

A person wearing a purple jacket is speaking into a microphone on a stage. The background is a dark, blurred audience.

# Storytelling

## Elevate Your Leadership Presence

APEX, November 2024

John Stroud, AI Guides

# Reasons to be here



**Struggling to craft a clear message...  
message...**

despite having lots of evidence?



**Unsure what to say...**

and seeing hard work go  
unnoticed?



**Want to increase Executive Presence...  
Presence...**

be seen as a trusted, and compelling  
compelling presenter by Senior  
Management?

# The Story of Renu







**I've been the tail  
wagging the dog**

# Teaching Geeks to Speak



# Today's Journey



**Why tell  
Stories?**



**How does  
this Relate to  
Your Work**



**Importance  
of the  
Storyteller**



Kick Ass





# 1. Why Tell Stories?

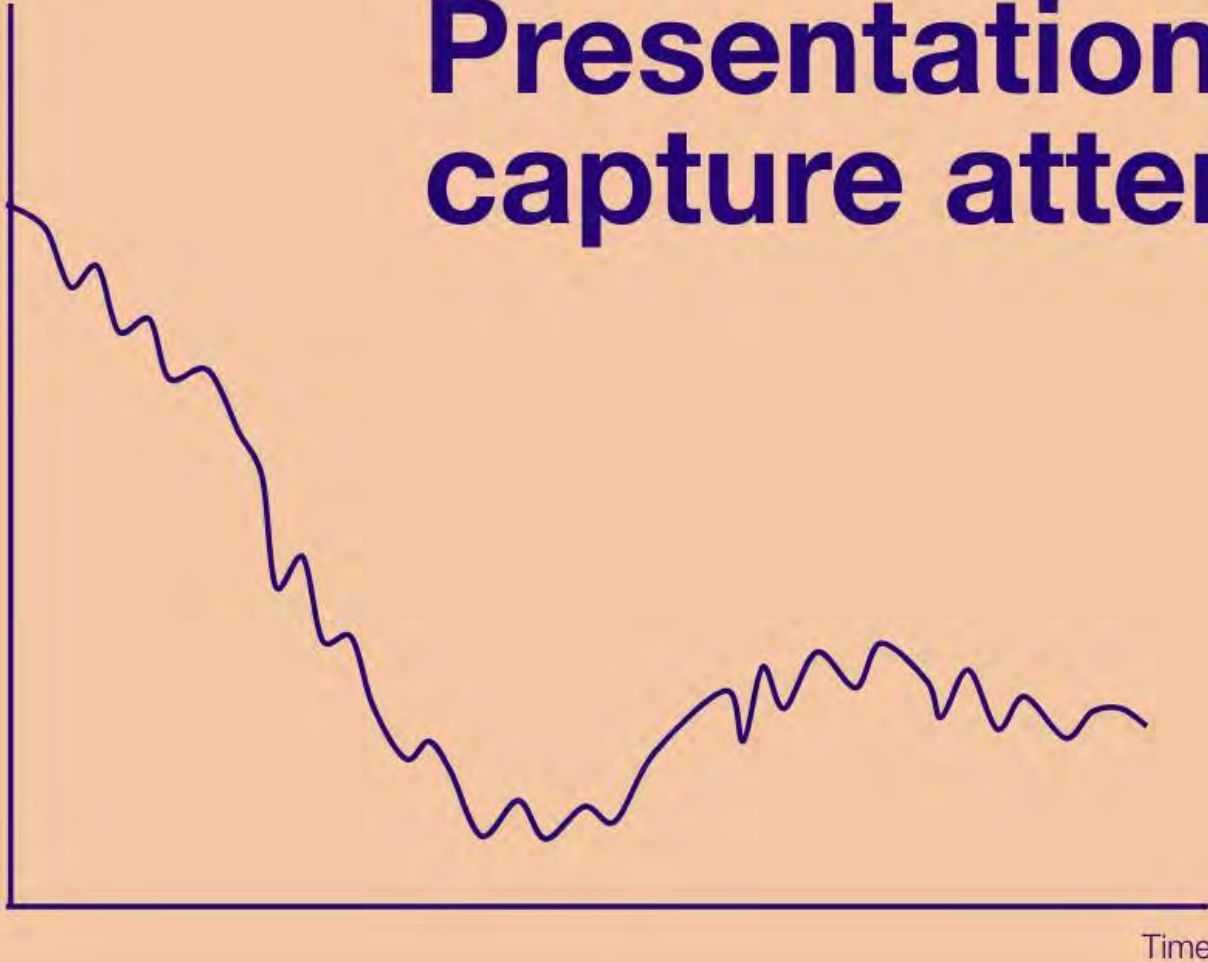
Stories are the **language** of  
Leaders.

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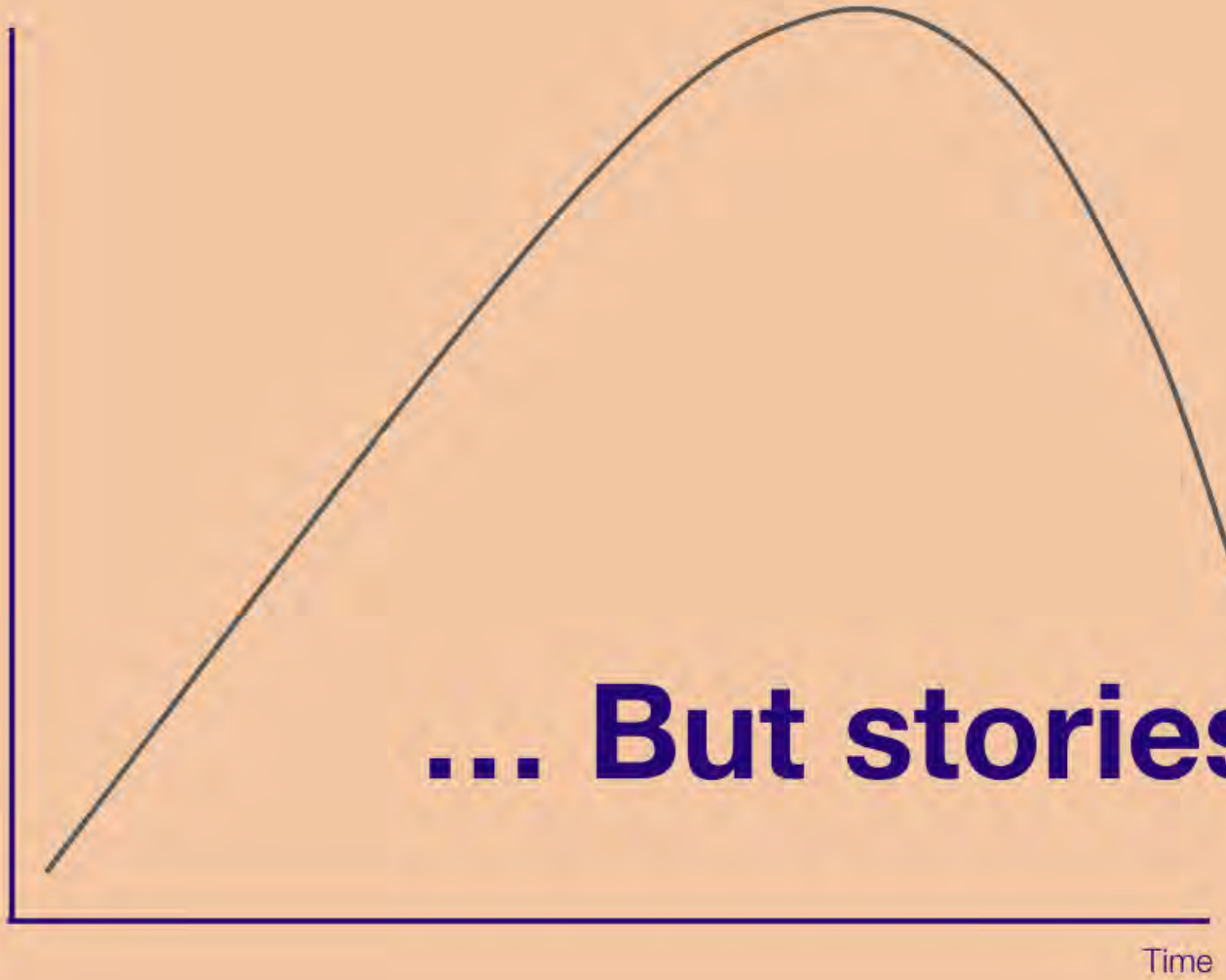


