**SCIENCE OF STORYTELLING**

Much research has been done into how our brains react to stories and how they help us learn and encourage learning. And it’s not research that lacks credibility either – it’s the work of professors working out of Ivy League universities and thought leaders who advise the World Bank and international governments.

If you have colleagues who favours talking about data and the theory of your work, then some of the science of storytelling might be just what you need to convince them! Here are some short summaries of some of our favourite pieces of research but do click through to read, listen or watch the extra resources as there really is some fascinating stuff to learn.

**Mining emotions**

Professor Paul J. Zak from Claremont University has identified the brain processes that support behaviors and virtues like as trustworthiness, generosity, and sacrifice, as well as those whose absence leads to evil, vice, and conflict. His findings have been used by the World Bank for poverty alleviation programmes.

He discovered that by telling more emotional stories you can encourage the creation of more Oxytocin, which is responsible for promoting empathy, and Cortisol, which is the distress hormone. The quantities of both of these in participants’ bloodstream had a direct impact on how much money people gave in tests. Read more [here](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_stories_change_brain) or watch his [TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/paul_zak_trust_morality_and_oxytocin?language=en).

**Influence Relay**

Professor Hasson from Princetown University runs a neurological lab that studies the brain’s responses to real life events. He discovered the ‘all brain activation’ effect of stories, which means that by telling a powerful story well you can plant the emotions you feel in your listener or viewer’s brain. In turn the listener or viewer turns the story into their own idea or experience. He calls this the influence relay. This ability to use stories to influence is a powerful tool for charities. Watch his [TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/uri_hasson_this_is_your_brain_on_communication).

**Story Net**

For 30 years Kendal Havenhas beenresearching the process of story-based influence and persuasion. His findings have even been used by the U.S. Department of Defense. He has some fascinating findings about how the brain learns and retains information.

Haven has discovered that evolution has rewired the human brain to think in specific story terms. Humans naturallyturn incoming information into story before it reaches our conscious minds and we filter out things that don’t make sense with what he has called the neuralstory net**.** This net filters out and ‘corrects’ complex information and data that we can’t make sense of before we are even aware we have done it. Telling a story is literally a better way to teach someone than sharing simple facts and data. It is a fascinating areas and this [podcast](https://www.theh2duo.com/waterinreallife/25/) is well worth a listen.

**Five minute read**

This [easy read](http://lifehacker.com/5965703/the-science-of-storytelling-why-telling-a-story-is-the-most-powerful-way-to-activate-our-brains) on lifehacker is a great summary of some of the science and is great piece to point colleagues towards.