



TACIT Teaching Materials



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These notes are to accompany the Executive Briefing on Storytelling which forms part of the TACIT programme. They are designed for teachers and coaches to use to help structure a workshop based on the approach. Our intention is that they become the basis for an on-going development of learning resources around the topic and so feedback, elaboration, configuration, addition, etc. would be welcomed.

The default assumption in the design of this workshop is for a 1-day session with extensive opportunity for interaction and practice on the part of participants.

In addition to the workshop structure there are several hand-outs and other learning resources; our intention again is to build a library of these to support delivery of various different kinds of teaching/coaching input based on this technique.



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Storytelling

Workshop size: ideally 10+ participants

Location: Flexible layout, chairs in groups, or a circle if possible.

Facilitators: 1 +1 trainer



Content

This module introduces storytelling as a method of teaching or transferring information to an audience. Through presentation and discussion, understanding is gained of how the brain processes information and responds to stories, and the essential elements of a coherent and effective story. This is developed using a series of exercises to encourage creative thought and use of language, and the ability to start to devise stories for use in their own work environment. Finally some interactive exercises will facilitate a discussion of presentation and storytelling skills.

Educational Objectives

After completing this module, participants will have completed the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge/understanding

Participants will:

- Understand the importance of storytelling as a device for both communicating ideas and for developing understanding within the innovation process
- Understand, in broad terms, how the brain processes information and creates narrative and why this understanding is important.
- Understand what differentiates a story from a parcel of information, and the necessary building blocks to creating an engaging and effective story.

Abilities/skills

Participants will:

- Reframe their own organisation's innovation stories in terms of a traditional narrative, and use this tool to refine the story.
- Use language and ideas creatively and flexibly.
- Use some basic presentation skills to improve their impact in communicating ideas – pitching innovation.

Competencies

Participants will:



- Take the first steps towards generating and presenting their own organisational story.



Roadmap of the workshop

1. Introduction and warm-up
 - a. Various exercises
2. Why stories matter
 - a. In organizational life
 - b. In innovation and entrepreneurship

Break

3. The neuroscience behind storytelling
 - a. Exercise – what makes a good story?
 - b. Review and discussion
4. Building blocks for storytelling

Break

5. Story-writing exercise
 - a. Create a compelling story in small groups
 - b. Share/present stories
 - c. Review and commentary

Break

6. Review and learning capture



Resources to support delivery

Materials required:

Type	Quantity	Purpose/location
Pens	1 per participant	
Notepaper	3 sheets per attendee	
White boards/ charts	4	1 per group, standing next to working area of each group
Objects for “this is not a spoon”	1 per two attendees	

Slide sets

(NB Although sample slide sets are available as part of the supporting resources workshop leaders may wish to present the material in different ways, using different media or their own slide sets).

Lecture/discussion 1: The power of storytelling

(Powerpoint 1)

Lecture/discussion 2: Neuroscience of Story

Powerpoint 2)

Lecture/discussion 3: Elements of Story

Powerpoint 3

Handouts

(These can be distributed during the session or sent beforehand to allow participants to prepare)

1. The power of storytelling (for all participants)
2. Neuroscience (for all participants)
3. Story Elements (for all participants)



4. Story Games (for facilitators only)

Handout No 1: The power of storytelling



Two snapshots of innovation.

Snapshot #1

A large US-owned multinational company specializing in coatings and surface engineering brings new product to market through a spin-off of its office products division. The product is slow to succeed but eventually comes to dominate its marketplace, defining a new product category. Sales moved from a disappointing handful in the year of launch, 1977, so that the product was withdrawn and then relaunched in 1980. Sales then picked up, running quickly to \$2m and forty years later the product and its derivatives account for over \$1bn in sales.

Snapshot #2

It is Friday afternoon, and deep inside a nondescript red brick building a laboratory chemist called Spencer Silver is working on new adhesive trials. Bored and looking forward to the weekend he looks distractedly out of the window on to the Mississippi river. A crazy thought comes into his head; 'I wonder what will happen if I mix up an overdose of the chemical I'm working with?' The result was an interesting failure – instead of the sticky adhesive he was aiming for he got a semi-sticky cloudy fluid. He put a stopper in the flask, stowed it in his desk and, sighing, went back to work.