# Presentations don't capture attention ...

Subjective report  
of attention



Subjective report  
of attention



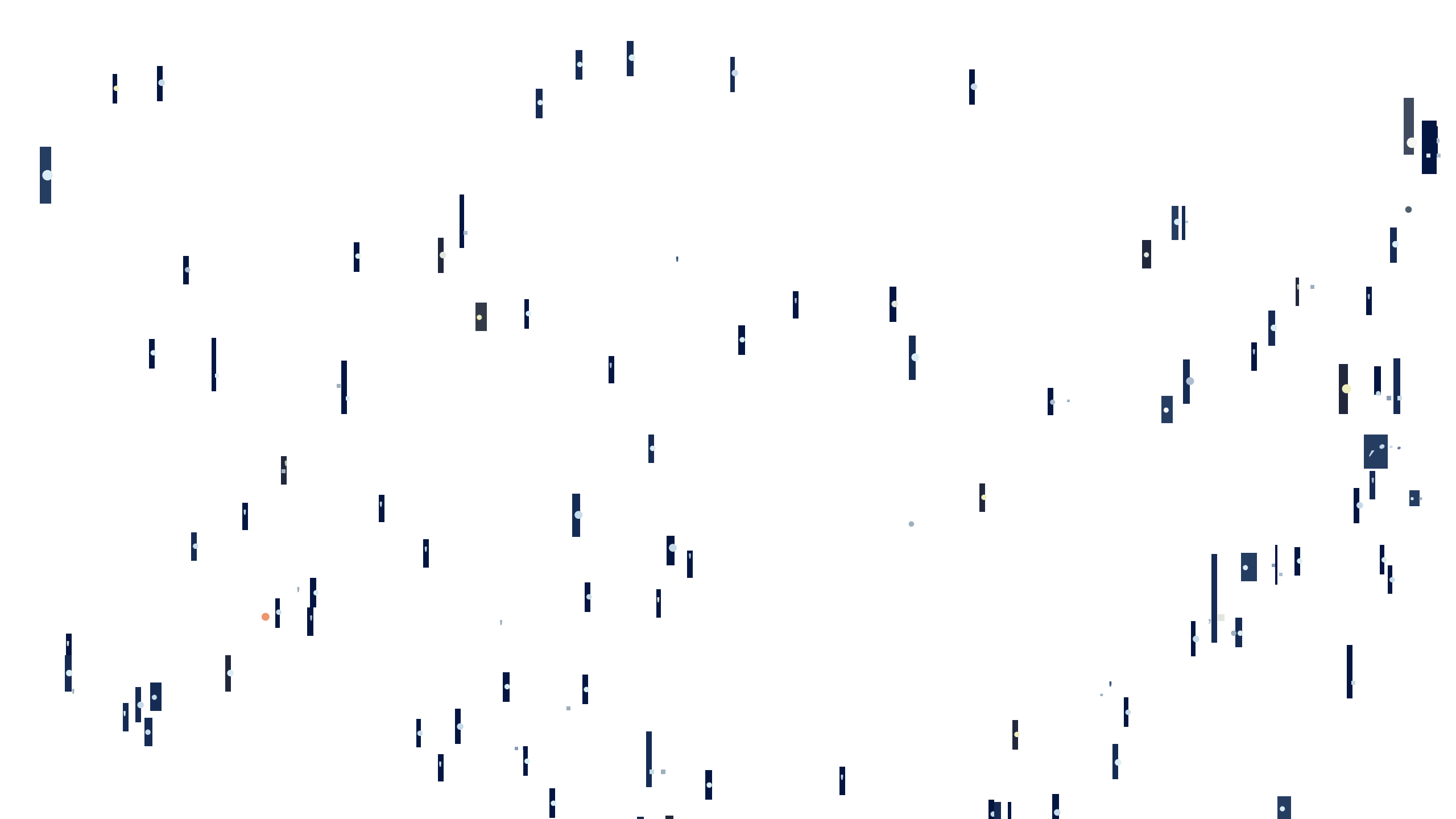
**... But stories do**

Humans think in  
in stories





















## **Storytelling had huge advantages**

- **1 versus 1, whose odds do you like?**



# Why are we more powerful than chimps? 70,000 years ago we started to tell stories

Up to that point, cooperation limited to the approximately 100 people we could know and trust

## Other species cooperate too

- Chimps: Flexibly with those they know
- Ants: In Large Numbers (like ants)

**Stories let us cooperate with strangers, flexibly flexibly & in large numbers**



Human : Human

Human : Story : Human

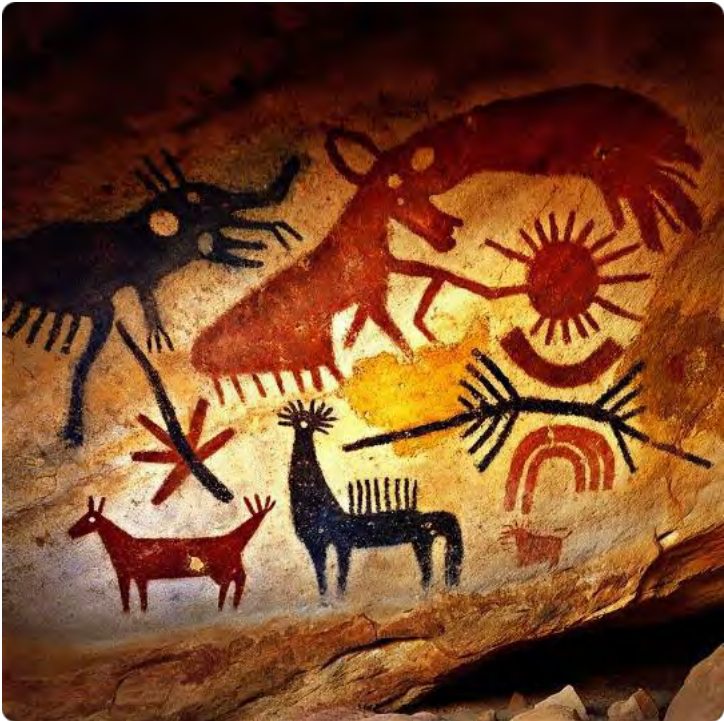
# We could create stories about...



Trade



Empires



Customs



# Today we have stories about...



## Currency

We agree this paper has value.



