# Telling the Story of Your Research

Turn findings into messages people understand, remember, and use



## Storytelling works

People take action when they feel an emotional connection to the data. A strong story helps people see themselves in the research, makes complex findings clear and memorable, shows why it matters now, and connects evidence to real decisions.

**People remembered stories roughly 12–13 times better than statistics**, as shown by an experiment described in the book *Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath.

## How to tell an effective research story

### Lead with people, not data

Framing the data around the human experience helps make an emotional connection to the information.





### Build a clear narrative flow

Each part of your story should connect logically and show the change over time.

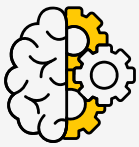


### Focus on one main idea

Repeat a key idea across the story: start with it, return to it, end with it. This helps audiences stay oriented.

### Use simple, concrete language

Make findings specific and easy to picture. Use real examples, scenarios, and quotes to show what research looks like in practice.



### Explain why your findings matter

Connect your research to real problems that people can relate to. Always seek to answer the question: "Why should I care?"





### Keep your story aligned to data

Avoid inflating claims or skewing your data to fit the story. Be honest about limitations, and address possible misunderstandings up front.

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# The core structure of a research story

Use this structure to shape your story, then follow the roadmap below to put it into practice.

1. **Context**
   Introduce the background.
2. **Challenges**
   What barrier or gap are you addressing?
3. **The Action**
   What did your data show? What moves things forward?
4. **Meaning**
   What changed based on your data?
5. **Implication**
   Now what? What actions are needed?

# Vision to execution roadmap



### Define your audience and goals

- Who needs this?
- What do they care about?
- What do you hope they do with this story?

### Identify the core message

- Key takeaways (No more than 2-3)

### Craft your story

- Use the core structure to tell a human story.

### Choose the format

- How will you deliver the story? (e.g., video, social media, email blast)

### Tailor the delivery

- Adjust language, length, and detail to match your audience and format.

## Common pitfalls to avoid

- ✗ Starting with dense data instead of context
- ✗ Including too many findings at once
- ✗ Using vague or abstract language
- ✗ Jumping straight to conclusions without explanation
- ✗ Leaving the audience unsure what to do next

## Quick checklist

Before you share your research story:

- ✓ Does it start with a clear, real-world problem?
- ✓ Does the story flow logically from start to finish?
- ✓ Is there one clear takeaway?
- ✓ Are the findings easy to understand and apply?
- ✓ Does it show why the research matters?

**Bottom line:** An effective research story helps people understand, remember, and act on data-based findings.

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