Over the next three years he found himself bored on various occasions and took his flask out, playing around with ideas for using a non-sticky glue. Eventually he came up with the thought that you could coat it on the surface of paper to make it temporarily stick to a surface. But who'd want that? Hmm..' and back into his drawer the flask went again.

Some weeks later he met a friend in the canteen. Over coffee Art Fry told him about the previous evening's rehearsal with his choir and the annoying experience. 'Every time I turn up to practice with all my pages neatly marked with bookmarks. Yesterday I dropped my hymn book – and spent most of the rest of evening flicking through the hymnbook trying to find my place. I wish we made Scotch tape which was sticky but not so sticky, then I could paste the little so-and-so's into my book without tearing the pages when I peel them off again'



And at that moment a great idea was born....



We could go on with the second story – the long late hours the pair spent trying to convert the bright idea into reality, the calling on of favours, the pressing of colleagues into service as the pair bootlegged their product into life. Their tantalizing internal marketing strategy, making them out of fluorescent coloured papers and giving them out free to some secretaries to that others who saw them, wanted their own supplies and plagued the purchasing department for a product that didn't yet exist. All of it surrounded by a company culture in which it was OK to spend your time (well at least 15% of it) fooling around, being curious, trying new things out.



But we don't need to – [the story of Post IT notes](#) is widely reported and has become a staple case in discussing various aspects of innovation and entrepreneurship. The important difference is in the two approaches to telling that story – one sticks to the facts, keeps the detail to a minimum and the narrative neutral. The other brings it alive, puts real people in with their flaws and strengths, their energy and passion, their trials and tribulations along the way. It brings the case alive, even if the underlying messages to be drawn out might be the same. That is [the power of storytelling](#), and it is something which organizations are increasingly recognizing as a valuable tool.

Stories matter – not for nothing have they been around a long time. We are to some extent hard-wired for story, have the neural circuits already waiting for the incoming signals, and the following through of story provides a deep satisfaction. ([One argument is that we are programmed to get pleasure from stories](#) because they carry important information – our brains sugar the learning pill by ensuring that listening to/ reading stories stimulates our reward centres).



For our purposes storytelling is a helpful addition to our toolbox of methods and approaches to helping people understand and work with innovation and entrepreneurship. Stories help us in teaching and coaching because:

- they give us perspectives, depth, interest, arouse our concern, make us care, motivate us to learn
- they bring things to life, give case histories 'dimensionality' - characters and events aren't simply facts
- they carry emotions - people feel excitement, anger, passion, frustration, courage and fear. Innovation is not simply a mechanical process but one



which is all about people and the ways
they behave

- they highlight that innovation is a social process – it's always interactive. It happens as a multi-player game in which others can help or hinder us, stimulate or block us, bring knowledge, spark creativity, make connections
- they remind us that innovation is not just about resources but about who controls them and how to access them, how to find work arounds, how to mobilize power and influence and what happens when these are ranged against us
- they are familiar – most innovation and entrepreneurship stories are variations on some age-old plots that we recognize deeply in side us. For example the hero entrepreneur making success against the odds – that's Odysseus and his long mythical voyages. Or the misfit undervalued by the organization, working away on her idea, actively discouraged from following a dream. But they break out of their box and create something powerfully new. It's Cinderella over and over again. Or Red Riding Hood, carrying her bright new ideas to market but having to make the journey through the dark wood inhabited by the Big Bad Wolf and his cronies, all trying to defeat her in this journey. Or Treasure Island, seeking after the rewards which come at the end of a long and arduous voyage into the unknown. And so on...
- they offer us choices – looking at stories, even those with unhappy endings, gives us the chance to relive the decisions taken and to think about what might have been if different things had been done. They are simulators in which we can prepare for future innovation by playing with lessons from the past
- they let us explore possible futures, building scenarios of different worlds, good and bad, within which we might try and innovate and highlighting threats and opportunities along the way.



2. Using stories in teaching and coaching innovation (TCI)...

Given the long list of features above it's not surprising that stories have become a powerful resource for teachers and coaches. [The case method](#), strongly associated



with Harvard Business School, is widely used and its derivatives can be found all over the place. Whether it is on a conference platform at an all-industry event, or in a university lecture theatre or, increasingly, in self-study programmes over the Internet the case study forms a key part of the learning material.