## Nation States

We imagine lines in the earth



## Ideology

We believe in one person, one vote









**Steve at the  
World Bank**

Decisions are not resource-  
constrained, they're **story-  
constrained**

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Tell a good enough story, and the resources will follow



The best story **wins**

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Top Objection:

**"my audience  
wants facts"**

"

1.3M  
units shipped

31%  
share

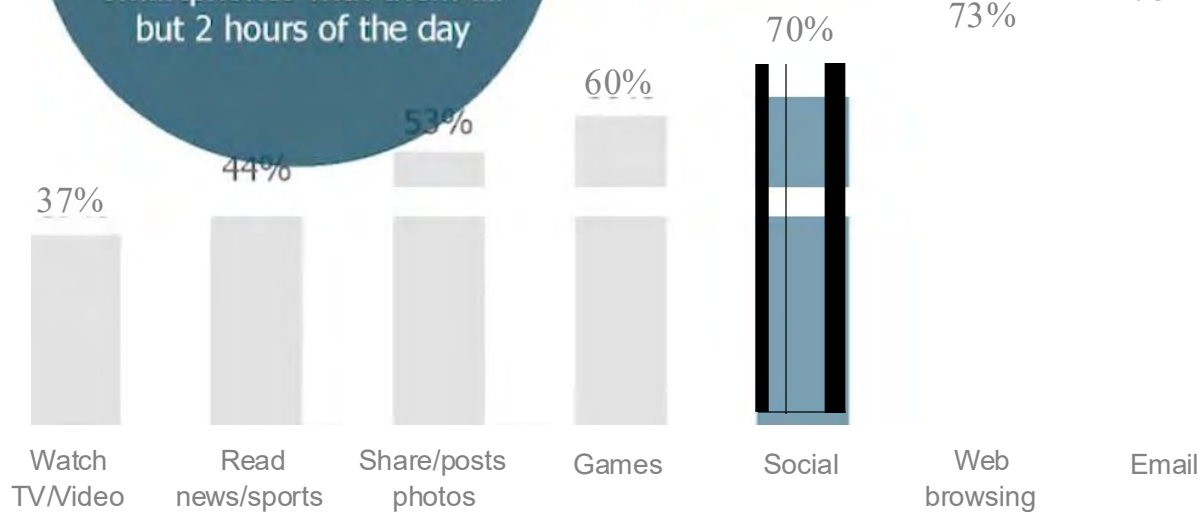
\$2 billion  
Upside  
opportunity



79%  
of people keep their smartphones with them all but 2 hours of the day

25B  
connected devices

85MM  
millennials online



More than 117 million  
people post online every day

3.2bn  
Global middle class 2020

On average, US users spend 11 hours  
per day with digital media



**Facts don't stick** in people's minds.  
minds.

If you give people a list of facts, they  
they won't remember them.

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But if you give people a **story**, it is a  
a **roadmap** for the facts in the story.

