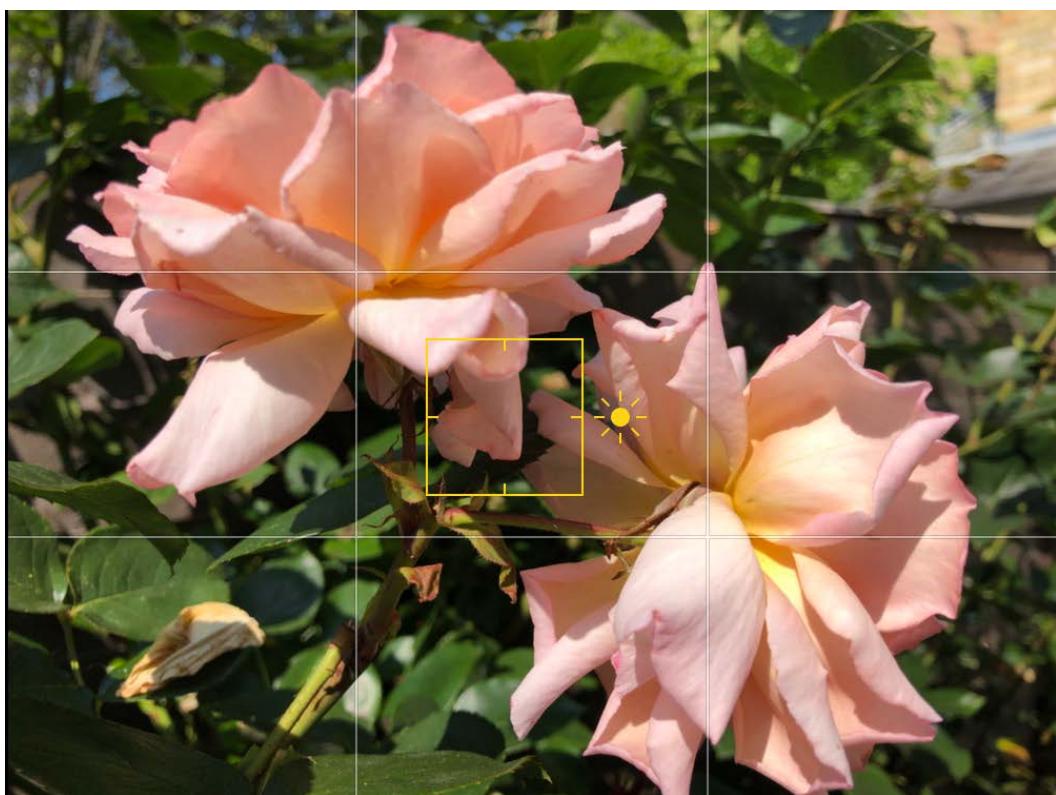
Aside from organising your life, bringing a taxi to your door, finding that restaurant hidden way off the beaten track, connecting you to all your friends in a second, and so much else, they're also slick at photography.

One of the lesser known tricks a smartphone can perform is to focus and expose a picture in just the way you want.