An important point is that the library of stories on which we can draw is huge and growing, with variations to suit all kinds of situations – large firm, small firm, for profit, not-for-profit, social and commercial innovation, start-up and hundred year old company – there are cases about all of them. Think of any angle on innovation and there'll be a case or two to help exemplify it. And the modality is shifting too – we have plenty of video material, the odd film (think 'Steve Jobs' or 'The Social Network') or TV series 'Halt and catch fire', 'Start-up'). We've got biographies and autobiographies, documentaries and revisionist histories – plenty to choose from. (There's even the odd musical tale around, picking up on the old Bardic tradition of telling stories when the main delivery vehicle was a wandering troubadour who talked and sung the latest news).

So the key to using storytelling isn't in the availability of material – there are plenty of stories out there and more coming on-stream all the time. The challenge to us as teachers and coaches is finding effective ways to work with them. Our work within [the TACIT project](#) suggests four complementary modes of doing so and we'll explore each of these briefly here.

3. Using storytelling for TCI

Mode A - Story listening

This is the most common approach and forms the basis of the case method in teaching. In outline students and learners are presented with a story and encouraged to explore it, analyze it and draw out conclusions, key learning points. We can guide them towards particular themes or highlights and many good cases provide not only the case for students but also teaching notes to help teachers and coaches with this process of shared exploration.



There are many variants on this theme – for example encouraging students to research around the cases, bringing new or updated information to bear. Or looking at new ways of delivering the cases, in the form of video or audio material which can



help bring the experience to life. And the learning exploration can be structured through asking some key questions, giving students the analytical tools to become critical analysts themselves, able to extract useful lessons rather than taking the stories at face value.

So here the key TCI skills are in using stories and guiding students/learners to key insights within those cases.

Mode B - story telling

A second approach is to use stories as the raw material but to present them in vivid and compelling fashion. The ancient craft of storytelling did not necessarily involve each bard creating new material but rather delivering and embellishing well-known stories for their audience. The storyteller becomes an amplifier, bringing the stories to life and drawing the listener towards important insights of their own.



Here the power of stories to engage attention becomes important since it provides the motivation to learn more, gives listeners (learners) the encouragement to question the story and the characters within it. It is about more than simply presenting the facts, it involves an active narration using tools and techniques to bring a story to life.

It's also worth remembering that storytelling predates written language by thousands of years; our primary learning mechanism was for a long time through learning from stories told and retold by 'experts'.

So the TCI skill set here is still about highlighting and focusing the attention of learners on key insights but the range of techniques to draw the audience in becomes important.

Mode C - story writing

This third approach builds on the first two but involves us in actually creating and crafting stories from innovation-related material. It is about bringing a story to life through the use of language, characters, plot and other devices which fiction writers make us of extensively. As [Julian Birkinshaw and colleagues point out](#), we can learn to tell innovation stories in bland and neutral fashion or we can create something which catches attention and





engages the listener/reader.

Writing with intent can draw upon the extensive knowledge base around how stories are constructed and how they have a deep-rooted neuropsychological connection. Good stories have [a number of elements which we can mobilize](#) to help with the craft – plot and story arc, characters, key motivating incidents, a sense of tensions to be resolved and so on. Stories are not just events – they unravel over time; screenplay writers often talk about the ‘beats’ the key moments in a story which give it a rhythm and a sense of movement towards an end.

So the TCI skill set here involves learning to write stories or to adapt stories we already have to make them more compelling, bring them alive.

Mode D - story re-writing

This last approach recognizes that stories can be reworked, elaborated, retold and extended – they are living things. And there is scope for many people to get involved in that story re-writing and telling process. One way of building on the Mode A case method, for example, is to get students to rewrite the story – giving it different endings and highlighting where key decision points might come. Or else looking at the story from different perspectives, rewriting it from the standpoint of a user, a senior manager a shop-floor worker, etc. The same story might be experienced in different ways and these perspectives offer helpful insights.