# GAME OF THRONES

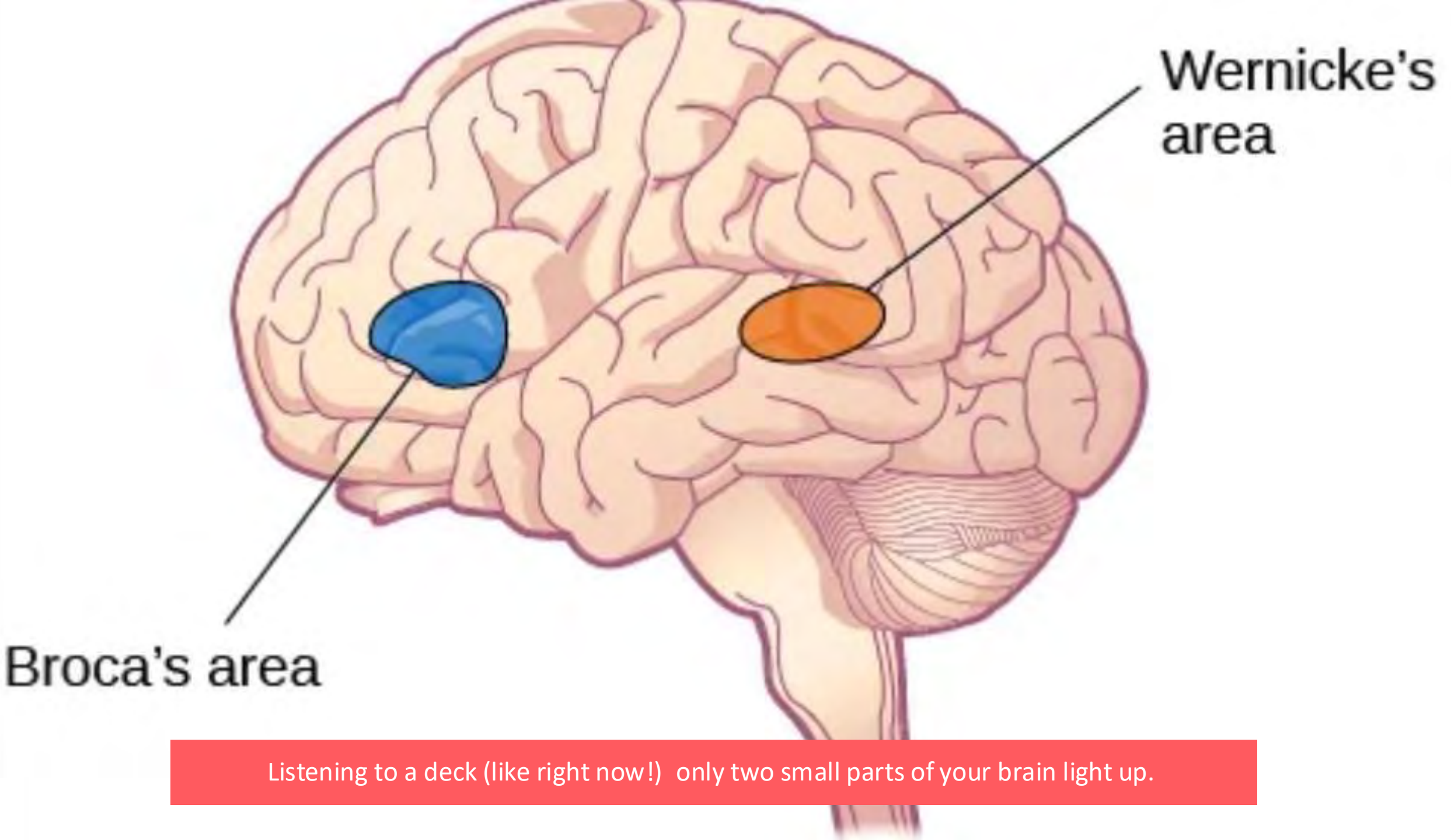
THE COMPLETE SERIES



# Seinfeld







Broca's area

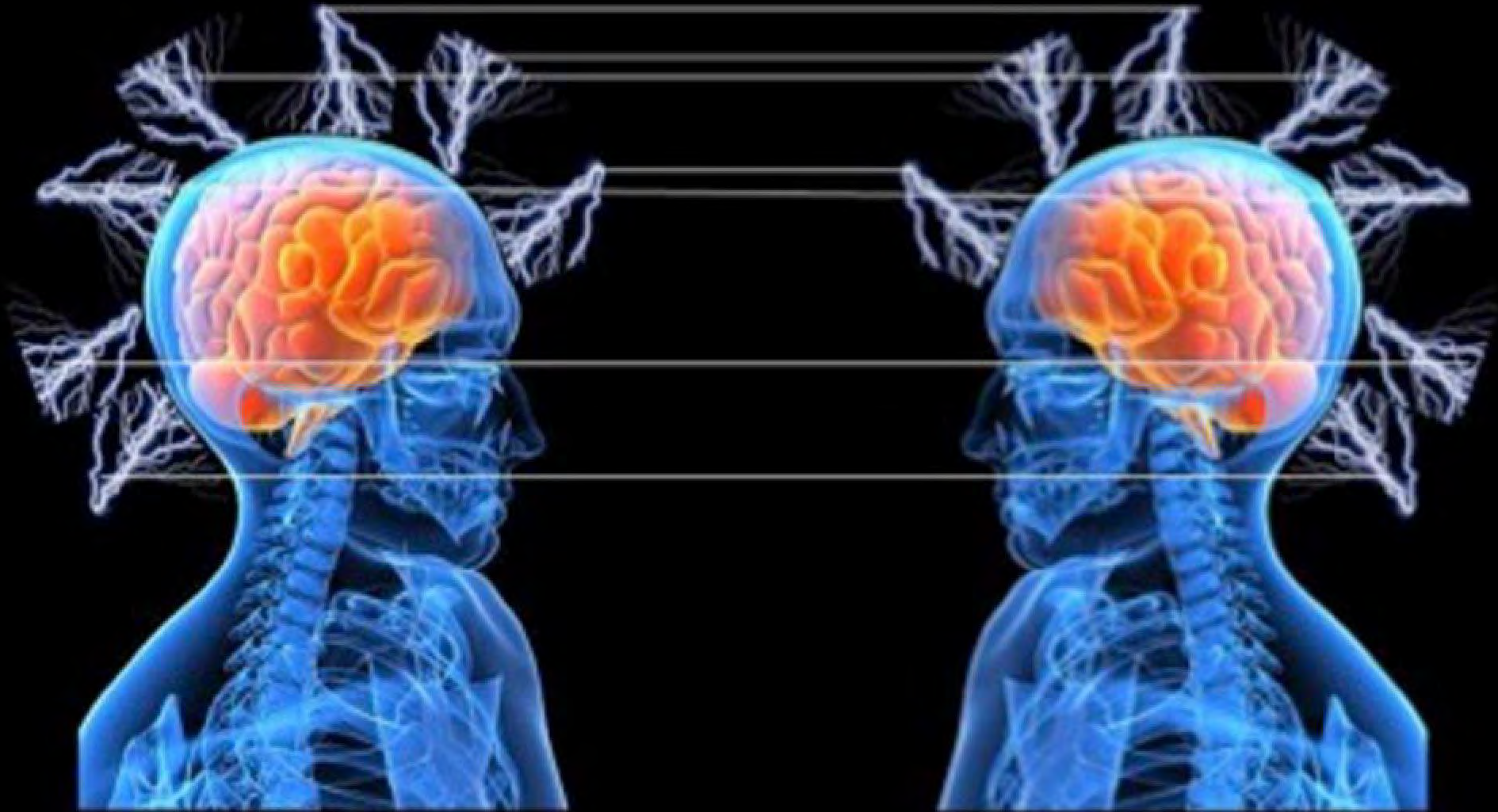
Wernicke's area

Listening to a deck (like right now!) only two small parts of your brain light up.





...but when you hear a story...



Movie in your mind with Neural Coupling



**FACTS**







# People will do anything for those who:

1. Encourage their **dreams**,
2. Justify their **failures**,
3. Allay their **fears**,
4. Confirm their **suspensions**, and
5. Help them **throw rocks** at their enemies.

A warm, golden-hour scene of a desk. In the foreground, there's a stack of old, leather-bound books. A small potted succulent sits on top of the books. To the right, a vintage-style alarm clock is visible. In the bottom right corner, there's a cup of coffee. The background is softly blurred, showing a desk with various items like pens and pencils. The overall lighting is warm and inviting. A semi-transparent dark rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

## 2. How Does this Relate to Work?



# Within the time you have, stories help...

1. Brief up:
  - Introduction to a Presentation
  - Arc of an entire Presentation
2. Share your vision with your team
  - Help them be aligned with your “why”
3. Team Building in a time of Return to Office
  - Sharing stories encourages others to share theirs

# 5 Essential Stories to Tell

- Origin Story: why your team/organization was formed.
- Value Story: explain how you help people.
- Crucible Story: how your team/organization overcame a challenge challenge
- Innovation Story: how you developed a solution to a new problem. problem.
- Pie-in-the-Face Story: how you made a mistake.

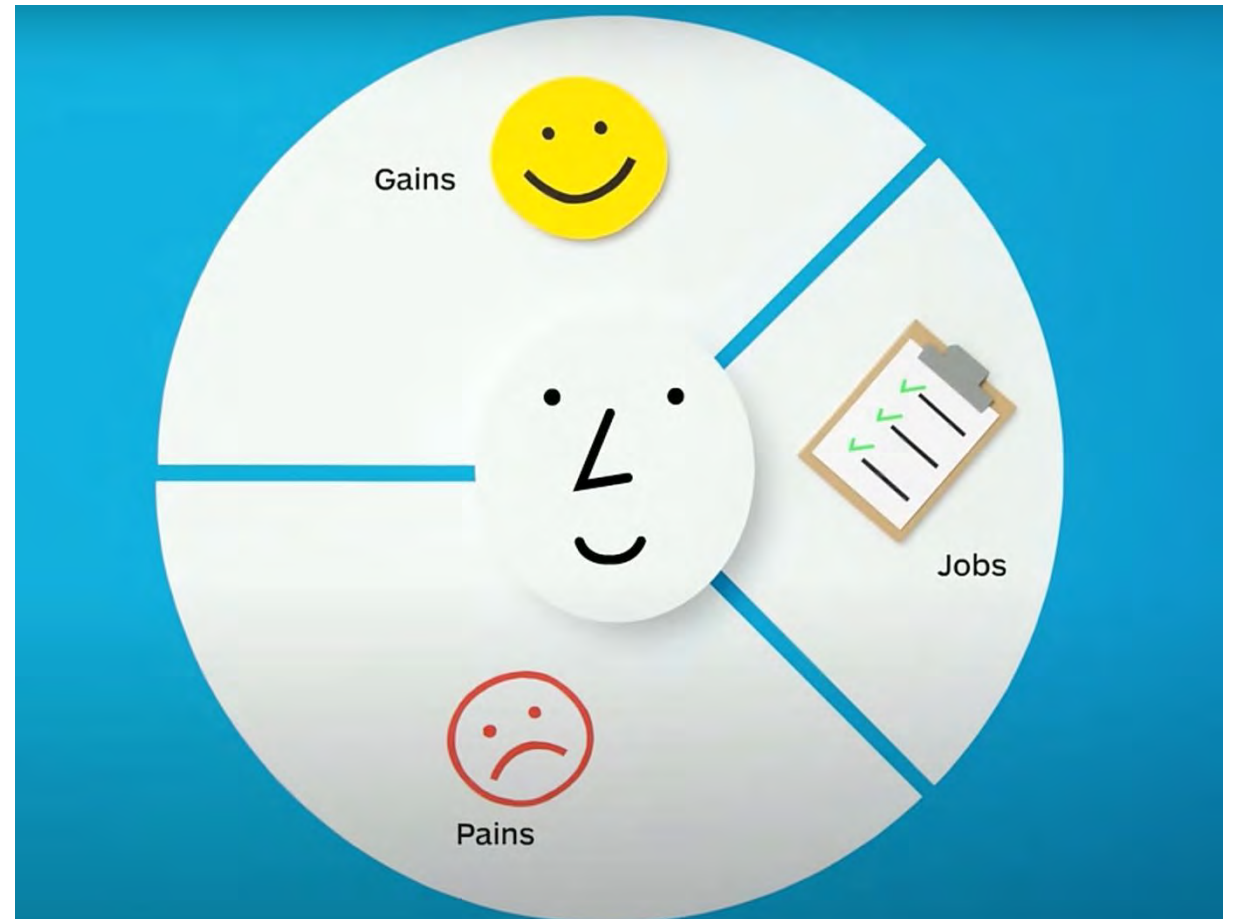


1. Focus on your audience

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# Think about your ADM

- **What jobs do they have?**
- **What pains do they experience?**
- **What gains are they seeking?**







Paul selling shoes

ADM Jobs	ADM Pains	ADM Gains
Driving Policy and Strategic Initiatives	Competing Priorities.	Confidence they are making the right decision.
Compliance & Oversight	Limited time and resources.	Foresight of emerging risks.
Stakeholder Relations	Resistance to change.	Opportunity to be a hero.