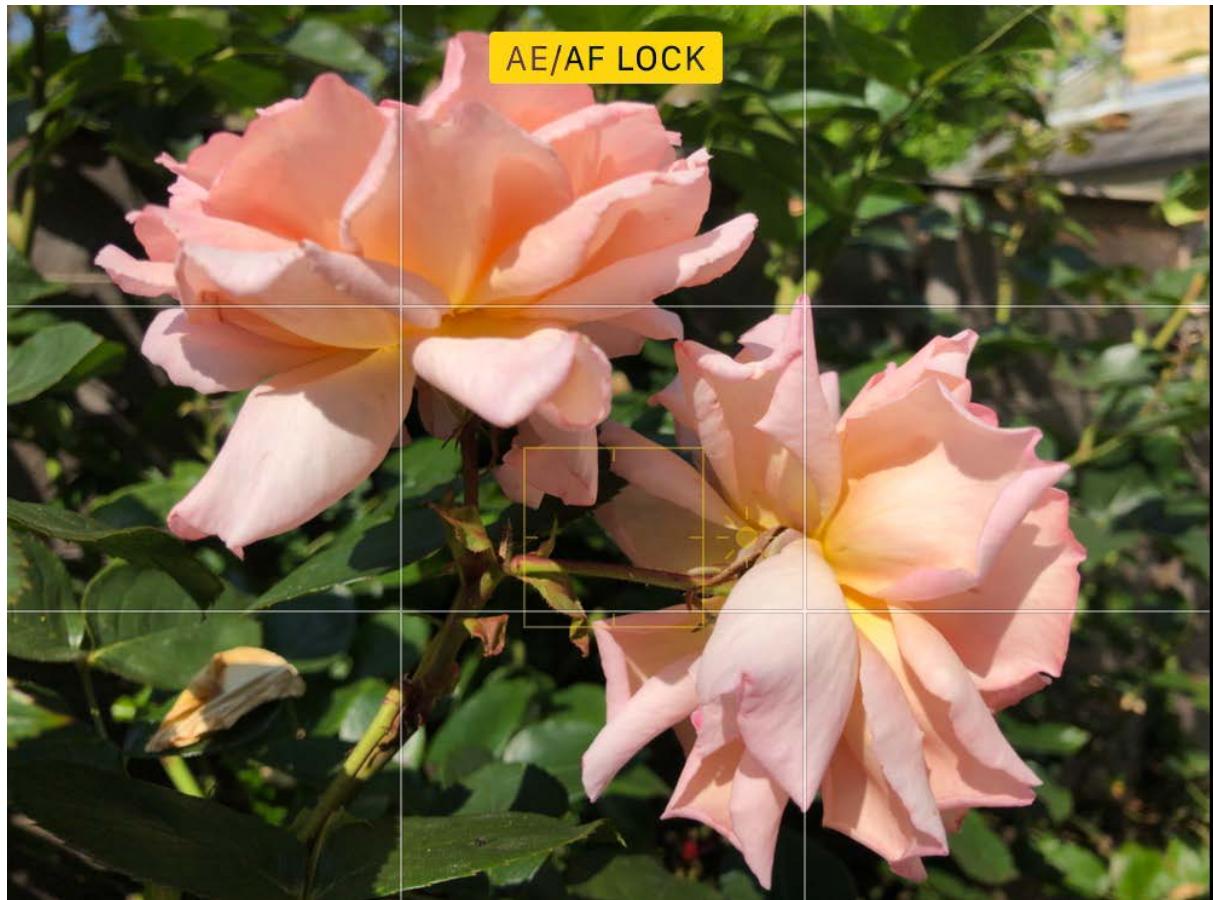
Generally, they're programed to find faces, and home in on them. But you can tell your phone to work in a different way. Open your camera and frame a shot. Now tap the screen.

What happens?

You should see a yellow box, with a sunshine symbol beside it, like this:



Now hold your finger in the box.



The AE/AF lock at the top means you've locked the exposure and focus on the point which the faint yellow box surrounds.

Clever, eh? But your phone hasn't finished yet.

Is the picture looking a little too bright, or dark?