There's also the opportunity to explore potential futures – science fiction type stories – where different choice can lead to different outcomes. Using stories provides a powerful way of exploring the future in lined fashion – not just by extrapolating a few technical or market trends but in constructing rich narratives which draw them all together to create different innovation scenarios.

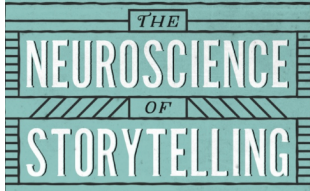
Another way in which story rewriting works is in using [storyboard devices/templates](#) to engage the ideas and contributions from different stakeholders at the start of an entrepreneurial venture. Since by definition the original idea is unlikely to be perfect the value comes in drawing in information and pivoting, adapting the story and introducing new strands. So stories and storyboards become powerful devices for creating innovation and for learning about key aspects of the process.

The TCI skills here require not only story writing but also the ability (and the tools) to draw others into the process, to train and equip learners to become storytellers and



writers themselves.

Handout No 2: The Neuroscience of Story



The brain is made up of billions of nerve cells, intricately connected. It contains nerve centres (groups of neurons and their connections) which control many involuntary functions, such as circulation temperature regulation, and respiration, and interpret sensory impressions received from eyes, ears and other sense organs. It also contains centres or areas for associative memory which allow for recording, recalling, and making use of past experiences. Consciousness, emotion, thought and reasoning are more abstract functions involving many centres.

It is not the place of this paper to deliver a complete understanding of the biochemical neural mechanisms that underpin input, output and process, but to provide a broad-brush analysis of function with reference to narrative.

Most of what reaches your conscious mind is highly processed input coming from regions one or more stops downstream from the sensory areas. These areas process incoming information from sensory organs (eyes, ears, smells, pressure receptors and so on) and turn it into something that makes sense to the conscious mind.

This processing turns the continuous incoming stream, this complex cacophony and signals, into a narrative string with which the conscious mind can work. Simply put, the raw sensory input is arranged into a string of observations that "make sense" a story.

In evolutionary terms, stories are old. Much information transfer in business or education nowadays is conducted using slide presentations. Microsoft Powerpoint was first released in 1987. Go further back: humankind has been majority-literate in developed nations for less than 200 years. Writing as a way to communicate has been dated as far back as 8,500 years. Cave paintings indicate that inscription as a way to communicate existed at least 40,000 years ago. However evolutionary biology suggests that humans had the complex language and social organization indicating that they shared stories at least 100,000 years ago, and probably considerably longer.

The dominance of story as a mode of interaction, communication, archiving and information recall has evolved with us: so that we are all "hard-wired" to think, to understand, to make sense of things in and through story concepts.

Tapping into an instinctive and evolved communications system as a teaching method makes obvious sense. Kendall Haven, a scientist-turned storyteller uses the term Neural Story Network to describe the mechanism by which incoming information is processed



and turned into narrative for the conscious mind to consider. For more details on this see the Reading List.

The basics of information processing are as follows: incoming information from a variety of sources (visual, auditory, olfactory and so on) is initially processed in areas that give it recognition and understanding as an object, a specific recognized sound, or a moving thing, or a person. It is then processed via the centres which add emotional response, reference previous experience and memory, and then passed through the Neural Story Net which makes sense of the information in terms of cause and effect and reason. In order to produce something that “makes sense” to the conscious mind, it may do so by adding assumptions, disregarding apparently non-conforming information, creating new information, and inferring connections, motives, intent, significance, based in part on emotional response and past experiences. Only then does it reach the parts of the brain that get to think about it consciously in terms of a narrative that makes sense.

In summary, between your sensory organs and your conscious mind, information is massaged into narrative shape. What reaches your conscious mind is your personal interpretation of what your sensory organs actually recorded. It is worth noting that when you impart information, that will be similarly processed by the listener so that the information you have provided is filtered through *their* own perceptions, emotions and previous experience so that they will in turn have created their own story BASED ON the information you have provided. That is the story they will act upon.

Understanding this is important. As a communicator you need to minimize the distortion created during processing by your audience. The effective way to do this is to present it as a story that ALREADY makes sense.

In order to do this, three things that need to be achieved when reaching a target audience are:

- To engage the audience (so they want to listen).
- To hold their attention (so they pick up as much of the information you are transmitting as possible).
- To get through their processing without significant distortion of your information and message.