2. Who are you helping?

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# Create a Persona

- **Name:** Arun
- **Challenge:** Unaware of available assistance.
- **His Own Words:** “I just assume that the Canadian government is irrelevant”
- **Your Role:** “We plan to help Arun by doing X.”



**Note:** Can be a real person (e.g., from focus groups) or an illustration of a problem (in which case be transparent).



**Apple**



**Orchard**







### 3. Get your *story* straight

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A story that is whole has a beginning, middle and an end.”

-Aristotle's *Poetics*

# Beginning



# Middle



# End





McKinsey  
& Company

**BCG** BOSTON  
CONSULTING  
GROUP

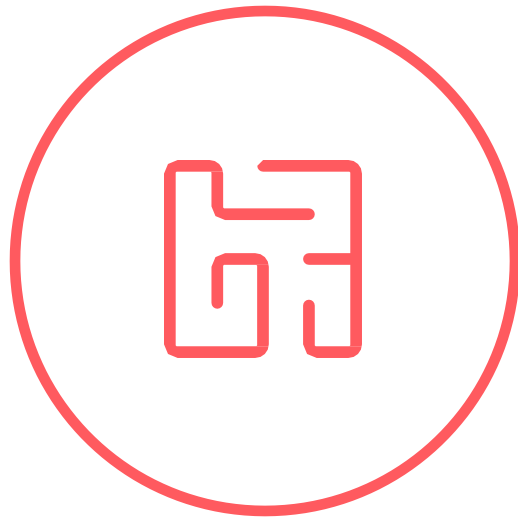
# Structuring the Storyline



## Situation

Why is this important?

What you need to know to understand the problem.



## Complication

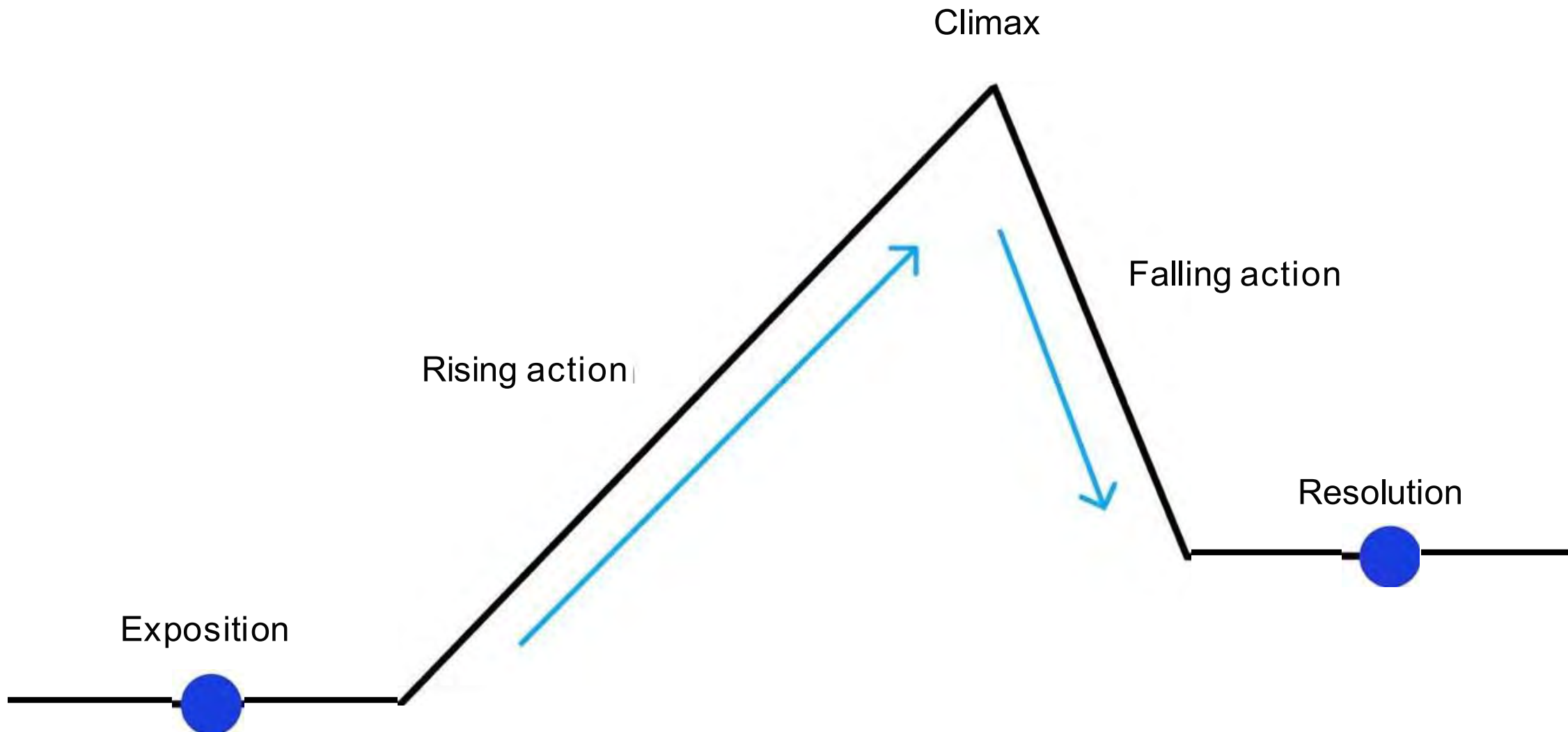
What went wrong?