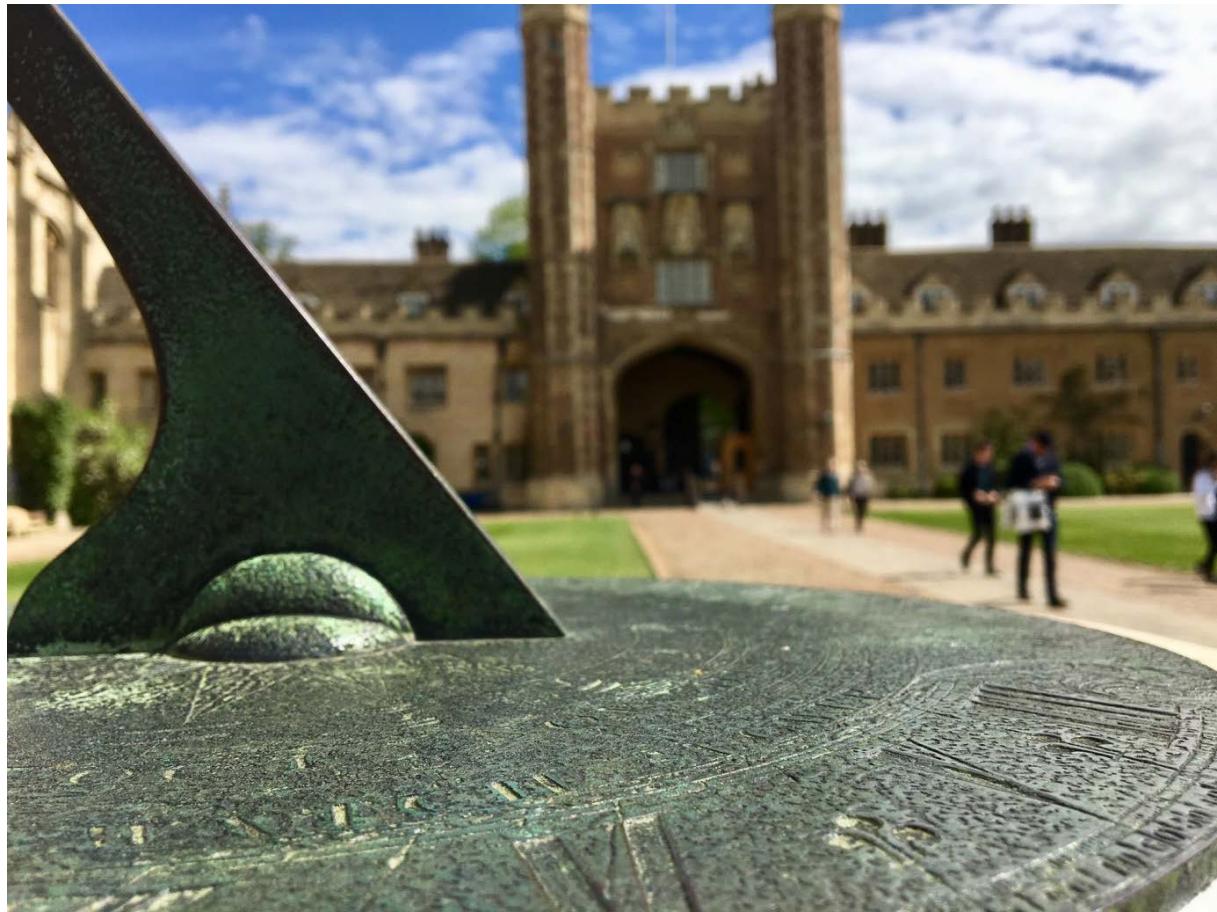
No problem. Brush your finger up or down the yellow sun symbol beside the box.

See what happens? The picture gets lighter or darker.

Have a play with that, until you find the perfect settings for your shot.

Experimenting with focus and exposure can make a real difference to your photos.

Here's a favourite image of mine from Trinity College, which has educated some magnificent thinkers through the years, from Isaac Newton to Lord Byron.



The picture would never have come out so well if I hadn't spent a few seconds adjusting the focus and exposure.

## 8.6 LIGHTING

Generally, you want the main light source, whether a window if you're inside, or the sun if outside, behind you when taking a photo.

That way the subject should be evenly lit, and you can get good results, as with this picture of Queen's College and the famous Mathematical Bridge.