This third point is key to using stories. An effective story structure has certain elements, and presenting a strong and coherent story provides information that is intuitively understood and remembered.

Further Reading

Gottschall, J. *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2012.
Haven, K. *Story Proof*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2007.
Haven, K. *Story Smart*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2014.



Handout No 3: Building Blocks of Story

There are many books and lectures that will tell you exactly what a story is, and which elements make a string of words into a narrative. Unfortunately there is no single set of guidelines which holds true for every story. That said, there are some obvious elements to what makes a story, and also some tips and pointers for how to make the story you want to tell, one that engages and inspires.



What follows is a brief description of some of these and some pointers for further reading.

*“Begin at the beginning.....and then go on until you come to the end: then stop.”
(Lewis Carroll, Alice’s adventures in Wonderland)*

A story needs a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning sets the scene, the middle adds detail and takes you on a journey of discovery. The end wraps it up and gives it meaning.

Meaning is important: when crafting a story, the one single thing you need is to be able to answer the question “why?” Why do we do this, why is our product useful, why does this information matter? There may be more than one “why”, of course, and stories can be very simple or highly complex depending on context. But ask yourself why, to get to the crux of your piece.

Emotion is key. It can be used in different ways, but one of the vital parts of stories that engage is that they have the power to move people.

Stories are fundamentally about people. Providing a character that the listener can identify with or empathise with tends to pull them into the story. If they care about that character, then they will go on a journey with them. Of course the characters don’t have to be human, but stories we tell about animals or even inanimate objects tend to be anthropomorphized: we think of them in human terms.

For more complex stories, there are models available, that have been drawn from analysis of myth and folklore, the tales we have been telling each other to educate for thousands of years.

The classic example of this is Campbell’s “Hero’s Journey”. Joseph Campbell, a comparative mythologist, wrote about this in the mid-20th century, proposing that all of humankind’s myths (including all the stories fundamental to the major religions) essentially carried the same plot. The Hero, unknowing and unaware, receives a Call To Adventure, which is a stimulus that sets them on their journey. This takes them from their known world into the unknown. Crossing that threshold they have to pass a guardian. In the Unknown, or the Underworld, they may meet mentors or helpers. They



undergo challenges and temptations. At some point they descend into the abyss, where they undergo a kind of death or deconstruction. They are reborn, transformed, and through further challenges journey back out of the Unknown and into their old world. Scarred possibly, or changed, but carrying some treasure that they discovered on the way.

This concept was taken up by a Disney executive in the 1980's and promoted as a blueprint for film structure, and is closely adhered to in the film industry today, so that for example films such as Fight Club and Toy Story, and many many others, carry this basic plot structure.

Another set of elements has been proposed by Kendall Haven thus:

The Character has

- Traits – that can control receiver attitude towards story characters
- A goal – that they need to achieve in their story
- A motive – the drivers that make their goal important.

On the way, the character may meet:

- conflicts and problems – that stand in the way of achieving their goal
- risk and danger – likelihood (risk) and consequence (danger) of failure to achieve the goal. Makes for excitement and suspense.

The story is described in the struggles, a series of events a character undertakes to reach their goal.

Finally details can bring the background and environment of the story to life.

The Bare Bones version of this reads thus:

The Character.....

Needed -----

Because -----

But -----

So, -----

Finally -----



An alternative resource is to regard a story as requiring a plot, a character or characters, conflict, a theme and a setting. Or even simpler, character, agenda and plot.

Whether you use a more complex “recipe” to build your story, or just take the very simple elements of a narrative with a beginning and an end, an engaging character, a reason why, and some emotion....well, that’s up to you. We’ll be doing some exercises that help to build stories in the workshop.



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Before you attend, try this as an exercise for someone who wishes to use stories more. When hearing people speak, or reading a newspaper, or studying a text, asking yourself if the information you encounter is actually a story, and if it is not. And in the latter case, what would turn the information into a story? Or turn a poor story into a better one? Once you have done this for a while you will get a feel for creating and working with stories.

Further reading

Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, 1949. - Reprinted Harper Collins, London, 1993.