Why the problem is a terrible thing

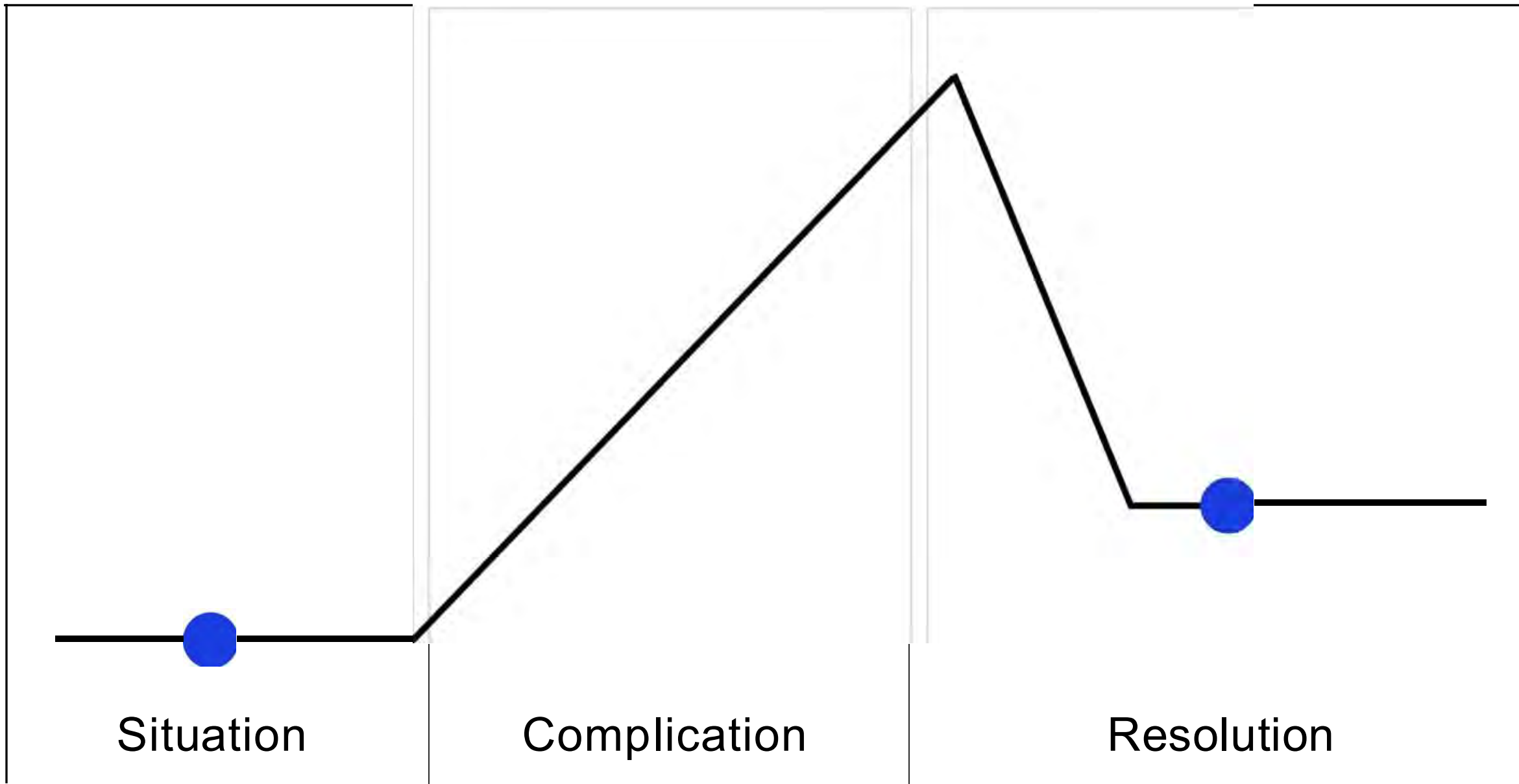


## Resolution

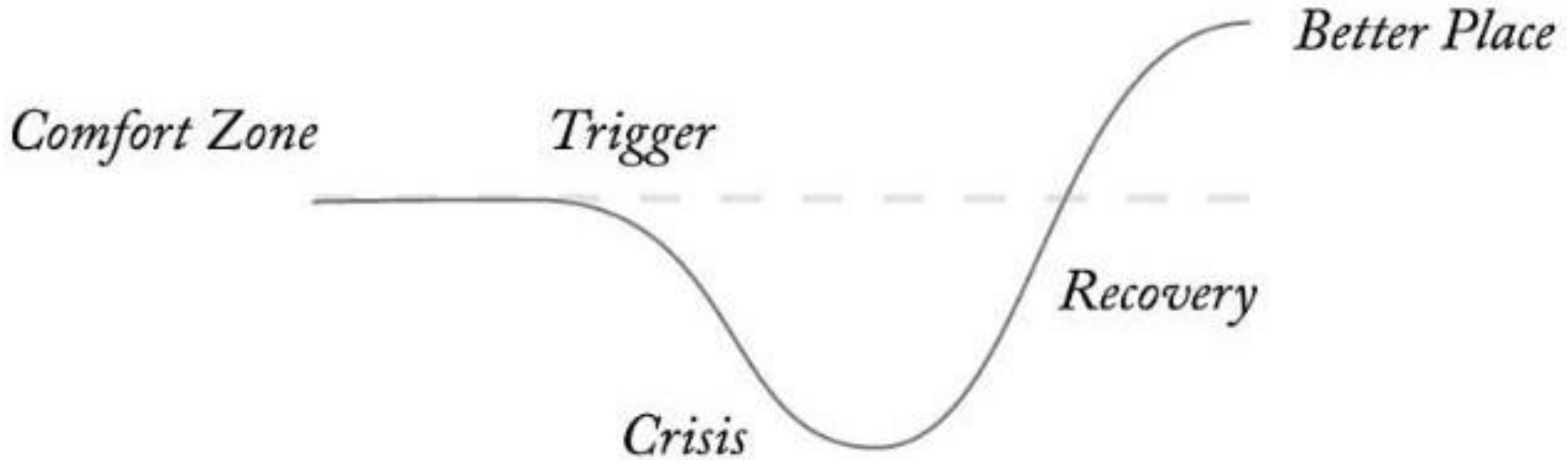
What is the solution?