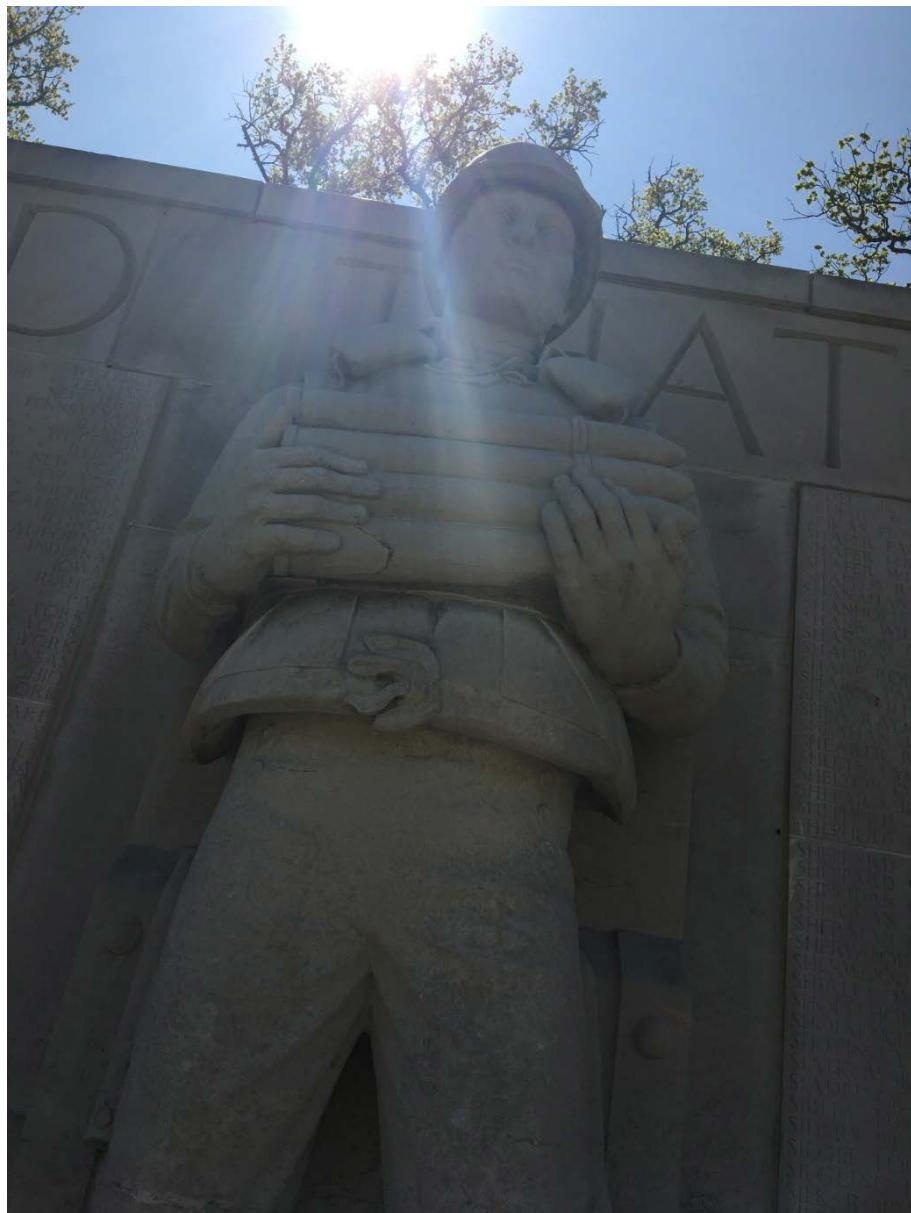


By the way, if you're a punctuation purist, and you're wondering about my use of the apostrophe there, it is correct.

The college is named after two queens. Hence Queens'.

(This is Cambridge. A solitary queen would just never do.)

Anyway, back to the point. Positioning yourself with the light at your back is, as ever, just a guideline. Because you can achieve impressive effects by shooting into the sun.



This is one of the memorials in the American War Cemetery at Madingley, on the outskirts of Cambridge.

It's a beautiful and deeply moving oasis of reflection, somewhere I often go when I need to think, and well worth a trip if you should visit my city.

## 8.7 VISUAL STORYTELLING

You've no doubt heard of this, and perhaps think it all sounds clever and complicated, but in fact it's straightforward and simple.

Visual storytelling is about letting the pictures tell the tale. I often think of it as walking through a scene and exploring with your eyes.