Haven, K. *Story Smart*. Santa Barbara, Ca: Libraries Unlimited. 2014.

Vogler, C. *Mythic structure for writers*. Studio City, Ca: Michael Wiesel Productions, 1998.



Handout No 4: Storytelling games



These are some examples of games that could be used in the workshop. Substitute them with your own if you prefer.

Ice-breakers

These get people relaxed, and start them right away telling stories, and show how easy it is.

“We all tell stories” - 1

Divide group into pairs. Ask them to tell a short story about their journey to the workshop, or something amusing that happened in the last 24 hours. Take no more than 3 minutes per person. *10 minutes, with 20 for feedback*

“We all tell stories” - 2

This assumes every workshop participant carries a smartphone. Divide group into pairs. Ask them to find a photograph on their phone, within the last 10 on their camera roll, and tell their partner the story behind the picture.

Creativity

These get people thinking and working flexibly and using creativity.

“This is not a spoon”

Divide group into pairs or threes. Hand out simple objects (examples: a spoon, a cork, a die, a ribbon, etc) and ask them to describe what it could be. For example: this is not a ribbon, it is the rope used in a tug of war by the gnomes that live at the bottom of my garden. They hand the object back and forth, coming up with different uses for it. *Approx 15 minutes, with 20-30 for feedback* from each group.

“The emotion room”

Solo working. Give each participant an emotion, ask them to write a short piece, describing a room to evoke that emotion, There must be no movement, and no people in the room. *Approx 15 minutes, with 30 minutes for feedback.*



Story

“Legend Starters”

A legend is a story that is probably based on truth, but has been embellished over the years until it is hard to know what the original facts were. This exercise aims to get people thinking imaginatively with language.

The whole group sits in a circle. Start off with a simple sentence. Pass it around the circle, each person embellishing/changing it a bit until it becomes an outlandish claim, a legend. For example:

- That cat looks as if it understands every word I say
- Jane’s cat understands every word she says
- I think Jane’s a witch. She and her cat talk to each other.
- There’s a witch that lives in the village. She’s got a cat that goes round town and takes all the gossip back to her.

Etc.

“stories in real life”

Solo working

These help people use their own understanding of stories, through the fairy tales they will have heard as children, to recognize the points of story in a modern or business context.

Take a simple folk tale or fairy tale, for example Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White or Cinderella.

-translate the characters to roles within your workplace. Who is the Big Bad Wolf, or the Woodsman, or the Fairy godmother?

-translate or rewrite the plot and characters to a modern context.

-write a short story of something within your workplace: something that happened in the office, or the story of a project and how it developed.

-translate that into a folktale world. Adjust as necessary to fit your workplace story into the shape of the folktale. Then translate it back. How has it changed? What was not there in your story before?

Overall, about an hour



Performance/presentation skills

“wink murder”

This aims to draw attention to how we use eye contact. It is a good game to kick start a discussion around how we use body language and eye contact. Many will have played this as children.

Sit participants in a circle. One person is chosen as the detective and sent out of the room. One of those remaining is chosen as the murderer. The detective is brought back in and stands in the centre of the circle. The murderer kills people by catching their eye and winking at them-victims should die as dramatically as possible! The detective has three chances to guess the identity of the murderer.

“Speaking in space”

This is an exercise in holding attention and using gesture and body language. Work in pairs. Pairs stand opposite each other and a few feet apart. A tells a simple fairy tale, so quietly that B might have to strain to hear. A illustrates their story with gesture. Discuss afterwards how connection, eye contact and movement help to get across the story.

Resources

“Pass it on”, A Resource for Teaching Storytelling with Young People.
Available from: Traditional Arts Team, email info@TradArtsTeam.co.uk

Johnstone, K. *Impro for Storytellers*. London: Faber & Faber, 1999.



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Additional resources:

Slide set: Using storytelling to help manage innovation

Powerpoint 4

Exercise: Innovation-linked stories

Example/activity: Red Riding Hood rewritten as an interactive innovation story

Matt's TACIT Project: Story Telling

Journal papers:

There are some journal papers published as a result of the TACIT project including:

IPDM paper as background

ISPIM The role of storytelling in innovation proces 17 Feb 2018.docx as background

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