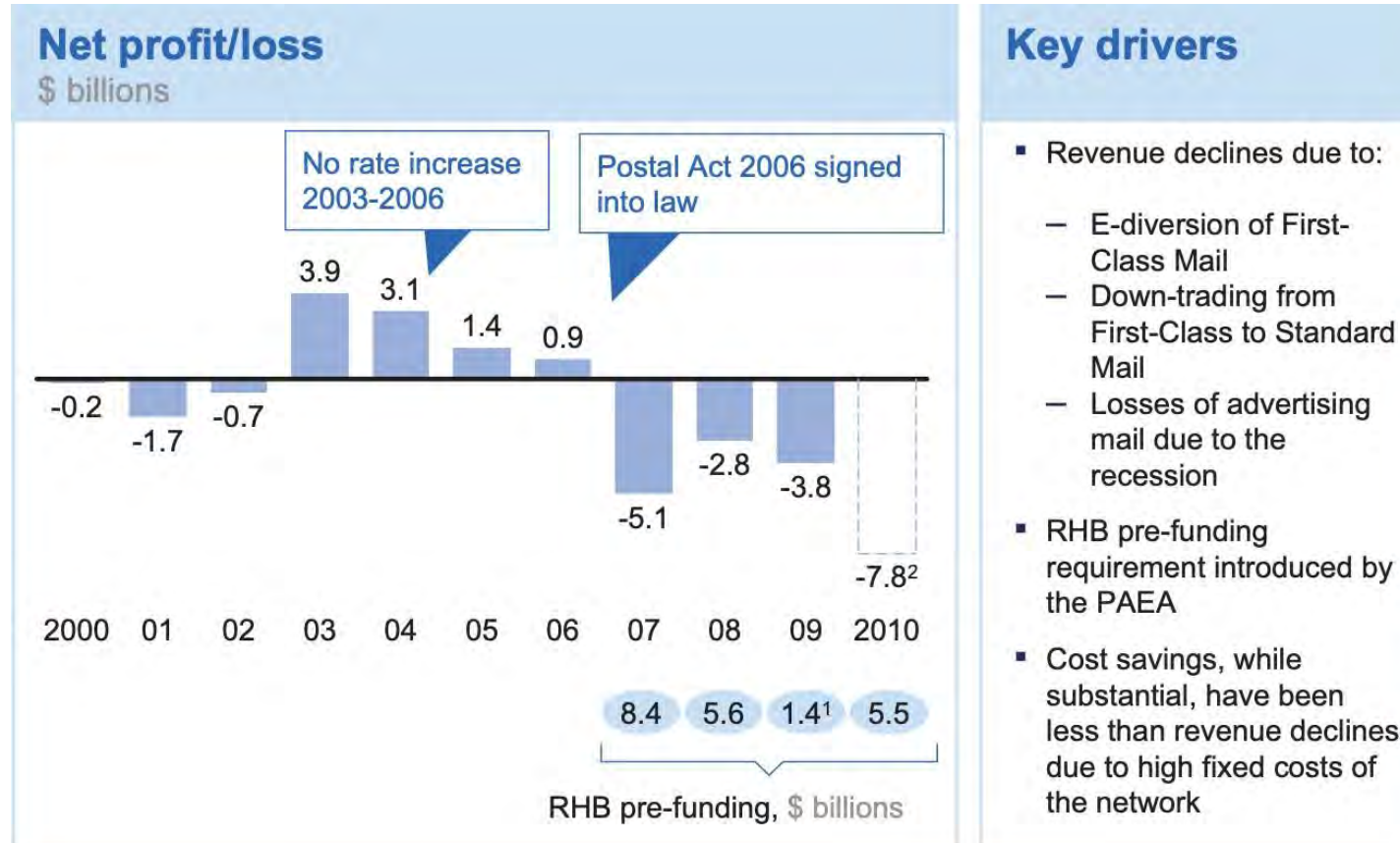




# "Person in a Hole" Story Arc



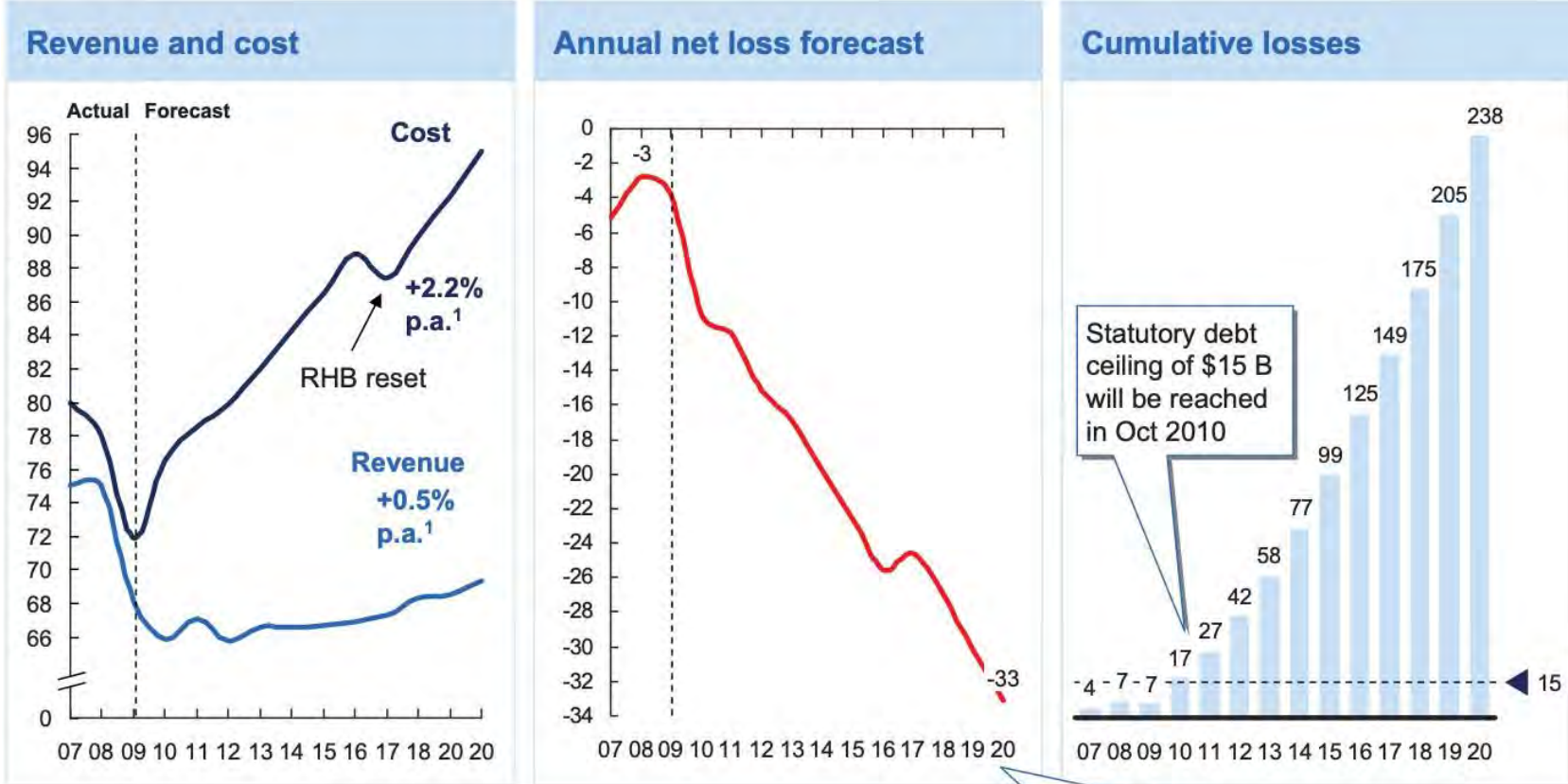
# Situation: the USPS is experiencing unprecedented losses





# Complication: Unless we do something, things will worsen

€ BILLIONS



Even if volumes remained flat instead of declining by 1.5% annually, the loss in 2020 would still be \$21 billion

1 Per Annum: Compound annual growth rate, 2010 to 2020

# Resolution: There are 4 things the USPS can do

## Net annual income benefit (2020)

<b>1</b>	<b>Product and service actions</b>	<b>~\$2B</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Productivity improvements</b>	<b>~\$10B</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Workforce flexibility improvements</b>	<b>~\$0.5B</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Purchasing savings</b>	<b>~\$0.5B</b>
	<b>Avoided interest due to reduced debt</b>	<b>~\$5B</b>

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**Total** **~\$18B**

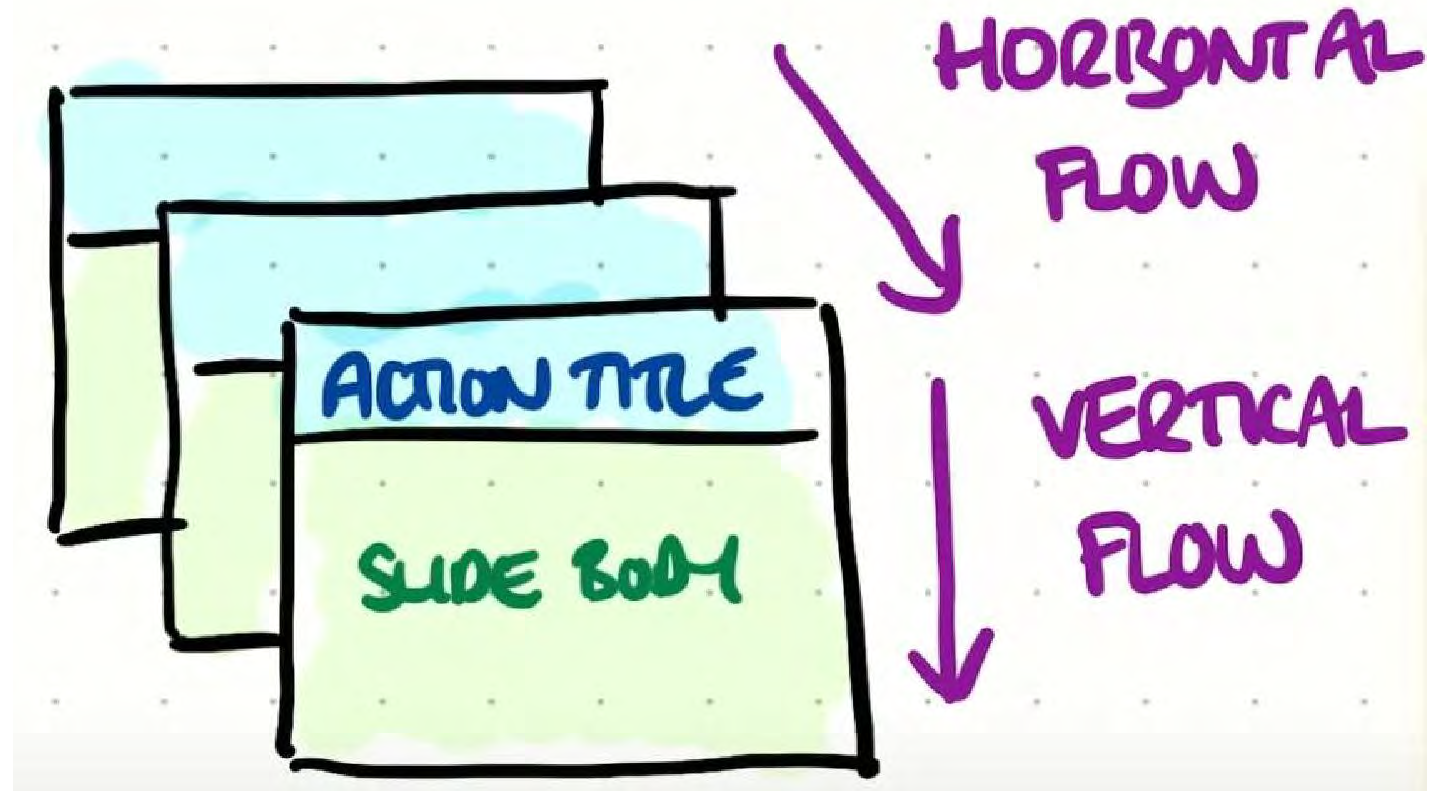
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**Cumulative impact 2010-2020** **~\$123B**

# PowerPoint Skeleton

Horizontal: Can understand the argument by just reading the Title (Dots).