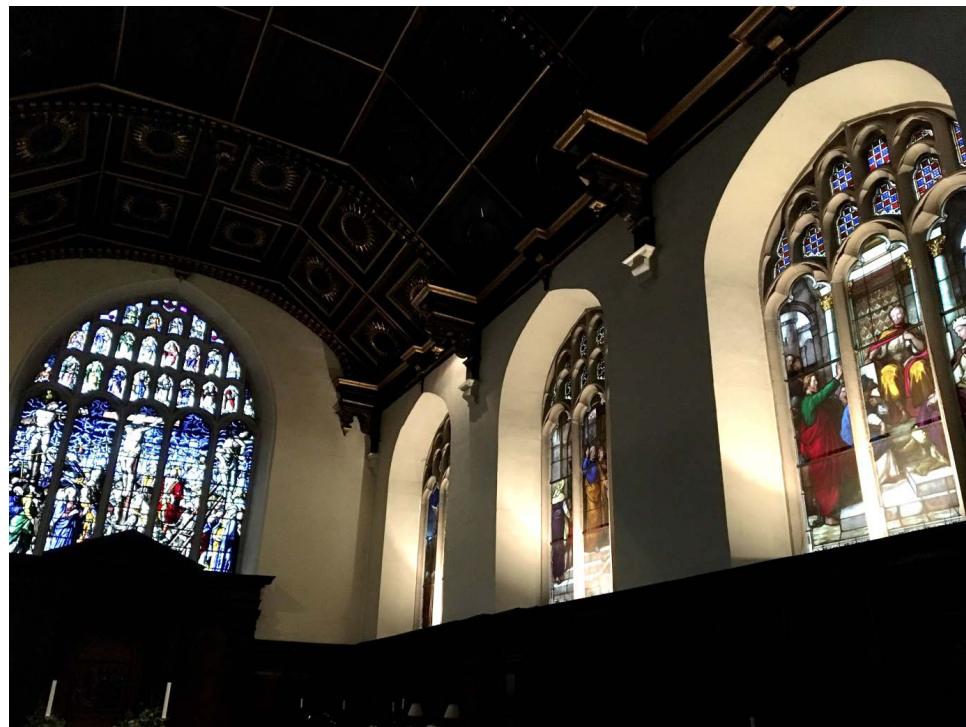
For example, imagine you were visiting Peterhouse College, the oldest in the University. First, you would walk into the college:



Next, you decide to head for the Chapel:



And then inside, to look around:





In brief, that's visual storytelling: letting the pictures do the work. You can also use graphics, much as you might with a presentation.

To explore further here's a two minute video of another Cambridge landmark, [the Mill Road Cemetery](#).

## 8.8 THE BUSINESS CASE

That's all very well, and thanks for the tour of Cambridge, I can hear you saying. But how does taking pretty pictures help my business?

In so many ways is the answer.

You can document important moments you want to share and celebrate, helping to raise your profile. Like these lovely entrepreneurs I have the privilege to work with.



Dewi and Gov run Oh Lily, which sells water lily based snacks, and they're delicious, believe me.

This was the moment they launched the company's new branding, something well worth telling the world about.

Which we did, in presentations, on their website, and social media, using photos like above.

A highlight of my career was interviewing two of the executives behind Google in front of a live audience at the University of Cambridge's Judge Business School.



Alan Eagle and Jonathan Rosenberg were an absolute pleasure to work with, and both myself and the audience learnt a great deal from their wisdom and experience.

We used photos like this to accompany newspaper articles, blogs, social media posts, and so much more about their visit.

The images helped show what a terrific event it was, and were a huge part of drawing attention to it.

And the business case, the return on the investment?

Chairing the event, and the subsequent publicity, led to several other fascinating offers of work for me.

## 8.9 VIDEOS

As I mentioned when we discussed websites, videos are incredibly important in business communication.

They can show off so much of what your business does, and how, in just a few seconds of action.

This is a [video](#) of me teaching. See how it gives a strong sense of not just what I do, but how I do it. In short, my character.

That's important, because it can help draw in customers when they see something they like, a way of working which is a little different from the norm.

Here's a [video](#) I made for a friend, who is an excellent business coach and trainer. Again, see how it showcases not just what Sheila does, but how she does it.

The video was filmed and edited using only a smartphone, and Sheila says the moment she put it on her website it brought in new customers.

But I know what you're thinking here.

*It's ok for that Hall chap to go on about making videos. He spent 20 years working at the BBC. It sounds much too complicated for me.*

Don't worry. It isn't. Your brilliant smartphone makes it all relatively easy.

## 8.10 MAKING A VIDEO

Broadly speaking, the principles of how to film good video are the same as with taking photos.

The rule of thirds, and use of foreground, background, and lighting still apply.

Which means it's now just a question of getting a series of clips of footage, then editing them together.