Vertical: Data & Visualizations (Dashes) supports the Title





# When Crafting the Story Add Elements to...

- Encourage their dreams (“Arun always wanted to...”)
- Justify their failures (“One day, Arun was surprised...”)
- Allay their fears (“Like most people, Arun was feeling...”)
- Confirm their suspicions (“As he suspected, the root cause was...”)
- Throw rocks at their enemies (“Having succeeded, Arun arrived at the next meeting with a knowing smile that said...”).

**I will tell you about the time I/we...**

**situation**

So there I was ...

set the stage: time/place background

**problem**

We wanted...

internal/external desire or goal

but...

lack of resources  
limiting beliefs  
external forces

**action**

And so...

(A choice)  
And then...

**result**

Until finally...

(data)

how much  
how good

Emotional data  
Somatic memory

**sad**

- depressed
- disappointed
- dismayed
- regretful
- down
- disillusioned
- mournful

**mad**

- frustrated
- annoyed
- defensive
- livid
- outraged
- offended



**happy**

- thrilled / overjoyed
- relieved
- elated
- excited
- pleased
- grateful
- thrilled
- content
- amused
- triumphant

**afraid**

- anxious
- vulnerable
- stressed
- nervous
- confused
- cautious

**hurt**

- betrayed
- shocked
- stunned
- aggrieved
- abandoned

**el**

**insight/connedion**

And now we know...  
That's why ...

A warm, golden-hour scene of a desk. In the foreground, there's a stack of books, a small potted succulent, a glowing lantern, and a mug of coffee. In the background, a clock and a pen holder are visible. Several speech bubbles are floating in the air, suggesting a story or conversation. The overall atmosphere is cozy and creative.

# 3. The Storyteller



**“People watching a presenter are more influenced by the likability of the speaker than by the quality of the speaker’s arguments.”**

*Ferran and Watts, Management Science, 09/2008*

# Be authentic

- We hate fake.

# Bottom Line up front

- Signal to your ADM whether this is a “good news” or “bad news” briefing.
- Signal to your ADM whether this is for information or action.
- This is not a mystery novel.



# Be Yoda (Not Luke)

- Your ADM (not you) is the hero of the story.
- Enable your ADM to make the best decision possible.

# “Be mindful of the time you have”

- If your ADM is in a rush, do not tell a long story.
- Begin with short stories (30 seconds – 1 minute) or analogies.

# “I'm nervous when I have to speak up”

- Most people are.
- Practice, practice, practice beforehand!!! Say it out loud!!!
- Even if you go "off script" your ADM doesn't know.



# Make it easy for your ADM to say “yes”

- Stop selling, once sold.

# Welcome Conversation

- Let your ADM find their own reasons for supporting your advice.

# Always keep your chin up

- Do not apologize for being there.
- Everybody fails, sometimes.
- Treat yourself as you would treat a friend.



# Storytelling for Public Servants

Workshop



# Workshop Options

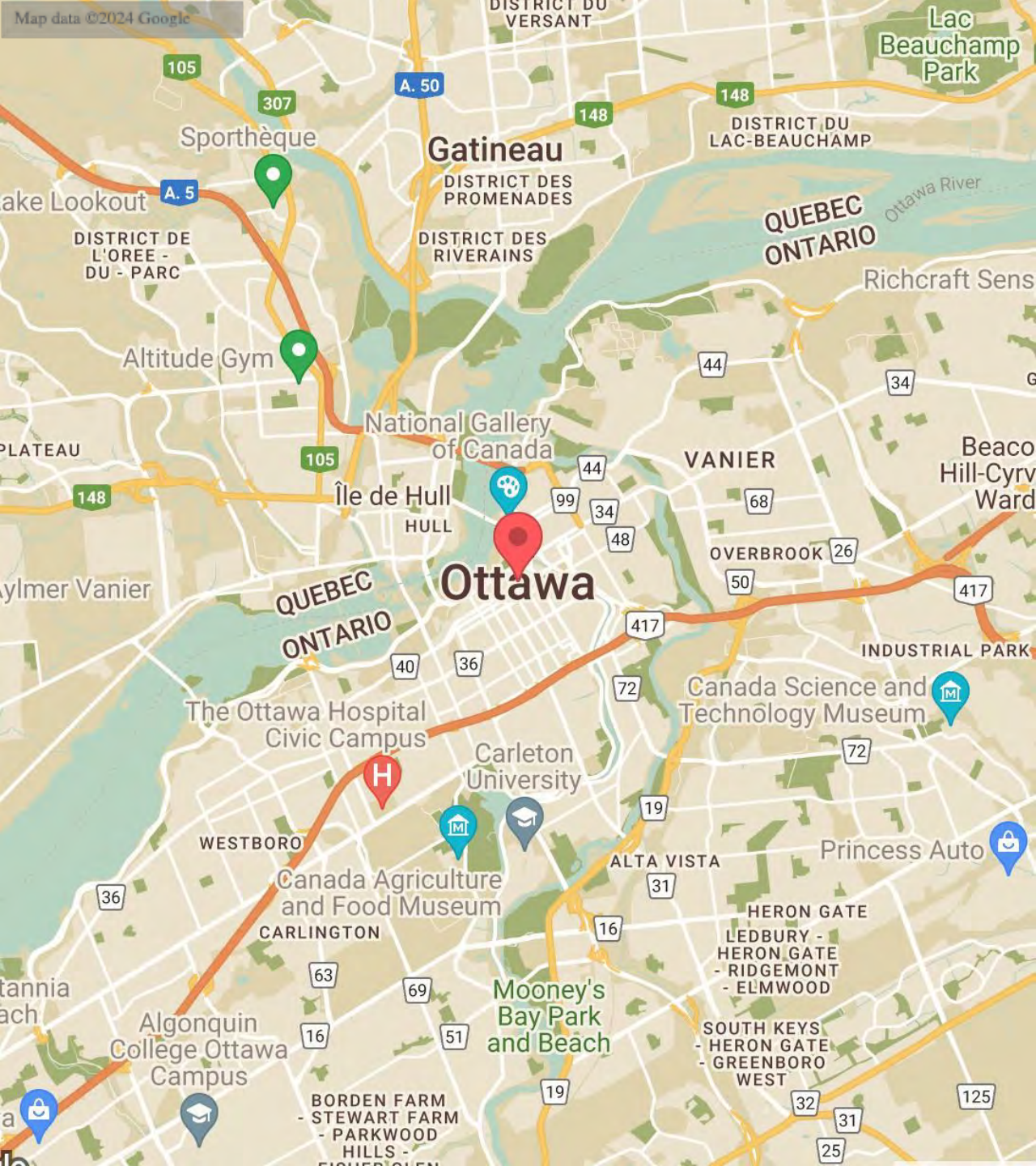
- Free Interdepartmental for Executives (Jan 9, 2025)
- Your Entire Team
- One-on-one for Executives (multiple shorter sessions).
- Interdepartmental for Staff Deck Writers

# **Free Half Day Workshop**

**January 9, 10 am - 2 pm, Impact Hub, Ottawa**







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