For example, this is another video I made for an [emergency ventilator project](#) in the coronavirus crisis. See how I filmed a mix of shots, including:

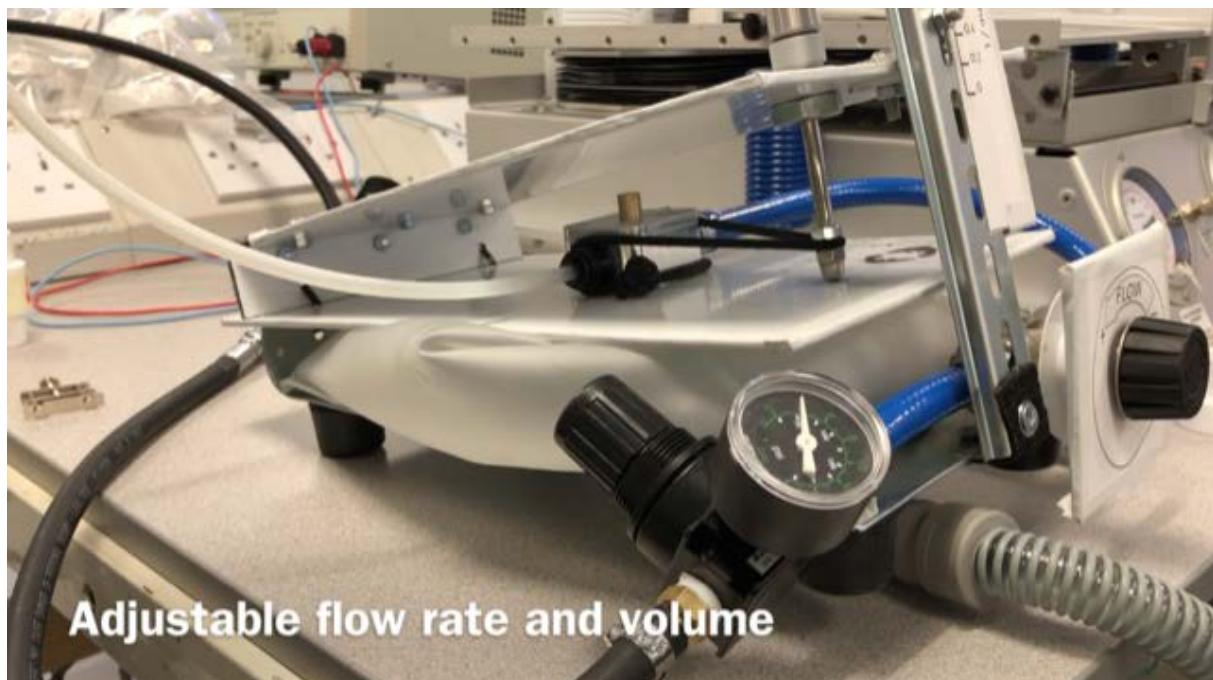
Wides, to establish a scene:



Mid shots, as though you're moving closer to the subject:



And close ups, to focus on the action:



You can also pan the camera (side to side motion), tilt (up and down), and zoom (move towards the subject.)

Then start editing, and learn as you experiment. Your phone will have a built in video editor, which will be plenty powerful enough for your purposes.

In the video above, I used captions to help explain what the viewer was seeing. You'll find these come as standard on any video editing app.

Let me take you back to Christ's Pieces on a glorious summer's day to briefly bring together my [guidelines for making videos](#).

Finally, in terms of durations, a video for a website should be less than two minutes long.

For social media films, you're only looking for 30 to 45 seconds.

The best way to learn the art of making videos is to have a play at it. I promise, it's not as difficult as it sounds, and I think you might find it enjoyable.

## 8.11 A LAST WORD

Finally for this chapter - and please excuse my indulgence - but I can't conclude your tour of Cambridge without one last iconic shot, also taken on a smart phone.



(Note the use of foreground, background, lighting and thirds.)

Punting is obligatory if you come visit us.

Just don't suffer the undignified fate of many, and fall in. It's not as easy as it looks.

# CONCLUSION

I always think I'm lucky to specialise in such a fun area of the kingdom of commerce. Musing with messaging offers a great opportunity for exploration, enterprise, and enjoyment.

It's because I've had such an incredible career in communication that I decided to spend my last few years of reasonable energy and lucidity teaching and training, passing on what I've learnt. That's why I wrote Accelerating Your Business Through Communication.

I've enjoyed it, I hope you have too, and that you found the book useful.

I'd love to hear from you about how I might have helped you along, and if there's anything you can suggest which might improve further editions.

You can email me on [Simon@Creative-Warehouse.co.uk](mailto:Simon@Creative-Warehouse.co.uk) or copy me in when you post on social media. You can find me here on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

And there's no excuse for not getting in touch.

Because I know, after our time together in the course of this book, you're now a master of business communication.